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王占梅 蔡丽文 / 编著

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编前小引

王占梅

英美文学源远流长，其发端可追溯至一千三百多年前的古英语时期。英国文学如不算盎格罗·撒克逊与盎格罗·诺曼两个历史时期，从被誉为英国文学之父的乔叟伊始，也历经了六百多年的发展和繁荣。其间，优秀作家代有人出，优秀作品积藏极富，对世界文学影响之深之广自不可胜言。美国文学继承与发展了英国文学，按文学评论界的一般定论，不算其殖民主义时期的文学，真正始于19世纪。但它生机勃勃迅即异军突起，很快迎来了文学上的黄金时期，特别是在本世纪高度发展的资本主义种种矛盾与精神危机的推动之下，涌现出许多重要的作家、作品和流派，同样也产生了世界性的影响。因此，英美文学是世界文学宝库的重要组成部分，为世界文学的发展和繁荣作出了巨大的贡献。

本书是《英文名篇鉴赏金库》丛书的小说卷。那么，何种小说当得上“名篇”之称呢？有些出版时轰动一时，但过后不久即销声匿迹的过眼云烟之作当然不能算是“名篇”。有些小说或因服膺于政治，或因趋附于时尚，掀起过阵阵“喧哗与骚动”，但风云变幻或时过境迁之后即归于沉寂终至湮没无闻。这样的作品自然也称不上名篇。名篇当为传世之作，应是留给后世的一份宝贵的文化遗产。它经得起时间和风云的考验，既有鲜明的时代性却又超越了时代，如

同莎士比亚一样,是“属于所有时代的”。英美文学浩如烟海,其中够称得上名篇的小说虽然为数不多,但也绝非一两册选本所能包容的。因此,我们在确定选目时也颇为踌躇颇费思量。

本书的编写旨在尝鼎一脔,希望读者通过一些著名篇章,特别是英文原著的阅读,能够领略英美小说独特的魅力,获得愉悦心灵的审美感受。为此,我们在编选名家名作的大前提下,首先考虑的一个因素是作品的可读性。比如,英国意识流艺术大师詹姆斯·乔伊斯一生所发表的杰作中,其艺术价值之高、学术价值之大以及对后世影响之深的作品,莫过于往往被赞为“英语文学丰富遗产中一部最伟大的小说”(桑顿:《尤利西斯》中译本序)的巨著《尤利西斯》了。但作者在该书中运用的许多创造性的文学手段,晦涩难懂的词语、典故与意象却非一般缺乏深厚的西方文化背景知识的读者所能领会与欣赏。而作者的另一部杰作《一个青年艺术家的画像》既具备了乔伊斯的基本艺术特色而又在读者可以欣赏的能力范围之内,于是我们就舍前者而取后者了。

在确定选目时,我们不得不考虑的另一个因素是篇幅。凡一位作家的佳作名篇中既有长篇小说也有短篇小说的,我们一律选用了短篇。这样,既可保持故事的整体完整又节省了篇幅。如马克·吐温、劳伦斯、福克纳和海明威等均选用了他们的短篇小说,尽管他们可能更擅长于也创作了不少不朽的长篇。

此外,我们在选目时虽力戒喜甘忌辛好丹非素之弊,注意了文艺鉴赏的多样,但像所有的选本一样,个人的趣味与偏爱仍会在书中经常流露。比如,曼斯菲尔德的《在海湾》、《玩偶的房子》等诸多脍炙人口的名篇中《花园茶会》能够入选,就因为编者四十多年前在中学时期阅读该故事时曾受到过强烈的心灵震撼,且至今未能忘怀,自然就对之喜爱有加情有独钟了。

本书每篇选文所附的作者简介概要地介绍了作家的生平与主要作品,对作家的艺术风格、创作特色及其在文坛上的影响也略有评论。作品赏析均为个人一得之见,但写作时也阅读参考了大量文献资料,力求扬弃陈议旧论,反映国内外研究英美文学的新成果。注释部分尽可能详略适中。凡有碍读者理解的则加注,但一般工具书能查到的词语、成语或典故等都不另加注了。

最后还要说明的是本书虽可用作学习英美文学史的伴随读物,但其目的不在宏观地介绍英美文学的概貌,因而对英美文学的史实,各个不同文艺时期与文艺思潮等就不作刻意的描述了。所选作品也仅按其发表的年代顺序编排而对其他因素一概不予考虑。

由于编者水平所限,尽管已尽了努力,所选篇目仍会有不当之处,评论与注释中也肯定存在不少缺点和错误,谨请同仁与读者不吝批评指正。

1998年8月于天津

前

言

目

录

Edgar Allan Poe 埃德加·爱伦·坡[美]	
.....	(1)
The Fall of the House of Usher	
《厄谢尔古邸的崩溃》.....	(2)
Charlotte Brontë 夏洛蒂·勃朗特[英]	
.....	(27)
Jane Eyre 《简·爱》.....	(28)
Herman Melville 赫尔曼·梅尔维尔[美]	
.....	(44)
Moby Dick 《白鲸莫比·狄克》.....	(46)
Charles Dickens 查尔斯·狄更斯[英]	
.....	(80)
A Tale of Two Cities《双城记》	
.....	(81)
Mark Twain 马克·吐温[美].....	(89)
The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County	
《卡拉维拉县有名的跳蛙》.....	(90)
Henry James 亨利·詹姆斯[美]	
.....	(102)

The Portrait of a Lady 《淑女画像》	(103)
Thomas Hardy 托马斯·哈代[英]	(119)
Jude the Obscure 《无名的裘德》	(121)
James Joyce 詹姆斯·乔伊斯[英]	(144)
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man 《一个青年艺术家的画像》	(146)
Katherine Mansfield 凯瑟琳·曼斯菲尔德[新]	(176)
The Garden-Party 《花园茶会》	(177)
D. H. Lawrence 戴·赫·劳伦斯[英]	(196)
The Horse Dealer's Daughter 《马贩子的女儿》	(197)
Virginia Woolf 弗吉尼亚·沃尔夫[英]	(219)
Mrs Dalloway 《达罗卫夫人》	(221)
F. Scott Fitzgerald 弗·斯科特·菲茨杰拉德[美]	(233)
The Great Gatsby 《了不起的盖茨比》	(235)

William Faulkner 威廉·福克纳[美]	
.....	(255)
A Rose for Miss Emily 《献给爱米丽小姐的 一朵玫瑰》	(256)
Ernest Hemingway 欧内斯特·海明威[美]	
.....	(270)
The Snows of Kilimanjaro《乞力马扎罗的雪》	
.....	(271)
Graham Greene 格雷厄姆·格林[英]	
.....	(301)
Brighton Rock 《布莱顿棒糖》	
.....	(303)
Saul Bellow 索尔·贝洛[美]	(324)
Looking for Mr. Green 《寻找格林先生》	
.....	(325)
Ralph Ellison 拉尔夫·埃利森[美]	
.....	(353)
Invisible Man 《看不见的人》	(354)
William Golding 威廉·戈尔丁[英]	
.....	(377)
The Lord of Flies 《蝇王》	(379)
Joseph Heller 约瑟夫·海勒[美]	
.....	(420)
Catch-22 《第二十二条军规》	(422)

Edgar Allan Poe

埃德加·爱伦·坡

(1809~1849)

19世纪美国诗人、短篇小说家和文学评论家。1809年1月19日生于波士顿，父母是流浪艺人。他幼失怙恃，两岁时被里士满烟草商爱伦收养。1815年随爱伦夫妇赴英国。1820年举家返回里士满。17岁入弗吉尼亚大学，因欠下大量赌债，不到一年即被养父停学。后化名入伍，并在养父帮助下进入西点军校，但终因不惯军校生活故意犯规而被开除。之后，他与养父彻底决裂。1827年，爱伦·坡出版了第一本诗集，时年18岁。1829年和1831年又出版了两本诗集，但为维持生计，他开始创作短篇小说。1833年，他的《瓶中发现的手稿》(*MS Found in a Bottle*)发表，获优秀短篇小说奖。后应聘先后担任几家杂志的编辑，同时继续写诗、小说和文学评论。爱伦·坡一生命运乖蹇，常有怀才不遇之恨，都悒寡欢，嗜酒成僻。1835年，他与体弱多病、年仅13岁的表妹弗吉尼亚结婚。1847年，弗吉尼亚病逝，受到巨大打击的他变得更加乖戾，精神近乎失常。1849年，他因公去费城，途中昏倒在巴尔的摩街上，4天后在谵妄中去世，年仅40岁。

肖伯纳曾声称：“美国出了两个伟大的作家：埃德加·爱伦·坡和马克·吐温”。他还盛赞坡在小说、诗歌和文学评论三个领域内都取得了卓越的成就。

坡提出的飘忽不定 (indefiniteness) 乃是诗歌要素等理论被法国象征派诗人奉为经典。他的“单一效果”(Single Effect) 等理论对作为特殊文学种类的短篇小说的形成和发展起着巨大的作用。他是举世公认的美国短篇小说的开拓者。他的小说多以死亡、复仇、犯罪、转生等为题材,设想怪诞,情节离奇,有的还富于推理,因而他常被视为侦探小说的鼻祖。他着意刻划人的精神世界,尤其是犯罪心理或变态心理,其特点,如他自己所说,在于“把滑稽提高到怪诞,把害怕发展到恐惧,把机智夸大成嘲弄,把奇特变成怪异和神秘。”他文笔讲究,善于调动一切因素,制造意境、渲染气氛,达到他所预期的“单一效果”。他的小说对世界各国许多作家如凡尔纳、斯蒂文生、王尔德都产生过巨大影响。尽管由于他的唯美主义文艺观和作品中明显的颓废情绪,我国有人把他称为“欧美文学中的逆流”,但爱伦·坡在西方文学中的不朽地位是不容置疑的。

The Fall of the House of Usher

厄谢尔古邸的崩溃

*Son cœur est un luth suspendu ;
sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne¹.*

—De Béranger²

DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eyelike windows, upon a few rank sedges, and up-

on a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium³: the bitter lapse into everyday life, the hideous dropping off of the veil⁴. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea. I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn⁵ that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness, of a mental disorder which oppressed him, and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society⁶, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room

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for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind⁷, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stern⁸ of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was⁹, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch¹⁰; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent¹¹, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain¹². It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people¹³, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other¹⁴—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue¹⁵, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name¹⁶, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”¹⁷—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment, that of looking down within the tarn, had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a

strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity: an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn; a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled webwork from eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the *studio* of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my

infancy—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé man of the world*¹⁸. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison, lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of

moral energy¹⁹, hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque⁴ expression with any idea of simple humanity²⁰.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence, an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy, an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection²¹, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of the narration had their weight²². He suffered much from a

morbid acuteness of the senses²³; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which 'did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave²⁴. 'I shall perish,' said he, 'I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved—in this pitiable condition, I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.'

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose suppositious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness, indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution, of a tenderly beloved sister—his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. 'Her decease,' he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, 'would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.' While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she