



双语译林

英汉双语对照



美国短篇故事 篇

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125

True Tales from

NPR's National Story Project

Paul Auster

[美国]保罗·奥斯特 主编

巫和雄 译

凤凰出版传媒集团

译林出版社

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国短篇故事 125 篇 / (美) 奥斯特 (Auster, P.) 主编;
巫和雄译. —南京: 译林出版社, 2011. 3

(双语译林)

书名原文: True Tales from NPR's National Story Project

ISBN 978-7-5447-1667-3

I. ①美… II. ①奥… ②巫… III. ①英语-汉语-对照
读物 ②故事-作品集-美国 IV. ①H319.4:I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2011) 第 020503 号

I Thought My Father Was God: And Other True Tales from the
National Story Project by Paul Auster

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书 名	美国短篇故事 125 篇
编 者	[美国] 保罗·奥斯特
译 者	巫和雄
责任编辑	田 智
特约编辑	吴莹莹
原文出版	Henry Holt and Company, 2001
出版发行	凤凰出版传媒集团 译林出版社(南京湖南路 1 号 210009)
电子信箱	yilin@yilin.com
网 址	http://www.yilin.com
集团网址	凤凰出版传媒网 http://www.ppm.cn
印 刷	南通印刷总厂有限公司
开 本	880 × 1230 毫米 1/32
印 张	16
插 页	2
版 次	2011 年 3 月第 1 版 2011 年 3 月第 1 次印刷
书 号	ISBN 978-7-5447-1667-3
定 价	29.80 元

译林版图书若有印装错误可向出版社调换
(电话: 025-83658316)



当信息时代的来临把我们居住的星球变成一个村落时，各国人民之间的交流变得更加简单通畅，也似乎显得越发迫切必要。

对于大洋彼岸的美国，相信国人都不陌生。从好莱坞大片的风行到各种译介书刊的畅销，无不凸显了我们对这个国家的浓厚兴趣。然而，肯德基和麦当劳无法让我们看清美国人的生活习惯，比尔·盖茨也不能代表美国亿万普通百姓。铺天盖地的媒体报道展现在我们面前的往往是一个被加工修饰抑或歪曲变形的形象。就在我们津津乐道于“美国精神”或“美国梦”时，曲解极有可能已经产生。那么，真正的美国应该是什么样子？美国人的喜怒哀乐又是如何表现的？也许他们自己的描述会给我们带来更为准确到位的印象。

本书译自美国作家保罗·奥斯特主编的一本故事集。原作是编者发起的美国“全国故事计划”的征文集,收有 180 篇短篇真实故事,译者从中选出 125 篇,仍按原书体例分为 10 个部分,每个部分集中表现一个主题。这些故事的作者年龄、职业及背景多种多样,男女各半,居住地都市、郊区和乡村都有,遍及 42 个州。文章题材广泛,风格各异,反映了美国社会生活的许多不同侧面。它们中有些是对过往经历的简单复述,有些是对现实生活的哲理反思;有些笔触细腻,颇见文学功底,有些则略显粗糙,甚至不能称之为“文学作品”。但是这些并不重要,编者无意于去发现另一个海明威,他的初衷只是要把这本书变成一座“美国现实的博物馆”,让读者从中尽览凡人万象,体会一丝真切的感动。正如书中一位作者所说,故事也许不够完美,但它绝对是真实的。一百多篇故事就如同一百多块拼图,读者在阅读过程中也许可以拼出一幅鲜活的美国家卷来。

译者在翻译过程中受到许多师长亲友的帮助与鼓励,在此一并致谢。

译者

2011 年 2 月

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ANIMALS

动物



The Chicken

As I was walking down Stanton Street early one Sunday morning, I saw a chicken a few yards ahead of me. I was walking faster than the chicken, so I gradually caught up. By the time we approached Eighteenth Avenue, I was close behind. The chicken turned south on Eighteenth. At the fourth house along, it turned in at the walk, hopped up the front steps, and rapped sharply on the metal storm door with its beak. After a moment, the door opened and the chicken went in.

LINDA ELEGANT

Portland, Oregon

小 鸡

一个星期天的清晨,当我走在斯坦敦大街上时,我看见前面几码的地方有只小鸡。因为走得比那只鸡快,我逐渐赶了上去。快到第十八大街时,我已经紧随其后了。那只鸡在第十八大街向南转去,沿街走到第四栋房子时,它拐进了人行道,跳上前门台阶,用嘴狠狠地啄那道铁制的防风门。不一会儿,门打开了,那只小鸡走了进去。

琳达·艾勒根特

俄勒冈州 波特兰

The Yellow Butterfly

In the Philippines, the tradition was to begin the rites of Holy Communion in the second grade. Every Saturday, we had to go to school to rehearse how to walk, how to carry the candle, where to sit, how to kneel, and how to stick out your tongue to accept the Body of Christ.

One Saturday my mother and uncle picked me up from practice in a yellow Volkswagen Beetle. As I slid into the back seat, my uncle attempted to start the car. It gave several dry coughs, and then the engine stopped turning over. My uncle sat in silent frustration, and my mother turned around and asked me what we should do. I was eight years old, and without hesitation I told her that we had to wait for a yellow butterfly to touch the car before it would work again. I don't know whether my mother believed me or not. She only smiled, and then she turned back to my uncle to discuss what to do next. He got out of the car and told her that he was going to the nearest gas station for help. I fell in and out of sleep, but I was awake when my uncle returned from the gas station. I remember him carrying a container of gas, filling up the car, the car not starting, and him tinkering some more, and still the car wouldn't start. My mother then got out of the car and hailed a cab. A yellow cab stopped. Instead of taking us home, the driver looked at our predicament and suggested that my uncle squirt some gas on the engine. This seemed to do the trick, and after thanking this good Samaritan, my uncle turned the ignition and the car started right away.

I began falling back to sleep. Half a block later, my mother woke me up. She was all excited, and her voice was full of wonder. When I opened my eyes, I turned to where she was pointing. Fluttering around the rearview mirror was a tiny yellow butterfly.

SIMONETTE JACKSON
Canoga Park, California

黄蝴蝶

在菲律宾有一个传统,就是在二年级时开始参加圣餐仪式。每个星期六我们都得去学校练习如何行走,如何持烛,练习坐在哪儿,怎样跪拜以及怎样伸出你的舌头去接纳耶稣的圣体^①。

一个星期六,在我完成练习后,我的母亲和舅舅开着一辆黄色大众甲壳虫汽车来接我。我钻到后排座位上,舅舅则准备开车。汽车吭哧了几声,然后引擎就停止了转动。舅舅闷坐在那儿一筹莫展。母亲转过身问我该怎么办。我当时八岁,毫不犹豫地告诉她我们必须等一只黄色的蝴蝶来摸一下汽车,然后汽车才能再次发动。我不知道当时母亲是否相信我。她只是笑了笑,然后就转过去和舅舅商量下一步该怎么做。舅舅下了车,说要去最近的加油站找人帮忙。我时睡时醒,但是当舅舅从加油站回来时我又醒了。我记得他提了一壶汽油,将汽车加满。车还是发动不起来,他又灌了点,车子依旧无法开动。于是母亲下车拦了辆出租车。一辆黄色出租车停了下来。司机没有载我们回家,而是看了看我们的困境,建议舅舅往引擎上喷点油。这下好像奏效了。谢过这个大好人之后,舅舅打着了火,车子立刻发动起来。

我又开始睡了过去。行过半个街区后,母亲把我叫醒。她兴奋异常,声音中充满了惊奇。我睁开眼,朝她所指的方向望去,一只小小的黄蝴蝶正围着后视镜拍打翅膀呢。

西蒙奈特·杰克逊

加利福尼亚州 坎诺咖园

^① 即无酵面包。

Pork Chop

Early in my career as a crime-scene cleaner, I was sent to the house of a woman living in Crown Point, Indiana, about two hours from where I lived.

When I arrived, Mrs. Everson opened the door, and I could immediately smell the scent of blood and other tissues emanating from the house. This told me that there was a real mess inside. A rather large German shepherd followed Mrs. Everson everywhere she went.

Mrs. Everson told me how she had come home to find the house silent, even though her aging and quite sick father-in-law was living there. Her German shepherd sniffed me with the curiosity usually shown by a large carnivore.

The basement light had been on, so she knew he must be down there. She found him sitting slumped in a chair. He had stuck a twelve-gauge shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger, removing most of his head and splattering brains, bone, and blood all over the finished basement.

I went down there for just a quick look and knew I would have to put on a Tyvek suit. More to keep blood off of my clothes than for protection against anything in the blood.

"Wow, what a mess," I thought to myself. In spite of my best efforts, I was soon covered from head to toe with blood. No matter how long I do this work, I still find it to be gross and disgusting. I guess that's a good sign.

I made several trips to my truck with contaminated items from the basement: ceiling panels, odd pieces of clothing, parts of the chair the old guy had been sitting in. I noticed that the curious dog was beginning to follow me around with increased interest.

I have learned that it's often better to say nothing than to say something really awkward during someone's time of grief. But this lady was sitting at the kitchen table with her head down, sobbing as though she had never cried before in her life. I felt that I had to say something to ease the tension. Her dog was still following