

[美] E·B·怀特 著 任溶溶 译

Charlotte's Web

· 英汉双语珍藏本 ·

夏洛的网

Charlotte's Web



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上海译文出版社

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导读

好书

严 锋



有一本书，叫《夏洛的网》，是美国人E·B·怀特写的，在中国知道的人不算太多，喜欢的人却不少。

我第一次读到这本书是在一九七九年初夏的时候。那一年，我上初三，被升学考试压得昏头涨脑，有一天偶然到久违了的市图书馆去逛逛，发现那里竟然腾出一层楼面，新辟为“少年图书馆”，专为初中以下的读者服务。我头一热，就当场办了一张证进去了。这多少有点奇怪，因为我不太记得自己有什么少年儿童时期，从小学四年级开始，手头便拥有市图书馆的正式借书证，而且几乎从来不看“成人读物”以外的东西。根本就不屑看。偏偏在我行将告别少年的时候，会跑到一个姗姗来迟的“少年图书馆”，这实在要算是一种罕见的缘分，仿佛冥冥之中有一种指引，让我在“少年”的最后两个月里，终于读到了少年应该读的，并且可以读一辈子的东西。

印象当中，在“少年图书馆”里，大概前后就只借过这一本书。两

个月以后我就读高中了，基本上和图书馆就断绝了来往。不过，套用一种我们比较习惯的说法，一本书可以顶一万本书。在我以后的有生之年里，大概过两三年我就要把这本书找得来看一遍，好像病人要定期吃药那样。有时候，生活中遇到一些额外不顺心的东西，像失恋啦，或是出国被人挤掉啦，那么就还会额外不定期地服用。服用之后便觉天高日丽，神完气足，心清肺明，好似用光了的蓄电池充足了电，又可以投入到人世间没完没了的损耗中去。

这实在是一本宝书。我觉得在一个理想的世界里，应该只有两种人存在：一种是读过《夏洛的网》的人；另一种是将要读《夏洛的网》的人。有时候，半夜里醒过来，摸摸胸口还在跳，就会很高兴，因为活着就意味着还能再把《夏洛的网》读一遍，而读《夏洛的网》就意味着还活着。

一天大清早，小姑娘弗恩看到他爸爸阿拉布尔手里拿着把斧头匆匆往外赶去，便问她妈妈这是怎么一回事。阿拉布尔太太告诉她，昨晚家里的老母猪生了一窝小猪，其中有一只必须被“杀掉”。小姑娘一听就急了，赶紧冲出去抢她爸爸的斧头。阿拉布尔先生告诉她，那只小猪先天不足，又瘦又小，恐怕是很难养大。这时，小姑娘说了一句非常精彩的话：“我也又瘦又小，难道也应该被杀掉？”

阿拉布尔先生让步了，弗恩独力喂养这只小猪，并为它取名威尔伯。可是弗恩还不算是这本书的主角。养到五个星期的时候，威尔伯已经太大，弗恩也养不了它了，于是听从阿拉布尔先生的劝告，六个

美元把威尔伯卖到了附近农场的她舅舅朱克曼家的谷仓里，这样她还可以经常去看望它。

在朱克曼舅舅的谷仓里，威尔伯一天到晚吃吃喝喝，晒晒太阳，感到很满足。就当它开始变得膘肥体壮的时候，旁边的鹅、羊、马、牛以过来人的身份发出了盛世危言。它们明确地指出，威尔伯的未来就是圣诞节的火腿。威尔伯吓坏了，在大家的怂恿下，它盲目地进行了一次逃亡，结果当然是失败。它又被关回了谷仓，当夜晚来临的时候，威尔伯躺在烂泥里，闻着它熟悉而又喜爱的臭哄哄的味道，想着过去的幸福生活，想着迫在眉睫的悲惨结局，忍不住悲从中来，哭成了个泪人儿。“我不想死啊，我不想死啊！”可是又有谁能救得了它呢？猪的命运难道不就是那样吗？

就在恨意绵绵而又万念俱灰的一刹那，从谷仓的黑暗中传来了一个清朗的声音：“你不会死的。”

我真的记不得我看了多少遍《夏洛的网》了，我熟知那里的每一个细节。可是，每次当我再听到这个黑暗中的坚定的声音的时候，还是忍不住头皮发麻，热泪盈眶。这是（发生在谷仓里的）伟大的一瞬间，就像上帝在说：“要有光。”

但是这里却并没有什么上帝，而是一只叫作夏洛的蜘蛛。夏洛答应威尔伯，她一定会想办法拯救它的生命。夏洛说了一句我们每个人都应该记住的话：

“我可以做你的朋友，我喜欢你。睡觉吧。明天早晨你就看见我了。”

一开始，夏洛老实承认自己还没有具体的计划，但是它会在每天穿梭织网的时候不停地思考。最后，聪明的夏洛终于想出了一个绝妙的办法。亲爱的朋友，如果您是一只蜘蛛，如果您也想去拯救一头可爱的小猪，您会怎么做呢？您能有切实可行的计划吗？至于我，苦思冥想了很多年，所有想出来的办法都比不上夏洛的好。

朱克曼家的帮工勒维在早晨来到谷仓，倒完猪食后，他抬头一看，猪食槽上方有个大大的蜘蛛网，网上明确无误地结着几个大字：“王牌猪”（SOME PIG）。

消息顿时传遍了乡里，威尔伯成了一头名猪。来参观的人络绎不绝，朱克曼一家乐开了花。名气确实不是一件坏事情，至少对猪来说是如此，但是威尔伯的命运仍然在空中飘荡。在一个贪吃的老鼠坦普尔顿很不情愿的帮助下，夏洛用它的网上艺术对威尔伯的名声层层加码，连续推出“了不起”（TERRIFIC）、“光彩照人”（RADIANT）等光辉字眼。最后，威尔伯参加了当地的农业博览会，在危急关头，已经衰老的夏洛，使尽全身的力气，用一个即兴发挥的“谦卑”（HUMBLE）把临阵怯场的威尔伯推上了金奖的宝座和名声的顶点，从而彻底地化解了威尔伯的性命问题。当胜利的消息传来，也是夏洛自觉衰老将亡的一刻，故事在此达到最高潮。

夏洛和威尔伯最后的对话简单中见真诚，感人至深：

“夏洛，”威尔伯停了一会儿说，“你为什么这样安静啊？”“我喜欢一动不动地坐着，”它说，“我一向就是十分安静。”“不过你今天好像特别安静，你没事吧？”“也许有点累，不过我觉得很平静。你今天上午在圆围栏里的成功，在很小的程度上也是我的成功。你的未来有保证了。你会活下去，安然无恙，威尔伯。现在没有什么能伤害你了。秋天的白昼要变短，天气要变冷。树叶要从树上飘落。圣诞节于是到了，接下来就下大雪。你将活下来欣赏冰天雪地的美景，因为你对朱克曼先生来说太重要了，他怎么也不会伤害你。冬天会过去，白昼又变长，牧场池塘的冰要融化。北美歌雀将回来唱歌，青蛙将醒来，和暖的风又会吹起。所有这些景物、声音和香气都是供你享受的。威尔伯……噢，这个美好的世界，这些珍贵的日子……”夏洛说着说着停了下来。

夏洛缓慢而又安静地死去，但是在死以前，除了拯救威尔伯，实现了自己对朋友的承诺以外，它也完成了自己的一件最重大的作品，一只卵袋，里面安安稳稳地装着它的五百四十个未来的儿女。威尔伯想尽办法把卵袋带回了农场，到了来年春天，小夏洛们一个个地破囊而出，乘风而去，但还是有三个小蜘蛛愿意留下来陪伴威尔伯，继续它们的母亲和威尔伯的友谊。

一开始的时候，因为无知，我还以为作者怀特是个无名之辈，后来慢慢地收集了一些他的资料，才知道不那么简单。怀特写的儿童文学只

有三部，除了《夏洛的网》以外，还有《精灵鼠小弟》和《吹小号的天鹅》，每一部都是不断再版的经典之作。这一发现着实令我欣喜若狂，但是也有莫名的失落，好像是突然发现自己偷偷暗恋的素面淡装的无名女孩竟然是当红的偶像明星。

从上世纪二十年代开始，怀特为《纽约客》(New Yorker) 和后来的《哈珀斯》(Harpers) 杂志撰写专栏散文，这些散文描写都市人情世态，名气也毫不在怀特的小说之下，至今还不断地结集再版。怀特的散文，一如其小说，朴素，明晰，隽永。这正是他在一九七九年修订的名著《风格的要素》中对文字的要求。

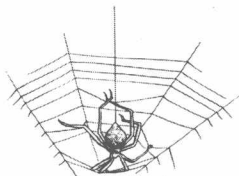
这也正是怀特的生活的风格。他迷恋简单素朴的农村生活。他的一生，有很大一部分光阴是在乡间渡过。怀特是养猪的好手，《夏洛的网》写的很大一部分就是他自己的生活，夏洛是真有其蛛，整个故事的源起也就在怀特拎着一桶猪食走向威尔伯的路上。在一篇谈自己创作的文章里，怀特写道：“对一个喜爱动物的人来说，农场也是一个恼人的地方，因为绝大多数的牲畜的恩养者，同时也就是它们的谋杀者。牲口们平静地生活，却可怕地暴然死去，命运的不祥之音始终在它们耳际回荡。我养了一些猪，春天下的崽，我喂了它们一个夏天，一个秋天。这种情形令我苦恼。我和我的猪一天天地熟识，它们也一样。”最后，在《夏洛的网》里，怀特下决心要拯救一头小猪的性命。

拯救一头小猪的性命有意义吗？我想，和拯救大兵瑞恩的意义应该是一样的吧。

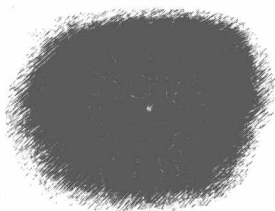
不过，从我第一次读《夏洛的网》到现在，已经有二十多年过去了，可是我一直都没能搞明白，这部“儿童文学”何以能够如此长久地令我着迷。这种着迷到最后已经成了一种偏执。我以传教般的热情把它推荐给自己所认识的每一个人，并且非常紧张地等待对方的反应，如果他们说好，我就会大大增加对他们的好感，如果对方反应平平，我就会掉头而去。我当然也记得我遇见的第一个自己在少年时期就读过《夏洛的网》的人，如今的著名学者包亚明先生。那还是刚上大学的时候，彼此还比较陌生，可是无意中谈及自己最喜爱的书，竟然都是《夏洛的网》，那种又惊又喜，相见恨晚的感觉，实在是难以言表。不用说，包君当场就成了我终身的朋友。

张伟在《柏慧》里提出了一个引起争议的看法，认为世界上所有的好人可能过去都是一个族里的，具有某种血缘的联系，后来因为某种原因而失散于世界各地。我觉得这种观点有点意思，想补充的是：这些好人们在联络的时候，会相互间说一些暗号，而《夏洛的网》就是暗号之一。就像《智取威虎山》里面对那种天王盖地虎式的切口一样，一个人说一声“王牌猪”，另一个人对一个“光彩照人”，相互就能够相视而笑，莫逆于心。

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1.

Before Breakfast

‘**W**here’s Papa going with that axe?’ said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

‘Out to the hoghouse,’ replied Mrs Arable. ‘Some pigs were born last night.’

‘I don’t see why he needs an axe,’ continued Fern, who was only eight.

‘Well,’ said her mother, ‘one of the pigs is a runt. It’s very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it.’

‘Do away with it?’ shrieked Fern. ‘You mean *kill* it? Just because it’s smaller than the others?’

Mrs Arable put a pitcher of cream on the table. ‘Don’t yell, Fern!’ she said. ‘Your father is right. The pig would probably die anyway.’

Fern pushed a chair out of the way, and ran outdoors. The grass was wet and the earth smelled of springtime. Fern’s sneakers were sopping by the time she caught up with her father.

‘Please don’t kill it!’ she sobbed. ‘It’s unfair.’

Mr Arable stopped walking.

'Fern,' he said gently, 'you will have to learn to control yourself.'

'Control myself?' yelled Fern. 'This is a matter of life and death, and you talk about *controlling* myself.' Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the axe and tried to pull it out of her father's hand.

'Fern,' said Mr Arable, 'I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weaking makes trouble. Now run along!'

'But it's unfair,' cried Fern. 'The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If *I* had been very small at birth, would you have killed *me*?'

Mr Arable smiled. 'Certainly not,' he said, looking down at his daughter with love. 'But this is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another.'

'I see no difference,' replied Fern, still hanging on to the axe. 'This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of.'

A queer look came over John Arable's face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself.

'All right,' he said. 'You go back to the house and I will bring the runt when I come in. I'll let you raise it on a bottle, like a baby. Then you'll see what trouble a pig can be.'

When Mr Arable returned to the house half an hour later, he carried a carton under his arm. Fern was upstairs changing her sneakers. The kitchen table was set for breakfast, and the room smelt of coffee, bacon, damp plaster, and wood-smoke from the stove.

'Put it on her chair!' said Mrs Arable. Mr Arable set the carton down at Fern's place. Then he walked to the sink and washed his hands and dried them on the roller towel.

Fern came slowly down the stairs. Her eyes were red from crying. As she approached her chair, the carton wobbled, and there was a scratching noise. Fern looked at her father. Then she lifted the lid of the carton. There, inside, looking up at her, was the newborn pig. It was a white one. The morning light shone through its ears, turning them pink.

'He's yours,' said Mr Arable. 'Saved from an untimely death. And may the good Lord forgive me for this foolishness.'

Fern couldn't take her eyes off the tiny pig. 'Oh,' she whispered. 'Oh, look at him! He's absolutely perfect.'

She closed the carton carefully. First she kissed her father, then she kissed her mother. Then she opened the lid again, lifted the pig out, and held it against her cheek. At this moment her brother Avery came into the room. Avery was ten. He was heavily armed — an air rifle in one hand, a wooden dagger in the other.

'What's that?' he demanded. 'What's Fern got?'

'She's got a guest for breakfast,' said Mrs Arable. 'Wash your hands and face, Avery!'

'Let's see it!' said Avery, setting his gun down. 'You call that miserable thing a pig? That's a fine specimen of a pig — it's no bigger than a white rat.'

'Wash up and eat your breakfast, Avery!' said his mother. 'The school bus will be along in half an hour.'



‘Can I have a pig too, Pop?’ asked Avery.

‘No, I only distribute pigs to early risers,’ said Mr Arable. ‘Fern was up at daylight, trying to rid the world of injustice. As a result, she now has a pig. A small one, to be sure, but nevertheless a pig. It just shows what can happen if a person gets out of bed promptly. Let’s eat!’

But Fern couldn’t eat until her pig had had a drink of milk. Mrs Arable found a baby’s nursing bottle and a rubber nipple. She poured warm milk into the bottle, fitted the nipple over the top, and handed it to Fern. ‘Give him his breakfast!’ she said.



A minute later, Fern was seated on the floor in the corner of the kitchen with her infant between her knees, teaching it to suck from the bottle. The pig, although tiny, had a good appetite and caught on quickly.

The school bus honked from the road.

'Run!' commanded Mrs Arable, taking the pig from Fern and slipping a doughnut into her hand. Avery grabbed his gun and another doughnut.

The children ran out to the road and climbed into the bus. Fern took no notice of the others in the bus. She just sat and