

Selected Readings of Contemporary
American Essays (with Chinese Translation)

美国短文英汉比读

王凡 毛荣贵

编译

[美] Rosemary Adang

苦斗人生

Story from the Summit



湖北人民出版社
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前言之一

王 凡

人生自古谁无死，留取丹心照汗青。

——这是南宋文天祥在其《过零丁洋》中的名句。

我曾想，略知民族英雄文天祥之坎坷命途者，自然会作如此联想：他能写“人生自古谁无死”这样的千古绝句，也一定会仰天慨叹：人生自古谁无苦！

后来，留学英伦，读 Noel Grove 的 *Mark Twain——Mirror of America*（《马克·吐温——美国的镜子》）一文，深为其动，尤其是以下这句，让我思绪袅袅：

Bitterness fed on the man who had made the world laugh.

（这位令全世界的人发出笑声的人自己却饱尝辛酸。）

马克·吐温，一代美国文学巨匠，幽默大师，他的作品让美国人欢笑，让西方人欢笑，让全世界的读者欢笑。他本人却在“苦水”中泡大！

我本以为，他应该是这样一个人：

Happiness and pleasure fed on the man who had made the world laugh.

（这位令全世界的人发出笑声的人，生活充满了幸福和快乐！）

由此，我更坚信：人生自古谁无苦！

而大多数幸福快乐的人，难以体验命运坎坷的煎熬。殊不知，天有不测，人生无常。当不测风云突然降临，却常常措手不及。难能可贵的是，书中 23 个真实故事的主人公面临种种苦难——骤失至亲、痛苦童年、命途多舛、天有不测……没有屈服，而是勇敢地挑战命运，展现出的品质、意志和风采强烈地震撼着我。

在翻译此书的日日夜夜里，我流泪，我感奋，我深思。——人生

本苦短,更兼风和雨!然而,这仅仅是 one side of the coin(硬币的一面),人生的种种磨难,又何尝不是一种福祉?人生,因苦而美。——因为磨难即财富,人生因磨难而放射出绚丽夺目的光彩。

现在的家长似乎懂得了“苦,乃福祉;苦,即财富”的哲理,颇愿意让未经风雨的子女接受所谓的“吃苦教育/受挫教育”。

翻译此书,让我懂得,吃苦与受挫,是生活的一种常态,一种生态,其功能常为“非生态”苦难所能完成。面对不测,他们的坚强与勇气,使他们战胜一个个磨难,渡过一道道难关。

然而,痛定思痛,苦后思苦,舛后思舛。主人公们无不慨叹:

Perhaps it is true that everything has a price and we must sacrifice something precious to gain something else. The poets and philosophers say adversity, sorrow and pain add a dimension to our lives. Those who suffer deeply touch life at every point; they drain the cup to the dregs while others sip only the bubbles on top. Perhaps no one can touch the stars who hasn't known the depth of despair.

(也许这是对的:每样东西都有其价值,我们必须牺牲一些珍贵的东西才能另有所获。诗人和哲学家说,逆境、不幸、痛苦增加了我们的生活阅历,历尽沧桑的人们方可感受生活的一点一滴;他们将人生的苦酒一饮而尽,而别人只不过啜饮表层的泡沫,也许没有下过苦海的人是无法摘取那成功的星辰。)

笔者,身兼读者与译者,在为文章内容所动的同时,亦为精彩的英语表达所深深吸引,尤其是本书出现的修辞手段,五光十色、美不胜收!如:

1. He first put a club in my hand when I was about ten. I threw a lot of tantrums in the upland hills of North Carolina, and clubs too. I was in such a rush to be good that he would urge me to “relax and enjoy the round. The game ends far too soon.” I didn't have a clue what he meant. (见 *Enjoy the Round*《好好打一场高尔夫球》)

唉, I threw a lot of tantrums in the upland hills of North Carolina, and clubs too. 此句的表达,真有点怪异。动词 threw 有两个宾

语(tantrums / clubs), threw 怎么能和 tantrums(发脾气,发怒)搭配呢?

原来,该句运用了异叙(syllepsis)这个辞格,动词 threw 同时与两个宾语(tantrums / clubs)搭配,新意拂面!翻译时,不得不割爱。试译:

他第一次把高尔夫球杆放在我手里的时候,我大概十岁。在北卡罗来纳州的山中,我一次次发脾气,一次次把球杆扔掉。我急于求成,老爸总是劝我“放松点,慢慢打,比赛结束得太快了。”我一点儿也不明白他的意思。

2. When the things happen that you do not like, you have two choices: You get bitter or better. (见 *The White Picket Fence*《白色的尖桩篱笆》)

此句同时运用了两种修辞——低调(understatement)与头韵(alliteration)。when things happen that you don't like——读似轻描淡写,实则沉甸甸,指的是作者的丧夫之痛!其表达却是典型的低调手法。Bitter or better,押了头韵,读来有一种乐感。试译:

当你不喜欢的事情发生了,你有两种选择:要么痛苦不堪;要么痛快达观。

(“痛苦”、“痛快”,这两个“痛”字,与原句的“bitter”、“better”构成声韵之呼应。)

3. In some places, hospitals were so crowded that beds, overflowing the wards, spilled out into hallways and lined the walls, each bed bearing the paralyzed form of a child. (见 *My Father Gave Me Life Twice*《父亲给我两次生命》)

该句巧用了 overflow 一词的转义(connotation)。overflow,原指水的漫出,这里用来比喻医院的拥挤,病床摆到了病房外,十分形象。可译为:

一些地方的医院里挤满了人,病房里摆不下那么多病床,病床如水,水漫大厅,水漫走廊。每一张病床上都躺着受小儿麻痹症煎熬的小孩。

4. The entire building chirped, whistled, screeched, squeaked and rustled with life. (见 *My Unforgettable "Animal Lady"*《难以忘怀的“动物女神”》)

该句正是典型的平行结构(parallelism),五个拟声词(chirped, whistled, screeched, squeaked and rustled)一字排开,各种动物的叫声,似此起彼伏,“声声不息”气氛得以渲染,意境得以烘托。令读者置身于动物世界。试译:

整幢屋子飞禽鸣,走兽吼,生机一片。

除了修辞,书中还有许许多多精彩的句子,等待读者发现与琢磨。

例如:

To cure his patients, he relied on a palette of remedies that included modern science, folk medicine and plain common sense. (见 *Doc Tenney's Healing Magic*《兽医坦尼的绝活》)

如何理解句中的一个词组 a palette of?

《英汉大辞典》中并未有 a palette of 这一词组,palette 是个名词,意思是“调色板”呀!稍加思索,便不难发现其含义!精彩,这就是美国英语!

试译上句:为了治疗染病的牲畜,他用尽五花八门的办法,包括现代科技、民间药物和简单常识。

上述的举例,让我们管窥了英语语言的玄妙。宋代的张孝祥在《念奴娇·过洞庭》发出“悠然心会,妙处难与君说”的感叹。读者诸君在阅读此书时,如果能融入感情,用心体味,相信定会有更多的收获。此外,每篇文章都配有译文,可帮助读者深刻理解英文表达,深化英汉两种语言的对比认识。品赏英语独特的精彩表达,必然对提高翻译能力有所益处。

作为译者,必须承认,纵使在翻译过程中时时以“信、达、雅”作为标尺,但其中的舛误在所难免。在此,笔者感谢旅美学者倪俊先生对本书译文的勘误,也真诚期待朋友们的批评指正。

2007 年初秋于上海徐家汇

前言之二

毛荣贵

美国是一个遥远的国度。

现在,美国对国人来说已不再遥远、不再陌生。

各种传媒对美国的报道纷至沓来,让我们能近距离、多角度地观察这个国家;我们身边有许多人访美归来,他们有声有色地向我们谈起美国见闻;美国许多专家学者、旅游观光者来到中国,他们又有意无意地在宣传着美国。

距离的拉近,交往的频繁,相信“西方的月亮比中国圆”的人士越来越少了。相信“美国遍地是黄金”的人士也开始怀疑自己。然而,美国对我们许多人来说又是神秘的、朦胧的、天堂般的。

本书却要向读者真实展示当今美国人亲历的种种人生磨难。他们也有磨难?是的,请勿感到意外!国人用“天灾人祸”四个字来概括人世间的种种不幸。生活在地球另一面的人当然不在幸免之列。不信,请读一读本书 *Enjoy the Round* (《好好打一场高尔夫球》)一文主人公的一句话:

The only thing life really promises us is pain. It's up to us to create the joy.

(生活能真正给予我们承诺的只有痛苦,而快乐需要我们自己去创造。)

本书 23 篇文章很难说囊括了当今美国人的全部磨难。但是,23 篇文章的内容没有一篇是雷同的。天有不测风云,人有旦夕祸福。世界皆然,笔者在编辑本书的时候曾几次潸然泪下。真的,The only thing life really promises us is pain! 如此而已,岂有他哉? 尽管美国是一个发达国家,尽管美国人民享受着高度的物质文明,尽管美国

傲视世界群雄。

然而,美国人又似乎是乐天知命、豁达洒脱的。他们认定:天灾难防,人祸难避!本书 *When the Telephone Rang* (《电话铃响起的时候》)一文说到:

There are seasons of the heart. There are seasons in our lives, just as there are seasons to all of nature. These seasons cannot be forced any more than one can force the coming of spring by pulling at tender blades of grass to make them grow.

(心有四季。生活也有四季,就如自然界万物都有春夏秋冬一样。四季无法人为地加以改变,就如一个人无法用拔苗助长的方法强令春天的到来。我经过了好一阵子才懂得了这一点。)

虽说字里行间透出几分无奈,但毕竟在天灾人祸面前表现出不凡的理性。

因此,笔者在垂泪之后,更多的是受到一份启迪,得到点滴鼓舞。本书的每一篇均可视作是挑战命运的颂歌!

细读全书,你会惊奇地发现自己读不到什么“豪言”。以下这句话选自 *The White Picket Fence* (《白色的尖桩篱笆》)。好像最能道出书中人物的精神风貌:

Change is part of life and the making of character, hon. When things happen that you don't like, you have two choices: You get bitter or better.

(变化是生活的一部分,而且也塑造了人的性格,亲爱的。当你不喜欢的事情发生了,你有两种选择:要么痛苦不堪,要么痛快达观。)

这句话,平平淡淡,远非“壮语”,即使是本书的另一主编,美国西雅图的 Rosemary 教授对此话的 paraphrase,仍然使用了“低调”:

When things happen that you don't like, you have two choices: You get angry and stay that way, or you learn from the changes.

(当你不喜欢的事情发生了,你有两种选择:你要么感到气愤,不

予改变,要么吸取教训,以求改变。)

遭遇人生不测之后,本书主人公泪飞如雨者有之,痛不欲生者有之,一度沉沦者有之。然而,却没有一个 get bitter,或者 get angry and stay that way! 而是 get better,或是 learn from the changes。笔者却喜用“苦斗”两字写之,并且将这两个字挪用到本书的标题。

我们不能以偏概全,把书中人物的“苦斗”精神视作一种“美国精神”。然而,当我们能在这样一本书里集中地读到美国人敢与命运抗争的真实故事的时候,我们的心震撼了,我们又想起了毛泽东的一句话:人是要有一点精神的。

细读本书,在精神上获得的享受是多方面的。

就写作风格言,读者可以欣赏到文风各异的篇章。其中不少文章完全可以作为英语学习的范文精读细览,而令读者爱不释手。

例如,本书中有 *Sure Is Cold* (《真冷》) 这样书卷气十足、文才斐然之作,也有 *Finding My Way Back* (《寻找振奋之路》) 那样低吟浅唱而又如泣如诉之文;有 *The Love I'll Never Forget* (《此爱永驻我心》) 这样文笔曲折而情感如瀑的故事,也有 *The White Picket Fence* (《白色的尖桩篱笆》) 那样构思精致盆景式的散文;有 *My Father Gave Me Life Twice* (《父亲给我两次生命》) 这样朱自清“背影”式的抒情佳作,也有 *A Mother's Warning* (《一位母亲的警告》) 那样用血泪写成的呐喊短文。

本书既是一扇了解美国的窗口,又是学习英语的一本理想读物。限于编者的水平,书中欠当之处在所难免。恳望广大读者不吝赐教。

2007 年初秋于上海

目 录

前言之一	王 凡 1
前言之二	毛荣贵 5

When the Telephone Rang

电话铃响起的时候	1
----------------	---

A Mother's Warning

一位母亲的警告	16
---------------	----

Finding My Way Back

寻找振奋之路	23
--------------	----

Music Was His Passport

音乐是他的护照	32
---------------	----

Doc Tenney's Healing Magic

兽医坦尼的绝活	46
---------------	----

The Boy Who Talked With Dolphins

和海豚交谈的男孩	60
----------------	----

The Secret Life of the Gomez Twins

戈氏孪生兄弟的秘密生活	75
-------------------	----

"You Are My Dictionary"

"你是我的词典"	89
----------------	----

No Greater Love

最伟大的爱	101
-------------	-----

A Classroom Full of Flowers

摆满鲜花的教室	117
---------------	-----

The Love I'll Never Forget	
此爱永驻我心.....	126
My Favorite Valentine	
永驻我心的情人节.....	139
Love beyond All Understanding	
超越一切的爱.....	148
Sure Is Cold	
真冷.....	166
The Baggy Yellow Shirt	
宽松的黄衬衫.....	175
The White Picket Fence	
白色的尖桩篱笆.....	182
"Hello, Young Lovers"	
"你好,年轻的情人!".....	188
Enjoy the Round	
好好打一场高尔夫球.....	194
Christmas Lost and Found	
失而复得的圣诞节.....	209
My Unforgettable "Animal Lady"	
难以忘怀的"动物女神".....	217
My Father Gave Me Life Twice	
父亲给我两次生命.....	230
A Winner's Secret	
一个胜者的秘诀.....	243
Against All Odds	
困难重重 永不退缩	256

When the Telephone Rang

电话铃响起的时候

By Melody Beattie

梅拉迪·贝蒂

催

人泪下,母亲痛说人生不测;令人感奋,母女重扬生活风帆。

本文的内容似可以上面两句加以概括。人生的不测往往突如其来! 14 岁的女儿 Nichole 带着 12 岁的儿子 Shane 去滑雪,本来是为了庆祝弟弟 12 岁的生日,孰料,在滑雪场上出现了这样悲惨的一幕:

When the two reached the top, Shane shouted, "Let's face it!" He dug his poles into the snow and pushed off. While going over a mogul, he fell, then stood up. Struggling to regain his balance, he was hit from behind by another skier and fell again. This time he didn't move.

三天之后,抢救宣布无效。

然而祸不单行。女儿的精神受此打击,不再是一个天真无虑的少女。她认定弟弟的死与自己有关! 她曾这样呼喊,道出了心声: I feel so guilty, so bad. I tried to drink it away. I tried to drug it away.

但是, Nichole 不仅没有能 drug it away,反而发出了 "I need help!" 的呐喊。她如此描写她吸毒的感觉:

... Sometimes I go blank, and the next day I can't remember anything. I'm scared. I need help.

次日,“我”即将女儿送入了“青少年戒毒中心”(inpatient chemical-dependency treatment centre)。

看来,“我”在痛失爱子之后,又将失去爱女。这时,我们读到了以下的文字: It was a strange time when Nichole was in treatment... I found something I thought I'd never find again—

calmness, a sense of peace. 此话也许和“物极必反”一说相通,然而,读之反备感心境黯然!

可是,真正的解脱就在此后不久。在戒毒中心和女儿见面时,女儿终于一吐心中久积的痛苦:

This whole nightmare is all my fault! You told me to be home by six that night. That's the last thing you said before we walked out that door. And if I had listened, if I had come home when you said, Shane wouldn't be dead now. I'm so, so sorry, Mom.

“我”离开中心之前,给女儿写了这样一张字条:

Dear Nichole, I love you very much. I always have. I always will. And if you had called me that night to ask if you could ski later than 6 p. m., I would have said yes. You didn't cause this, baby. And don't ever again think you did. Love, Mom.

此信字字是泪,句句是真情。然而,母女之间的这一交流间接告诉我们,自 Shane 离开人世后,母亲和姐姐心头弥漫着悲哀、失落、遗憾、悔恨,历久不散!死者长眠已矣,而生者还要生活下去。

When I got home, the telephone rang. “Thank you so much. That note means a lot, more than anything.”

母女间的沟通竟然令两个人顿有所悟,从此走出痛失儿子/弟弟的巨大心理阴影。以下的文字,不要说对经历了人生不幸的人,即使是对命途平坦的人来说,也会肃然深思:

There are seasons of the heart. There are seasons in our lives, just as there are seasons to all of nature. These seasons cannot be forced any more than one can force the coming of spring by pulling at tender blades of grass to make them grow. It took me awhile to understand.

一月,女儿 Nichole 从戒毒中心归来,母女同庆: We vowed to have the best year a mother and daughter ever had. To celebrate her homecoming, we had a party with her friends. It was a grand day. 读到此,你会露出欣慰的笑容吗?

1. On January 30, 1991, my son Shane's 12th birthday, I took my two children to a restaurant to celebrate. My daughter,

Nichole, apologized to Shane because she didn't have a gift. "Want to come skiing with Joey and me this Saturday?" she asked.

2. Shane's eyes lit up. Offers like that from his 14-year-old sister didn't come very often.

3. At home that evening Shane sidled up to me while I sat at my dressing table, brushing my hair. He opened my jewelry drawer and took out a small gold cross, one his father had given me at the time of our divorce. "Can I have this?" he asked.

4. "Sure, honey," I said, "You can have that."

5. That Friday, before the birthday ski trip, Shane stopped me in the kitchen, pulled down the neck of his sweater and pointed to the cross hanging around his neck. "God is with me now," he said quietly.

6. I had a hard time falling asleep that night. It wasn't, as the song says, that I thought we'd get to see forever. But I thought we'd have more time than we did. I didn't know the end would come so soon—that I would face a mother's worst nightmare, involving not just one but both of my children.

7. *One last time.* "Be home by six o'clock!" I yelled as the kids left that Saturday morning for Afton Alps, a ski area south of our home in Stillwater, Minn. Nichole promised they would be back on time.

8. It was a strange day. I left as if I was waiting for something, but I didn't know what. At 8 p. m. I wondered why the children weren't home yet. I was puttering around the house after 9 p. m. when the telephone rang.

9. "Mrs. Beattie?" a man asked. "I'm with the Afton Alps Ski Patrol. Your son has been injured. He's unconscious, but I'm sure he'll be fine. Stay where you are. We'll call you back."

10. The phone rang again in 15 minutes. "Your son's still not

conscious," the man said. "We're taking him to the hospital."

11. Be calm, I thought. Drive to the hospital and see your son. Be by his side. Everything will be fine.

12. A nurse met me in the emergency room. She looked at me differently from anyone who had ever looked at me before. She took my arm and led me to a small room. "Do you have someone you can call?" she said.

13. Those words broke my heart. I knew what they meant.

14. Soon I learned what had happened. After skiing the beginner hills all day, Shane decided to finish up by trying an expert slope called Trudy's Schuss. He talked one of Nichole's friends into going with him.

15. When the two reached the top, Shane shouted, "Let's face it!" He dug his poles into the snow and pushed off. While going over a mogul, he fell, then stood up. Struggling to regain his balance, he was hit from behind by another skier and fell again. This time he didn't move.

16. In minutes the first-aid sled arrived. When artificial respiration didn't work, someone called an ambulance.

17. "Help him! That's my brother!" Nichole shouted at the paramedics. As one medic hooked up an I. V., another started to cut off the chain with the cross that hung around Shane's neck. "Leave that on him," Nichole said. They closed the doors and sped toward the emergency room.

18. *No more options.* At the hospital I talked to a doctor. He said something about brain injury. Swelling. More tests. All weekend I pray for a miracle. Sometimes I couldn't bear to be in Shane's room. I felt as if I were going to explode or go insane. The ventilator whooshed as it pushed air into his lungs. I held his hand, gently squeezing his fingers. He didn't squeeze back.

19. I remembered when we were sledding together a few weeks before. Shane slammed into a tree and rolled off the sled. He lay there on his back in the snow. "Shane, are you all right?" I yelled, running to him.

20. He sat up quickly, smiled and said, "Psych!"

21. "Don't tease like that," I said. "If anything happened to you, I don't think I could go on. Do you understand that?"

22. He looked at me, got serious and said yes, he knew that.

23. Now I kept wishing he'd sit up, smile and say, "Psych." But he didn't.

24. On the third day the doctors told me we should turn off the life-support equipment. Shane's kidneys had shut down. His body wasn't working. He was brain-dead. Medically there were no more options.

25. I started screaming, "Damn it! This is my baby you're talking about!" I kicked a door across from me as hard as I could.

26. After Shane's friends, Nichole's friends, and family members said their goodbyes, I entered his room. I cut off a lock of his hair and touched his foot. I always loved his little feet. And I held him while they shut off the ventilator.

27. "I love you," I said. "I always have. I always will."

28. When they turned off the machine, a whiff of air escaped from his lungs, and he didn't move again. I knew then he hadn't moved again. I knew then he hadn't been breathing, hadn't been alive for days. The machines had made it look that way, but it wasn't so.

29. Walking out of the room and out of the hospital was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life.

30. *Losing Nichole.* We had balloons at Shane's funeral. When the children were little, they loved balloons. If they lost one