

王守仁 刘玉红 赵 宇◎编著

英美短篇小说

*British and American
Short Stories*

南京大学出版社



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1. 主题(Theme)

我们读了一篇小说,常常会谈到它讲的是什么意思。这个“意思”就是主题,它是作者通过作品的内容和形式表现出来的中心思想,是对故事主旨的概括性陈述。主题是作品的轴心,情节的构建、人物的塑造、基调的确立、风格的选取都以它为导向。小说的主题是客观的,因为它所涉及的情节是一种客观存在;同时又是主观的,因为每个读者的经验和感受都是独一无二的,对同一故事的理解就会见仁见智,所谓“一千个读者就有一千个哈姆雷特”。小说主题的这一双重性说明读解作品没有唯一“正确的”方法,同时读者也不能武断地天马行空,把自己的思想强加给作品,只能解释作品作为一个整体所表现出的含义。

传统故事往往传递一个明确的主题思想,最典型的例子是寓言故事,例如伊索寓言表面讲的是动物的故事,在结尾处则以一句道德说教点明主旨:

狐狸和葡萄

饥饿的狐狸看见葡萄架上挂着一串串晶莹剔透的葡萄,口水直流,想要摘下来吃,但又够不着。它看了一会儿,无可奈何地走了,边走边自我安慰道:“这葡萄没有熟,肯定是酸的。”

这故事是说,有些人对自己得不到的东西,就说它不好。

在现代小说中,主题很少如此鲜明直白,许多作品和寓言故事讲的是同样的道理,但讲述的方式充满艺术性,隐晦曲折,需要读者用心去琢磨。有些作品情节看似简单,主题却会有多重读解。威廉·卡洛斯·威廉姆斯的《暴力的使用》情节简单:一个医生去给一个小女孩看病,强迫她张开嘴,以便进行检查,却遭到小女孩的激烈反抗。但它的主题思想很丰富。我们可以说,这个故事讲的是“盲目的拒绝源于恐惧和无知”。也可以说“使用暴力有时是必要的,但会产生负面影响”。也可以说“使用暴力可以打败一个人的肉体,但无法征服他的思想”。这些读解也许不是百分之百的准确,但各有道理。和《暴力的使用》相比,凯瑟琳·曼斯菲尔德的《苍蝇》情节更为单一:一个公司老板把自己关在办公室里,用墨水折磨一只苍蝇,直到它死去。由于作者特别善于以看似单薄的情节来刻画人物内心,进而反映社会现实,也因为极少说明创作意图,因而常引起众说纷纭。有人认为这反映了常年为疾患所困的作者对生命的悲观态度。有人认为老板因儿子死于战场而无法自拔,这是对残酷的战争的批判,表现了反战主题。还有人认为这个故事体现了“人生而必死”的存在主义思想。小说本身提供了多种读解的可能性,让读者去思考、回味,而文学作品的魅力就在于多义性,在于激发人的思考。我们在陈述故事主题时,应避免简单化,努力表达其蕴含的意味。故事主旨太直白,就如一杯白开水,读来淡而无味;多义性虽然给阅读带来一定挑战性,但却能带来思考的愉悦,同时能磨砺心智,启迪思想。

我们在讨论短篇小说的主题时,尤其要关注细节。故事是具体的,主题是概括性的,是对细节的抽象总结。如此,思考主题就成了一种读解行为,我们不仅要仔细寻找有意义的细节,而且要跳出作品,进入抽象思维的境界。关注细节可以从篇名、人物姓名、重复出现的词语、有特别意义的动物或景物入手,这些都很可能是用来体现主题思想的手段。如《被抛弃的韦罗瑟尔奶奶》中“韦罗瑟尔”(Weatherall)这个名字意为“饱经沧桑”,加上“抛弃”(jilting),我们可以预想这是一个关于女性生活艰辛的故事。主题作为中心思想,是连接作品各部分的纽带,作家会围绕

主题选择和安排细节。读者掌握了主题,对普通平常的细节也会赋予新的意义,或在原本孤立的细节之间建立起联系。同时,主题的表述应该是适用于整个作品,而不是仅仅适用于作品的个别细节。

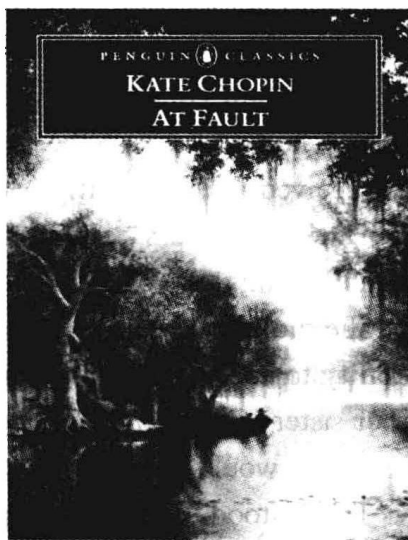
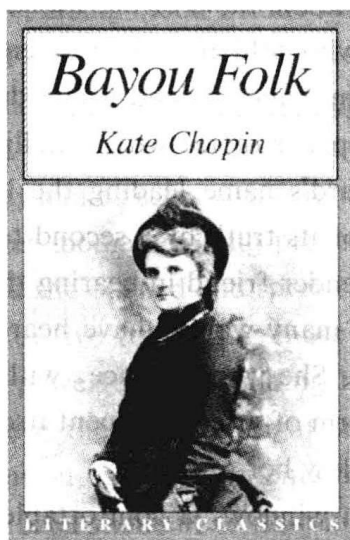
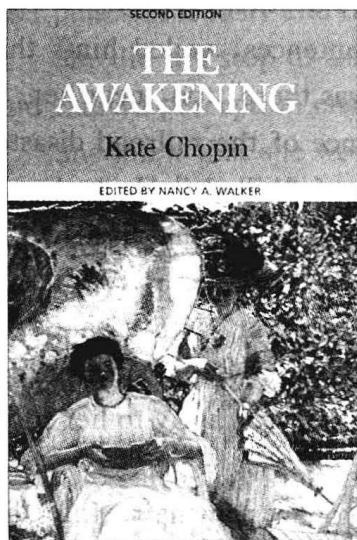
Kate Chopin (1850—1904)

作者简介

凯特·肖邦(Kate Chopin, 1850—1904)出生在美国密苏里州圣路易斯市。父亲是一位成功的商人,母亲是当地法国人社区的积极分子。肖邦5岁时父亲死于火车事故,此后她一直生活在母亲家族的法国文化背景中,深受其影响。肖邦21岁嫁给法国后裔的商人,在新奥尔良定居,育有六个子女。1882年丈夫染病去世,留下12 000美元债务,她独自经营丈夫留下的农场和商店。1884年母亲去世,这使肖邦不但生活艰辛,而且陷入了精神崩溃状态。在家庭医生的建议下,肖邦决定以写作来增加收入,同时缓解精神压力。从此她开始了短暂但颇有成就的文学创作生涯。但是,写作并未给肖邦带来多少收入,她主要靠在路易斯安那州和圣路易斯市的投资来维持生计。1904年肖邦因脑溢血去世,享年54岁。



文学创作



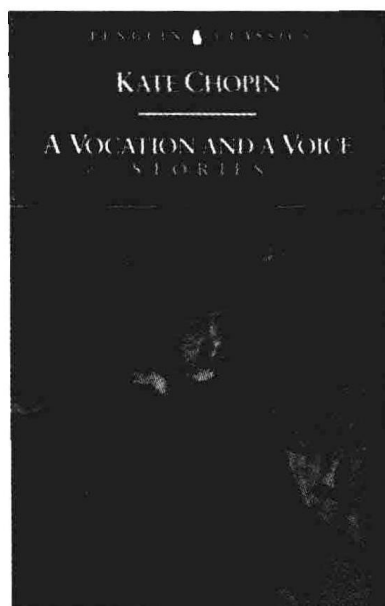
肖邦一生创作了两部长篇小说:《过失》(*At Fault*, 1890)和《觉醒》(*The Awakening*, 1899),和大量的短篇小说,共有100多篇,收入三部集子中:《牛轭湖的人们》(*Bayou Folk*, 1894)、《在阿卡迪的一夜》(*A Night In Acadie*, 1897)和《职业和声音》(*A Vocation and a Voice*, 1961)。因长期生活在法语文化的氛围中,肖邦大部分作品描写的都是新奥尔良和路易斯安纳州中部的风土人情,以及当地法国人后裔的生活和文化传统,这使她成为一位地方色彩小说家。

肖邦最著名的作品是《觉醒》。女主人公埃德娜不甘扮演贤妻良母的角色,大胆追求自由,在无法解决自我和道义的冲突后,她跳海自杀,以死来维护心所向往的独立与自由。《觉醒》因

大胆表达女性情欲而在当时被斥为有伤风化。埃德娜的死揭示了男性社会对女性的压抑,这一人物反映出肖邦超前于时代的思想。

肖邦的短篇小说主题丰富,除了反映女性的追求与社会现实之间的冲突,还有种族问题,这方面的名篇是《德西蕾的孩子》(“*Désirée’s Baby*”)。弃婴德西蕾为一富裕家庭所收养,长大后嫁给当地的有钱人阿曼德,生了个黑男孩。阿曼德怀疑妻子是黑人,将其赶出家门,德西蕾抱着儿子投河自尽。阿曼德后来意外发现有黑人血统的原来不是妻子,而是自己。反讽是这篇小说最突出的手法:丈夫以为自己是白人,非常骄傲,到头来却发现自己是黑奴的儿子。种族歧视终于导致家破人亡。

《觉醒》问世后招来始料不及的谴责声,肖邦逐渐被批评界遗忘。20世纪60年代末、70年代初,肖邦的独特性和创造性得到重新评价。现在她已经是公认的美国文学史上一位重要的妇女小说家。



作 品

Story of an Hour

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences, veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall^[1] any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler^[2] was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was

[1] forestall: 预先阻止。

[2] peddler: 沿街叫卖的小贩。

singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves^{〔1〕}.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke^{〔2〕} repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously^{〔3〕}. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose^{〔4〕} a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.^{〔5〕}

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-

〔1〕 eaves: 屋檐, 房檐。

〔2〕 bespoke: 显示。

〔3〕 tumultuously: 剧烈地。

〔4〕 impose: 强加。

〔5〕 A kind intention... brief moment of illumination. 她在顿悟的那一刻明白了, 无论是出于善意还是恶意, 这种将个人意志强加于人的做法不亚于一种犯罪。

assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir^{〔1〕} of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities^{〔2〕}. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack^{〔3〕} and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one.

He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

1894

赏 析

《一个小时的故事》是肖邦最著名的短篇小说，作品表达的女性主义思想引起评论家的注意。一般认为，从作者当时所处的社会环境、马拉德夫人对自由的热切渴望和为之而死来看，该短篇小说批判了男权（夫权）对妇女的压迫。19世纪末的美国在法律上和经济上赋予丈夫控制妻子的权力，做贤妻良母和顺从丈夫是女人的本份。她们没有自我，只是别人的母亲、妻子、女儿、情妇。马拉德先生似乎爱妻子，夫妻关系也不错，但是马拉德夫人对丈夫的爱几乎没有什么回应，相反，她对未来没有丈夫的生活感到兴奋，因为“将不会有强大的意志在盲目地坚持中来折弯她的意志，怀有这种意志的男男女女相信，他们有权力把个人的意志强加于其他人。她在顿悟的那一刻明白了，无论是出于善意还是恶意，这种将个人意志强加于他人的做法不亚于一种犯罪。”由此可见，丈夫对妻子的爱实际上是以自己主观、武断的爱来剥夺妻子的意志，这也是一种暴力。

作者用象征、衬托、反讽等多种手法来描写马拉德夫人情感由悲到喜，由喜到崩溃的过程。

〔1〕 elixir: 灵丹妙药。

〔2〕 importunities: 纠缠不休地再三要求，强求。

〔3〕 grip-sack: 手提包，旅行包。

如“heart trouble”是指心脏有病,同时暗示女主人公在感情上出了问题。马拉德夫人在卧室里看到的窗外春景衬托并暗示了她自我意识的觉醒。结尾医生说她死于过度高兴,其实她是死于极度的失望。

小说的女性主义思想不但表现在情节的构筑上,而且体现在三对空间中,楼上/楼下,窗内/窗外,门里/门外。相对于楼上的卧室,楼下是个公共空间,马拉德夫人的悲伤表现符合妻子这个社会身份。一旦进到卧室这个属于自己的空间里,她就成了追求自由的独立女性。窗外的春景和盎然的生机,反衬窗内人生活的压抑,暗示未来生活的美好。相比之下,门内/门外的对比非常简略,但不失深意。门内是真正的自我,门外是以亲人为代表的外部世界,空间的隔离暗示亲人尽管关心马拉德夫人,但并不理解她内心的渴望。

《一个小时的故事》不像肖邦其他作品有明显的地方色彩,但它语言简洁,字词精挑细选,意象鲜明生动,情节层层细心铺垫,处处隐含深意,富于讽刺意味的开放性结尾读后令人回味。

相关评论

Fatal Self-Assertion^[1] in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

Lawrence L. Berkove

Kate Chopin's thousand-word short story, "The Story of an Hour," has understandably become a favorite selection for collections of short stories as well as for anthologies of American literature. Few other stories say so much in so few words. There has been, moreover, virtual critical agreement on what the story says: its heroine dies, ironically and tragically, just as she has been freed from a constricting marriage and has realized self-assertion as the deepest element of her being. Confidence in this interpretation, however, may be misplaced, for using the standard proposed for the story by Toth and Seyersted—"every detail contributes to the emotional impact"—there is evidence of a deeper level of irony in the story which does not regard Louise Mallard as a heroine but as an immature egotist^[2] and a victim of her own extreme self-assertion. This self-assertion is achieved not by reflection but, on the contrary, by "a suspension of intelligent thought" masked as "illumination." As a result, a pattern of basic contradictions and abnormal attitudes emerges which gives structure to the story and forecasts its conclusion. The key to recognizing this deeper, ironic level is to carefully distinguish between the story's narrator, author, and unreliable protagonist.

Seyersted's early biography of Chopin describes the story neutrally as "an extreme example of the theme of self-assertion." More recent interpretation has largely followed a strong, and at times an extreme, feminist bent. Representative of this in both approach and language is Emily Toth's well-known characterization of the story as one of Chopin's "most radical ... an attack on marriage, on one person's dominance over another." Toth further elaborates this position in a later article in which she comments

[1] self-assertion: 自我坚持, 自我要求。

[2] egotist: 自我主义者。

that “Although Louise’s death is an occasion for deep irony directed at patriarchal blindness about women’s thoughts, Louise dies in the world of her family where she has always sacrificed for others.” Ewell similarly sees in the story’s “surfaces” Louise’s struggle for selfhood against “society’s decree” for female “selflessness, being for others.”

But in the text of this very short story there is no hard evidence whatsoever of patriarchal blindness or suppression, constant or selfless sacrifice by Louise, or an ongoing struggle for selfhood. These positions are all read into the story from non-textual assumptions. The simple truth is that this story is not about society or marriage, but about Louise Mallard. The single possible reference in the text to difficulties in her life is a sentence, which says that the lines of her face “bespoke repression and a certain strength.” It is not at all clear, however, what the cause of that “repression” was; whether, for instance, it might have been external, in society or in her marriage, or whether it was internal, a recognition that it takes strength to control one’s feelings or whims. Such few hints as the story supplies incline toward the latter position. While the text enables us to make certain inferences about Louise, it does not supply us with any information about the truth of her life except her perceptions, and these, as I intend to show, are unreliable and, insofar as they are taken as the statements of the story’s omniscient^[1] narrator, misleading and contradicted by other textual evidence.

Support for this position is spread throughout the story but the most dramatic elements appear in the following three paragraphs:

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

In these paragraphs, the story’s omniscient narrator takes us into Louise’s mind. However, while the attitudes expressed are definitely Louise’s there is no textual justification for also ascribing them to the narrator. Further, it would be a mistake to project them onto Chopin, for that would confuse narrator with author, a move that denies Chopin the full range of literary technique, and that would reduce this brilliant and subtle work of fiction to behind-the-scenes sermonizing.

It is significant, in the quotation’s first line, that Louise wishes to “live for

[1] omniscient: 全知的。

herself.” This has been generally understood to imply that she had hitherto^[1] sacrificed herself for her husband; however, there is no evidence for this in the text. Nor is there any evidence that her husband had done her living “for her,” whatever that might mean. It is an *ipse dixit*^[2] comment, arbitrary, without support, one of several she makes.

In the quotation’s second paragraph, Louise discounts^[3] love as secondary to self-assertion. While this is undoubtedly her position, there is no textual reason to assume it is also Chopin’s. Louise also recognizes self-assertion “as the strongest impulse of her being.” This is a peculiar value for a married person and is indeed incompatible with marriage, where an emphasis upon shared goals and mutual commitment is the opposite of self-assertion. The unreasoning self-centeredness of Louise partly explains the first two sentences of the quotation’s second paragraph, and they tell us more about her than about her husband. Of course, even married people who sincerely love each other have occasional disagreements and may not feel much love for the other at particular times. For most lovers this is not so much a contradiction as a paradox; the moments of hate occur within the larger context of love. But the warmest sentiment that Louise can express after being married to a man whose benevolence the previous paragraph explicitly affirms with its description of his “kind, tender hands” and his face “that had never looked save with love upon her” is the niggardly^[4] concession that she had loved him “sometimes.”

It is obvious that there is quite a discrepancy^[5] between the way Louise and Brently Mallard feel about each other, but all the mystery of the difference is on Louise’s side.

Whatever her original reason had been for marrying Brently, it is clear now that feeling the way she does about him she would be better off not being married. Her love for herself—“she would live only for herself”—does not leave room for anyone else. How, then, would she live?

Her justification^[6] for preferring to live for herself, the second and third sentences of the quotation’s first paragraph, are extravagant, unrealistic statements, each segment of which is controversial. She views her husband’s constant love as a “powerful will bending hers in a blind persistence.” Blind? Why is it blind? Inasmuch as^[7] Louise has apparently repressed her true feelings about her husband and marriage, if his love for her is blind it is because she has blinded him. In the absence of open communication about her feelings, how would he know what she wants, or what to do or say? In that circumstance, his persistence, which clearly annoys her, may only be a natural attempt

[1] hitherto;迄今,到目前为止。

[2] *ipse dixit*;〈拉丁语〉武断的言词。

[3] discount;低估;怀疑地看待,不信。

[4] niggardly;极少的,不足的。

[5] discrepancy;差异,不一致。

[6] justification;理由,辩解。

[7] inasmuch as;因为,由于。

on his part to please her and to convince her of his love. The failure of Brently's persistence is due at least in part to Louise's strange view of love—and the wording of the second sentence includes her as well as her husband—as a “crime,” a powerful will that “bends” the other person. This is a distorted view of love, which typically delights in pleasing and giving to the other. Believing love a “crime” cannot be considered a normal attitude, much less an emotionally healthy one.

Source: *American Literary Realism* 32.2 (Winter 2000).

问题与思考

1. What stages of emotional transformation does Mrs. Mallard experience after she receives the news of her husband's death?
2. What do you think really kills Mrs Mallard?
3. What is the function of the scene outside the bedroom window?
4. Analyze the irony in the ending of the story.

阅读链接

1. <http://www.katechopin.org>: 凯特·肖邦国际协会, 包括肖邦的生平介绍、长篇小说《觉醒》和《过失》以及短篇小说的出版情况、主要人物和参考书目等。
2. <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ChoAwak.html> : 可下载电子版《觉醒》。
3. http://books.google.com/books?id=0E9TWXk1d6IC&dq=kate+chopin&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=mHsBrCCyeG&sig=_Tsyod13jSSkIVEOT8EG46yJxAU&hl=en&ei=A0hAS7irE82OkQWH0cDyDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CC0Q6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=&f=false : 可下载电子版《牛轭湖的人们》。

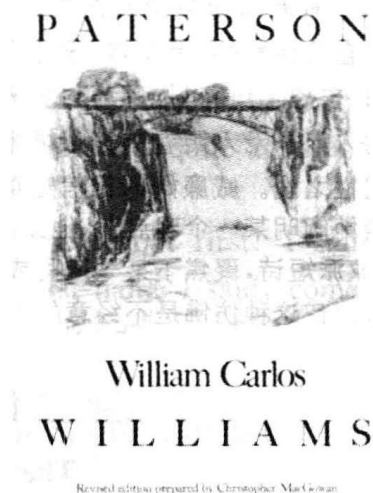
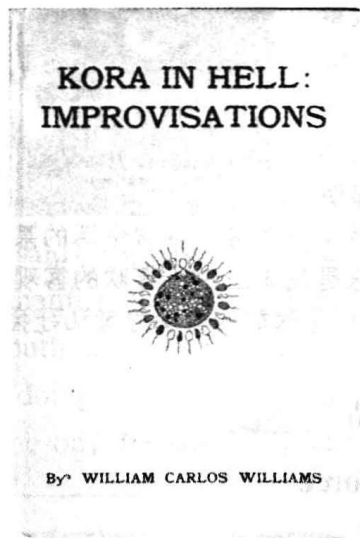
William Carlos Williams (1883—1963)

作者简介

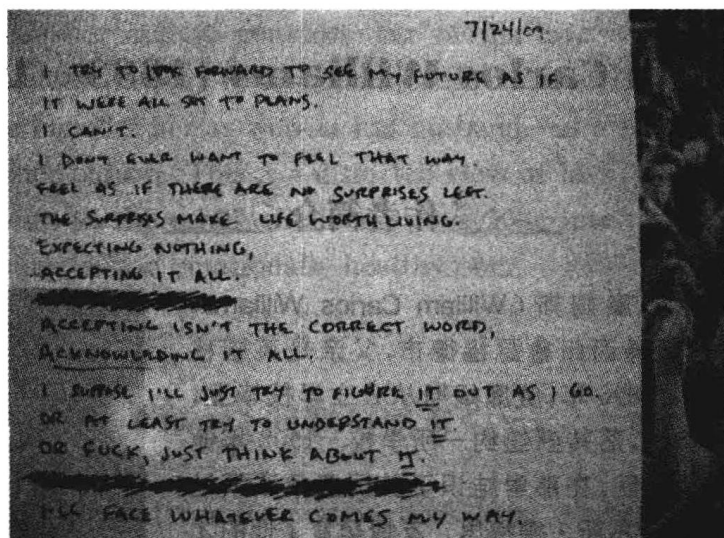
威廉·卡洛斯·威廉姆斯(William Carlos Williams, 1883—1963)生于美国新泽西州鲁瑟福德市,父亲是英国移民,母亲来自波多黎各。1896年,威廉姆斯从公立学校毕业,到瑞士和法国上了两年学,后转到纽约一所学校。1902年他进入宾夕法尼亚大学医学院,在那里结识了美国意象派领袖人物庞德、H. D. 和画家查尔斯·德穆思。友情孕育了他的才思,激发了他对写诗的热情。1906年威廉姆斯获得医学博士学位后,又去德国莱比锡大学深造,1910年返回故乡鲁瑟福德行医。他的医术精良,后来担任帕特森市总医院儿科主治医师。据统计,他在1910到1952年间共接生过2 000多个孩子。威廉姆斯在忙于工作之际,挤出时间创作了大量的散文和诗歌。1948年他心脏病发作,此后健康状况逐渐下降。20世纪50年代他停止行医,全身心投入文学创作。晚年他双目失明,疾病缠身,但仍继续文学创作。1963年3月4日威廉姆斯在家乡去世,享年79岁。



文学创作

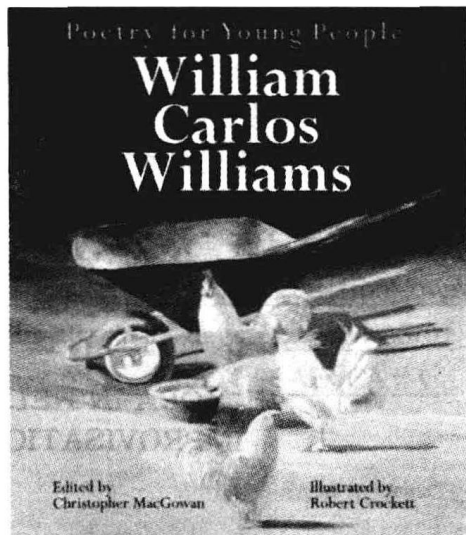


威廉姆斯虽一生行医,但常在看病的间隙记下创作灵感,且笔耕不辍,其创作面涵盖诗歌、小说、剧本和文学评论,是美国当代一位多产而卓有成就的作家。去世那年,他获得了普利策奖。威廉姆斯的诗歌意象生动、用词通俗、短小精悍、节奏明快,名作包括六卷长诗《帕特森》(*Paterson*, 1946—1962)、意象派经典短诗《红色手推车》(*The Red Wheelbarrow*, 1923)、诗歌集《爱之旅》(*Journey to Love*, 1955)等。威廉姆斯坚持用美国本土语言写作,成为美国现代诗歌



的代表,其诗风对 20 世纪的美国诗歌产生了重要影响。威廉姆斯的其他作品包括颇具讽刺和元小说风格的长篇小说《伟大的美国小说》(*The Great American Novel*, 1923),研究美国国民性的历史著述《美国性情》(*In the American Grain*, 1925),反映他敏锐的观察力和内省深度的《自传》(*The Autobiography*, 1951)等。

威廉姆斯共发表了 50 多篇短篇小说,收在《时代之刀》(*The Knife of the Times and Other Stories*, 1932)、《帕塞伊克河沿岸的生活》(*Life along the Passaic River*, 1938)、《蔑视》(*Make Light of It*, 1950)和《农夫的女儿》(*The Farmers' Daughters*, 1961)等故事集中,著名的有《暴力的使用》(“The Use of Force”)、《吉恩·贝基》(“Jean Beicke”)和《一脸粉刺的女孩》(“The Girl with a Pimply Fame”)。威廉姆斯虽爱写医生的故事,但故事题材广泛,如带自传色彩的《黑姑娘》表达了他对黑人女性一贯的钟情;《吉恩·贝基》描写为一个畸形婴儿的验尸过程,揭示穷人孩子无人照看的悲惨境地;而《时代之刀》讲述的是同性之爱。威廉姆斯相信短篇小说能够使作者“充满感情地阐明某一个观点”。他尤其擅长将哲学思考融入日常生活的某个细节中,风格则颇似他的意象派短诗,聚焦于某一速写或片断,笔法是临床医生所喜欢的客观和简洁,用词和语法明白易懂,但在这种仿佛是不经意的冷静记录背后是深刻的哲学思考和社会反思。



作品

The Use of Force

They were new patients to me, all I had was the name, Olson^[1]. Please come down as soon as you can, my daughter is very sick.

When I arrived I was met by the mother, a big startled looking woman, very clean and apologetic who merely said, Is this the doctor? and let me in. In the back, she

[1] Olson: 斯堪的那维亚普通姓氏。