

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM AND OTHER TALES

英美文学精品译注丛书



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Edgar Allan Poe



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《陷阱和钟摆》

埃德加·爱伦·坡(1809-1849)生于波士顿,逝于巴尔的摩。父母都是巡回剧团的演员。双亲死后,他成了孤儿;商人约翰·爱伦收养了他,不过没有办法律手续。他和爱伦断绝关系后,只得靠写作养活自己。生活屡遭不幸,故常酗酒以排忧。

坡被认为是“不合常规的”美国浪漫主义作家。他既写诗也写散文,但为他赢得声誉的主要是短篇小说。他的小说通常分为想象的故事和推理故事,其中最著名的是:《述异集》(1839),包括《瓶中发现的手稿》(1833)、《陷阱和钟摆》(1832)及《泄漏秘密的心》(1843);《莫格街谋杀案》(1841);《玛丽·罗热的秘密》(1842);《金甲虫》(1843)和《被窃的信》(1845)。

坡的作品中,恐怖与阴谋交织在一起,几乎到了病态的地步。弗洛伊德本人对这位作家的心理及其作品很感兴趣。坡对神秘和阴谋的兴趣在他的侦探小说中得到了完美的表达,它充分体现在《莫格街谋杀案》和《被窃的信》等著名小说的主角大侦探杜平身上。

他的作品人们并非一律接受。有的批评家认为他是世界最杰出的抒情诗人之一;其他批评家则觉得他知识面狭窄,思想缺乏深厚的基础,因此认为他只是巧妙处理某些韵律和旋律效果的聪明匠人。但大家一致认为他是短篇小说大师。美国作家获得欧洲文学界承认的寥寥无几,坡就是其中的一个。他的文名,尤其是诗名,在法国比在英语世界中大,法国浪漫主义者对他大加推崇。他是波德莱尔心目中的神,也备受马拉美赞赏。

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英美文学精品详注丛书

**The Pit
and the Pendulum
and other tales**

~~Edgar Allan~~ Poe

中国对外翻译出版公司

The Pit and the Pendulum

*Impia tortorum longos hic turba furores
Sanguinis innocui, non satiata, aluit.
Sospite nunc patria, fracto nunc funeris antro,
Mors ubi dira fuit, vita salusque patent.*

[Quatrain composed for the gates of a market to be erected upon the site of the Jacobin Club House at Paris.]

I was sick – sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence – the dread sentence of death – was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of *revolution* – perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill-wheel. This only for a brief period; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw; but with how terrible an exaggeration! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white – whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words – and thin even to grotesqueness; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness – of immoveable resolution – of stern contempt of human torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name; and I shuddered because no sound

Pit: large and deep opening in the ground.

Quatrain: poem of four lines. **gates:** portal; external door.
upon: on. **site:** place. **Club House:** building where the members of a club meet.

I was sick: I was suffering. **unto death:** to an extent that I could die. **at length:** in the end. **unbound:** set me free from chains.
my senses were leaving me: I was going to faint. **dread:** terrible. **distinct:** clear. **accentuation:** sound.

Inquisitorial: of the Inquisition. **seemed:** appeared. **merged:** blended; fused. **hum:** low continuous sound. **conveyed:** communicated. **perhaps:** maybe. **In fancy:** in my mind.
burr: prolonged buzz. **mill-wheel:** disc that drives a mill. **brief:** short. **for presently:** (*arch.*) for that moment. **for a while:** for a short time. **how terrible an exaggeration:** *note the construction with how.* **black-robed:** dressed in black. **whiter:** *comparative form of white.* **sheet:** piece of paper. **trace:** write.
thin even to grotesqueness: strangely thin.
firmness: strong decision. **immoveable:** immovable. **stern:** severe. **contempt:** scorn; hard criticism. **decrees:** pronouncement of the decisions. **Fate:** destiny. **issuing:** coming out.
writhe: twist; move. **deadly locution:** sentence of death. **fashion:** form. **shuddered:** trembled.

succeeded. I saw, too, for a few moments of delirious horror, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment. And then my vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white slender angels who would save me; but then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit, and I felt every fibre in my frame thrill as if I had touched the wire of a galvanic battery, while the angel forms became meaningless spectres, with heads of flame, and I saw that from them there would be no help. And then there stole into my fancy, like a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation; but just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; their flames went out utterly; the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, and night were the universe.

I had swooned; but still will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet all was not lost. In the deepest slumber – no! In delirium – no! In a swoon – no! In death – no! even in the grave all *is not* lost. Else there is no immortality for man. Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of *some* dream. Yet in a second afterwards (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed. In the return to life from the swoon there are two stages; first, that of the sense of mental or spiritual; secondly, that of the sense of physical, existence. It seems probable that if, upon reaching the second stage, we could recall the impressions

succeeded: was emitted.

nearly: almost. **waving:** moving.

sable draperies: black cloths. **enwrapped:** covered.

apartment: room. **fell:** went down.

at first: initially. **wore:** had.

seemed: looked like; appeared. **slender:** thin; slim. **would**

save: *future in the past*. **all at once:** suddenly. **most:** very.

frame: structure; body. **thrill:** tremble; vibrate.

wire: metal cable.

became: were transformed into. **meaningless:** without sense.

would be: *future in the past*. **then:** after that.

stole: passed unnoticed. **fancy:** imagination.

what: what kind of. **rest:** repose. **grave:** tomb.

gently: in a delicate manner. **stealthily:** furtively. **long:** a long

time. **attained:** received. **appreciation:** recognition. **just as:**

exactly when. **at length:** finally. **entertain:** hold in the mind.

vanished: disappeared. **before:** in front of.

sank: went down. **nothingness:** nonexistence. **went out:**

ceased burning. **utterly:** completely. **supervened:** came.

swallowed up: consumed. **rushing:** fast; very quick.

Hades: abode of the souls of the dead. **stillness:** quietness;

calm. **the universe:** everything.

swooned: lost consciousness. **all of:** the complete.

What of it: how much. **there remained:** was still present. **at-**

tempt: try.

slumber: sleep. **swoon:** state of unconsciousness.

grave: tomb. **Else:** if it is not so.

Arousing: awakening.

slumbers: sleep. **gossamer web:** fine filmy substance.

afterwards: later. **frail:** weak.

swoon: state of unconsciousness. **stages:** levels.

upon reaching: when we reach. **stage:** level. **recall:** remember.

of the first, we should find these impressions eloquent in memories of the gulf beyond. And that gulf is -- what? How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb? But if the impressions of what I have termed the first stage are not, at will, recalled, yet, after long interval, do they not come unbidden, while we marvel whence they come? He who has never swooned is not he who finds strange palaces and wildly familiar faces in coals that glow; is not he who beholds floating in mid-air the sad visions that the many may not view; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower -- is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the meaning of some musical cadence which has never before arrested his attention.

Amid frequent and thoughtful endeavors to remember; amid earnest struggles to regather some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul had lapsed, there have been moments when I have dreamed of success; there have been brief, very brief periods when I have conjured up remembrances which the lucid reason of a later epoch assures me could have had reference only to that condition of seeming unconsciousness. These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down -- down -- still down -- till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent. They tell also of a vague horror at my heart on account of that heart's unnatural stillness. Then comes a sense of sudden motionlessness throughout all things; as if those who bore me (a ghastly train!) had outrun, in their descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. After this I call to mind flatness and dampness; and then all is *madness* -- the madness of a memory which busies itself among forbidden things.

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound -- the tumultuous motion of the heart, and, in my

eloquent: expressive.

gulf: abyss. **beyond**: out of reach.

shadows: weak images.

termed: called.

stage: level. **at will**: when you want it. **recalled**: remembered.

unbidden: not asked. **marvel**: wonder. **whence**: from where.

swooned: lost consciousness.

wildly: strangely.

glow: emit light. **beholds**: observes. **floating**: suspended.

the many: most people. **view**: see. **ponders over**: thinks of.

novel: new. **whose**: *possessive case of the relative pronoun*.

brain: mind. **grows**: becomes. **bewildered**: enchanted.

arrested: attracted.

Amid: in the middle of. **thoughtful**: considerate. **endeavors**: attempts. **earnest**: sincere. **struggles**: battles. **regather**: obtain again. **token**: sign. **seeming**: apparent. **lapsed**: fallen; gone down. **dreamed of**: *note the use of the preposition of*.

brief: short.

conjured up: made appear by magic.

seeming: apparent.

shadows: weak images.

lifted: raised. **bored**: carried.

hideous: repulsive. **dizziness**: confusion. **at the mere idea**: only at the idea.

on account of: because of.

stillness: calm. **sudden**: unexpected.

throughout: right through. **ghastly**: horrible.

outrun: passed.

limitless: without limits. **paused**: rested. **wearisomeness**: fatigue. **toil**: work. **I call to mind**: remember. **dampness**: humidity. **busies itself**: is occupied.

forbidden: not permitted.

came back: returned. **motion**: movement.

ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion, and touch – a tingling sensation pervading my frame. Then the mere consciousness of existence, without thought – a condition which lasted long. Then, very suddenly, *thought*, and shuddering terror, and earnest endeavor to comprehend my true state. Then a strong desire to lapse into insensibility. Then a rushing revival of soul and a successful effort to move. And now a full memory of the trial, of the judges of the sable draperies, of the sentence, of the sickness, of the swoon. Then entire forgetfulness of all that followed; of all that a later day and much earnestness of endeavor have enabled me vaguely to recall.

So far, I had not opened my eyes. I felt that I lay upon my back, unbound. I reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard. There I suffered it to remain for many minutes, while I strove to imagine where and *what* I could be. I longed, yet dared not, to employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be *nothing* to see. At length, with a wild desperation at heart, I quickly unclosed my eyes. My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me. The atmosphere was intolerably close. I still lay quietly, and made effort to exercise my reason. I brought to mind the inquisitorial proceedings, and attempted from that point to deduce my real condition. The sentence had passed; and it appeared to me that a very long interval of time had since elapsed. Yet not for a moment did I suppose myself actually dead. Such a supposition, notwithstanding what we read in fiction, is altogether inconsistent with real existence; – but where and in what state was I? The condemned to death, I knew, perished

blank: empty; void.

tingling: prickling; thrilling. **frame:** body. **mere:** pure.

lasted long: went on for a long time. **suddenly:** unexpectedly.

shuddering: fearful; horrible. **earnest:** serious. **endeavor:** attempt. **true:** real. **lapse:** fall; precipitate.

rushing: very fast. **revival:** waking.

effort: hard attempt. **trial:** examination by judge and jury.

sable draperies: black cloths.

sickness: nausea. **swoon:** loss of consciousness. **forgetfulness:** not remembering. **earnestness:** serious intention.

endeavor: attempt. **recall:** remember.

So far: till that moment. **lay:** was. **upon:** on.

unbound: free from cords or chains. **reached out:** moved.

damp: humid. **suffered:** (*archaic*) allowed; permitted.

strove: tried hard.

longed: had a strong desire. **dared not:** had not the courage.

I dreaded: I was afraid of. **glance:** look.

things horrible: things which could be horrible.

grew aghast: became very afraid. **At length:** finally.

wild: very strong. **unclosed:** opened.

encompassed: was all around me. **struggled for:** tried hard to have.

stifle: cause difficulty in breathing. **close:** heavy.

lay: was down on my back. **made effort:** tried; attempted.

brought to mind: remembered.

attempted: tried. **deduce:** understand what was.

passed: taken place.

elapsed: passed.

Not for a moment did I suppose: *note the inversion.* **actually:** really. **notwithstanding:** in spite of. **altogether:** as a whole; entirely.

state: condition. **perished:** died.

usually at the *auto-da-fés*, and one of these had been held on the very night of the day of my trial. Had I been remanded to my dungeon, to await the next sacrifice, which would not take place for many months? This I at once saw could not be. Victims had been in immediate demand. Moreover, my dungeon, as well as all the condemned cells at Toledo, had stone floors, and light was not altogether excluded.

A fearful idea now suddenly drove the blood in torrents upon my heart, and for a brief period, I once more relapsed into insensibility. Upon recovering, I at once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a *tomb*. Perspiration burst from every pore, and stood in cold big beads upon my forehead. The agony of suspense grew, at length, intolerable, and I cautiously moved forward, with my arms extended, and my eyes straining from their sockets, in the hope of catching some faint ray of light. I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy. I breathed more freely. It seemed evident that mine was not, at least, the most hideous of fates.

And now, as I still continued to step cautiously onward, there came thronging upon my recollection a thousand vague rumors of the horrors of Toledo. Of the dungeons there had been strange things narrated – fables I had always deemed them – but yet strange, and too ghastly to repeat, save in whisper. Was I left to perish of starvation in this subterranean world of darkness; or what fate, perhaps even more fearful, awaited me? That the result would be death, and a death of more than customary bitterness, I knew too well the character of my judges to doubt. The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me.