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Lillian Hellman, a popular playwright and bestselling author, was a minor player in American intellectual circles. So why is she still such a divisive figure?

丽莲·海尔曼，一个有名的剧作家和畅销书作者，曾今是美国知识分子圈中的一个小角色。但是为什么时至今日，她还是一个如此备受争议的人物？

A Difficult Woman: The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman. By Alice Kessler-Harris.

《一个难对付的女人：莉莲·赫尔曼充满挑战的一生和她的时代》，阿丽丝·凯斯勒·哈里斯著。

Lillian Hellman knew how to tell a good story, and she liked to spin her own. So she destroyed old letters, suppressed records and hushed friends. She replaced hard documentation with soulful reminiscences of a Jewish childhood in New Orleans, of coming of age during the Depression and of defending her leftist ideals amid the hysteria of the cold war. Flinty yet glamorous, she was blacklisted in the 1950s because she would not confess to a crime of disloyalty she felt she never committed. In memoirs and anecdotes, Hellman presented herself as she wished to be remembered—the courageous and upright heroine of her own play—and tried to destroy or quash everything else.

丽莲·海尔曼知道怎样才能叙述出一个好的故事，并且她喜欢编写关于自己的故事。正因为这样，她废弃了旧的书信，禁止写记录性的文件，缄默朋友。用充满感情的回忆录，取代了生硬刻板文件。一个犹太人，在新奥尔良度过了自己的童年时光，成年时期经历了大萧条，并且在歇斯底里的冷战时期捍卫她的左翼思想。在二十世纪五十年代，她被列入黑名单，原因是她不愿意承认自己犯了不忠罪，她觉得自己从来没有犯过。虽然顽固了点，可是却很绚烂。在回忆录与轶事里，海尔曼这样呈现自己——一个有勇气且正直的女英雄，并且试图摧毁或是捣碎一切。

Hellman is an irresistible subject, but time has not been good to her reputation. Her effort to control her legacy appears to have backfired. Once celebrated for her taut writing and devotion to social justice, her image since her death in 1984, aged 79, has curdled into something villainous. Her plays are still performed—particularly “The Little Foxes”, which secured her fame in 1939—but they are often dismissed as moralising melodramas. Her name now tends to invite vitriol about her being a Stalinist and a liar, a woman who preached economic equality while swaddled in mink. She was a hypocritical “bitch with balls”, in the words of Elia Kazan, a film director, who seethed at Hellman's self-righteous take on the McCarthy era.

海尔曼是一个让人无法抗拒的主题，可是时间对她的名誉而言却并不是一件好事。她企图控制自己的遗产，没料却事与愿违。曾今人们赞美她那简洁紧凑的著作，还有为社会正义所做出的努力。但是她的形象，在1984年79岁的她去世后，变质成腐化堕落。人们仍然在表演她的剧本，尤其是1939年为她赢得名声的《小狐狸》。但是更多的时候，剧本被认为是具有说教性质的情景剧，因此不予考虑。一提起她的名字，就会引来社会对她的尖酸刻薄的评价。一个斯大林主义者，撒谎精，一个鼓吹经济平等却穿着貂皮大衣的女流之辈。用美国导演伊利亚卡赞的话说，她是一个虚伪的“长有男性睾丸的婊子”。导演伊利亚卡赞及其讨厌海尔曼在麦卡锡时代的自以为是。

This is the backdrop of “A Difficult Woman”. Alice Kessler-Harris, an American historian at Columbia University, begins her thoughtful book assuring readers that “it would be folly to try to capture the ‘real’ Lillian, whoever that is”. Hellman is too slippery a subject and too unco-operative a source for that. Rather, this biography works to answer the question of why Hellman remains such a divisive figure, “a lightning rod for the anger, fear and passion” that

divided Americans during an especially fraught ideological time.

这是令人深思的书籍《一个难对付的女人》的创作背景。艾丽斯·凯斯勒·哈里斯，美国哥伦比亚大学历史学家，如此开头本书向人们保证，“企图捕捉真实的丽莲 是一件愚蠢的事，不管是谁”。原因是海尔曼是如此的狡猾，如此的不可合作。准确点说，这本传记主要是来回 答海尔曼为什么是这样一位富有争议的人物，“是愤怒，恐惧与激情的避雷针”，在各种意识形态混杂的时代，让美国人四分五散。

Ambitious, acerbic and direct to the point of rudeness, Hellman was a woman of voracious appetites, the kind of “tough broad” who “can take the tops off bottles with her teeth”, according to a 1941 New Yorker profile. She knew she wasn't a beauty (her first boyfriend said she looked like “a prow head on a whaling ship”, but she bristled with a sexual charisma designed to distract husbands from their wives. Lonely and insecure about her desirability, she found affirmation in affairs and friendships with men.

野心勃勃，尖刻，并直接达到粗鲁的程度。海尔曼是个贪吃的女人，据 1941 年杂志纽约形象描述，她粗鲁的可以“用牙齿扯下瓶塞”。她知道自己不是一个美人（她的第一任男友说她长得像是“捕鲸船的船头”），但是她性感十足，专门勾引别人的老公。孤独，还有对性感的不安全感，使得她在艳遇和与男人的友谊中寻求 肯定。

The most significant of these was with Dashiell Hammett, a famous and flamboyantly alcoholic writer of detective novels, with whom she enjoyed an unconventional romance for 30 years until he died in 1961. Hellman always credited him with teaching her how to write, showing her how to craft distinctive characters with just a few lines of raffish dialogue. In turn Hellman bailed Hammett out of the occasional fix, and tended to his reputation and estate for the rest of her life.

与她交往的最有名的当属达希尔·哈密特。达希尔·哈密特，侦探小说家，著名，有派头，酗酒。直到 1961 年达希尔·哈密特死亡，海尔曼跟他经历了 30 年的 不同寻常的浪漫。海尔曼经常说他的好话，比如他教她如何写作，如何用几行简短的低级趣味的对白塑造出与众不同的人物形象。对应地，海尔曼保释达希尔·哈密 特于偶尔的贿赂，并用其余生悉心照料他的名誉和财产。

Vehemently anti-fascist, Hellman fought for civil rights and civil liberties, always believing a better future was within reach. She became a labour organiser during the Depression, and travelled to Spain to witness the horrors of its civil war. She flirted with communism in the 1930s, seeing the party as an essential check on fascism in Europe. Problematically, she joined the party after the worst of Moscow's purges and show trials, and even signed a letter declaring her faith in the guilt of the defendants. But her membership was brief, and she later expressed regret for not having understood just how blood-soaked Stalin was.

海尔曼是激进的反法西斯主义者，为了人权和自由而战，并且坚信美好的未来就在手边。在大萧条时期，她成为工会的组织者，并且亲赴西班牙，见证内战的恐怖。在十九世纪三十年代，她与共产主义接触，亲眼目睹了，在欧洲，主要的被抓捕对象是共产党。给她真正惹麻烦的，是在糟糕的莫斯科大清洗后，她加入了共产党， 并且出庭，甚至签署一封信，宣称自己对被告的过失有信心。

Amid growing fears about the Soviet menace in the 1950s, Hellman still loudly supported “peaceful coexistence” rather than aggressive containment. Called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC in 1952, she elegantly declared that it was “indecent and dishonourable” to name names in order to save herself, particularly when she did not feel she had done anything wrong. America's repression of communism, she argued, was more insidious than the threat of it. Despite decades of involvement in progressive politics and her public criticism of

Stalin's regime, Hellman is still regarded as an “unrepentant Stalinist”.

在 1950 年代，人们在对苏联的威胁战战兢兢之际，海尔曼依旧高调支持“和平共处”而不是强制遏制。1952 年，在被非美活动调查委员会传唤之前，为了保全自己，她高雅地宣称公开点名是“不得体且不被尊重”的。看点是，她还并不觉得自己做错了什么。针对美国对共产党的镇压，她反驳道，比起共产党带来的威胁，这更阴险。尽管她参与了几十年的政治改革，并且公开批评斯大林政权，海尔曼还是被标榜为“顽固不化的斯大林主义者”。

Ms Kessler-Harris largely defends Hellman against her harshest critics by placing her and her choices—such as her defence of communism and her refusal to embrace feminism—in the context of her times. Hellman's politics were often naive, but she was hardly alone. She had the “sense of justice of a very small child”, according to a friend, and she conveyed this moral certainty in her plays. But she was a bit player in intellectual circles, a celebrity whose outspokenness earned her disproportionate attention. So why has Hellman become a symbol for all that went wrong in the ideological battles of the 20th century? Ms Kessler-Harris argues that it may have something to do with the fact that she was a brassy, unattractive and sexually voracious woman who reaped commercial success from “middlebrow” work.

凯斯勒·哈里斯女士替海尔曼讲话，反对那些针对她的苛刻的批评。主要是通过把海尔曼放在她所处的时代来看待她这个人她的决定。诸如，防卫共产主义，拒绝拥抱女权主义。海尔曼的政治活动通常是天真幼稚的，但是却都不是她一个人的行为。根据她一个朋友的说法，她有一种“一个非常小的小孩子的正义感”，这在她 的剧本中有所体现。在知识分子层中，她可以说算是跑龙套的，可是她的坦率直言，赚足了人们的眼球。在二十世纪意识形态竞争焦灼的年代，到底是什么让海尔曼 成了一个标志？凯斯勒·哈里斯女士认为，这来源于这样一个事实，她脸皮厚，长的不好看，性贪婪，但是却能从极普通的工作中攫取大量的商业财富。

Hellman hardly helped matters by claiming her own moral superiority. In her 1976 memoir, “Scoundrel Time”, she lambasts fellow leftists for not speaking up when innocent Americans were being jailed or ruined by the HUAC witch hunt. Her anger was not directed at the government, but at “the people of my world”, the intellectuals who did nothing to defend America's civil liberties. By placing herself on this righteous pedestal, touting her own bravery in a time of fear, she left herself open to criticism, particularly for her blindness to Stalin's sins. She was also more vulnerable to claims that she twisted the facts to promote her story of personal courage.

海尔曼想通过声称自己的道德优越感来帮助解决事情，可事情却正好相反。1976 年的回忆录《邪恶的日子》，HUAC 监禁或迫害无辜的美国人民，左翼分子们没有大声抗议，海尔曼炮轰同行的行为。她的愤怒并不是指向美国政府，而是“我的王国里的人们”，那些知识分子，对于保卫人民的自由，置若罔闻。她把自己当做正义的化身，在人们充满恐惧心理的年代，兜售自己的勇敢。海尔曼将自己置于大众批评的箭靶之下，尤其是她对斯大林罪行的一无所知。同时她也很容易让人们攻击她利用扭曲事实来推广自己很有勇气。

But the final nail in the coffin of Hellman's reputation was hammered in 1980, when she decided to go after Mary McCarthy, a novelist and literary critic, for defaming her in a late-night TV interview. Younger, more attractive and intellectually fierce, McCarthy accused Hellman of being a bad and dishonest writer; “every word she writes is a lie, including ‘and’ and ‘the.’” Hellman sued. The lawsuit lasted for the rest of her life. After years of defending civil liberties and criticising rapacious wealth-seeking, Hellman ended her days seeming like a greedy and vengeful censor.

但是，给海尔曼的名声带来致命一击的，是 1980 年她与玛丽麦卡锡的官司。玛丽麦卡锡，

小说家和文学批评家，在一档晚间电视访谈中说了海尔曼的坏话。麦卡锡，更年轻，更有吸引力，更智慧，谴责海尔曼是一个坏人，一个不诚实的作家：“她写的每一个词，包括‘and’和‘the’都是谎言。”海尔曼起诉她。这场官司一直持续到海尔曼生命的最后。多年以来，她保卫人民自由，谴责贪婪的追求财富的行为，不料在生命结束之际，看起来却像是个贪婪的，报复心重的审查员。

This is a shame. Hellman may not have been the hero of her reminiscences, but she spent a lifetime believing it was the duty of engaged citizens to fight racism, alleviate poverty and protect civil liberties. She was a role model to feminists in the 1970s, but she despaired that they talked too much about bras and too little about economic opportunity and human rights. She made some foolish choices, but Lillian Hellman was often on the right side of history. Too bad so many of her good ideas have been tossed out with the bad ones.

这真是一件令人遗憾的事。海尔曼或许不是她回忆录中的英雄，可是她终生坚信，反对种族歧视，缓解贫困，并且保护人民的自由是参与社会的人民应有的义务。她是1970年代女权运动的行为榜样，但是她们谈论的更多的主题是内衣，经济机会和人权的实在太少，这很令海尔曼失望。虽然她做过一些愚蠢的决定，但是丽莲·海尔曼总是站在历史的正确的一边。真不幸，她的很多好的观点随着不好的，一同被丢弃。