

英语注释读物

八十年代美国名家中短篇小说丛书(之五)

唐纳德·巴塞尔姆
短篇小说集

中国对外翻译出版公司



Donald Barthelme Short Stories

唐纳德·巴塞尔姆 短篇小说集

[美] 唐纳德·巴塞尔姆 著
戴树乔 注释

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by Donald Barthelme

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出版前言

近些年来,我们经常接触到一些读者,有大学英语本科生、研究生,有翻译工作者,也有英语文学爱好者,他们不约而同地提到,想多看一些最新的英文原著,但遗憾的是这类书不多,能找到的也大多年代较早,要想看看近年出的文学原作可谓难上加难。为此我公司才决定出版这套丛书。

这套丛书包括六个短篇小说集和一个中篇,作者分别是:索尔·贝娄、约翰·奇弗、约翰·厄普代克、雷蒙德·卡弗、唐纳德·巴塞尔姆、安·贝蒂和威廉·肯尼迪。这些作家有的是久负盛名的文学大家,有的则是八十年代崛起的说部新秀;其中包括诺贝尔文学奖以及美国普利策奖和全国图书奖的得主。他们的这些集子大多曾是美国的畅销书,有的被权威性报刊评为八十年代的十部佳作之一。

我们这套丛书主要收入八十年代依然活跃文坛的名家的短篇小说集,在此之前的作家的同类作品不在此列。有些作家虽在美国文坛卓有声誉,但我们未能找到他们在八十年代出版的短篇集,只能付之阙如。

丛书中有六本是八十年代第一次出版,唯有《奇弗短篇小说集》例外。这本作家自选集于1978年第一次出版精装本,出版之后即成为美国罕见的短篇小说畅销书,并一举获得美国两项文学大奖——普利策奖和全国图书奖。此书至1988年已是第九次印刷。鉴于约翰·奇弗在美国文坛的地位以及在中国文学界的影响,本集又是他生前最后一部短篇集,我们仍将它收入丛书(依据美国兰登书屋下属的巴兰坦出版社1980年3月的版本)。此外还有一点需要说明,这套丛书中的有的集子原书部头太大,一时不能全出,目前先选了八十年代或靠近八十年代的作品。

我们在编辑这套丛书时,注意兼顾到作品的文学代表性,尽可能选择不同流派的、风格相异的作家和作品,以使读者不仅对每位作家的风格有深刻的印象,还可由此对当今美国文坛有比较广泛的了解。

本丛书的注释以大学英语本科高年级学生和具有同等水平的英语文学爱好者为对象,力求少而精,只就一些较难理解的方言俚语、独特的背景知识以及疑难句子作注。

我们这套丛书为读者提供了一个阅读最新英文佳作的机会,这是读者盼望已久且不可多得的机会,若读者能够珍惜它,在品味和欣赏文学原著的过程中提高英文阅读能力和文字水平,同时加深对美国的文学和社会现状的了解,我们将感到莫大的欣慰。

在这里,我们要感谢参加这套丛书注释工作的外交学院和厦门大学的教授、副教授们的鼎力相助。此外,由于我们水平有限,在丛书的选编方面难免有不足之处,还望读者多多指教。

巴塞尔姆和他的小说

美国小说家唐纳德·巴塞尔姆(1931-1989)生于费城,曾在陆军中服役,五十年代中期一度任休斯顿博物馆馆长,也曾做过编辑工作,后来在美国纽约城市大学任文学写作教授。他的作品除长中篇小说外,一般短篇大都由《纽约人》文艺杂志发表;可以说他由于经常在该刊发表作品,而确立他的文坛地位的。美国的批评家有的认他为“新小说派”,有的则说他是“后现代派”,但不管是什么派,他是个美国文坛的怪才,却是可以肯定的。他之怪,怪在不以常情来衡量事物的合理性而加以发挥。可惜他英年早逝,未能更展长才,这不能不说是美国文坛的损失。

他写的短篇小说,收集在《回来吧,卡利加里博士》(1964)、《不齿的习俗、怪僻的行为》(1968)、《城市生活》(1970)、《愁苦》(1972)、《罪恶的欢乐》(1974)、《业余爱好者》(1976)、《节日》(1979)等。中篇著名的有《白雪公主》(1967),这被视为巴塞尔姆的代表作,也被书评家讥为“邪恶的童话”。因为书中虽以白雪公主与七个侏儒的童话为主,但完全写成关系暧昧,似乎白雪公主与七个侏儒都有猥亵行为似的。巴塞尔姆相信(正如其他“实验派”如巴思、品钦等人所相信的)“艺术向来是对现实世界的一种逃脱。然而,把艺术当做明确课题的作家们越来越多描写逃脱的困难,描写‘艺术’世界靠生活感情定形或变形的程度。”(《美国当代文学》358页)巴塞尔姆的最佳小说就充满了追求无法达到的目标所产生的灰心丧气感。他的《城市生活》中故事精确地点明了他的主题:意识的崩溃,创造力的枯竭,对性格分裂的厌倦,如此等等。所以巴塞尔姆主张小说的构成,应该和绘画中的抽象派一样,“把互不相关的事物拼凑在一起,如果效果好,就创造了新的现实”,因为“零乱是有趣的而且有用的”。他把这一理论作为他写小说

的中心原则,因之他写的东西不免零乱,而要理出一条主线,便成为难事。他的长篇小说《亡父》(1975),是图解与文字的拼凑,述子女埋葬亡父的故事,文字极为隐晦,其用意在于表现他的黑色幽默。有的批评家居然读出此书是巴塞尔姆为批评现代派而写的一篇小说化的论文。但因为他在文中用了许多隐喻,所以令读者如堕五里雾中,莫知究竟。也许学院派的研究人员掌握了这本小说的线索,而对于普通读者实在是本匪夷所思的书。他自己只承认自己的作品是黑色幽默。从形式上讲,可以称他为“实验派”或“新小说派”,而实质上则他确是一个黑色幽默的人。他的行文也极为庞杂,从广告图像画片、市井俚语、黑语行话、陈词滥调、接近胡闹的插科打诨,毫无意义的口头禅等等拼凑而成。但这里面有时是有所指的讽刺和挖苦。他的行文用字很别扭,自己却说“我就喜欢别别扭扭,而且要别扭得特殊”。所以他的文字总给人一种夸张其词,有哗众取宠之嫌,甚至于即使是美国读者也难以理解。另一方面,他也以传统手法写短篇,但其黑色幽默的含义,要能懂得,也煞费脑筋。这也许是世纪末混杂社会中的产物吧。

他一生获得古根海姆文艺创作奖,全国图书奖(《白雪公主》)及全国文学艺术院奖。他也是美国文学艺术院的成员之一,如此不凡的文学荣誉自然有他出人头地之处。但他一生毁誉参半,誉者称他为实验派小说巨子,毁者称他搞乱了美国的文学艺术。

我们这本书是巴塞尔姆最后的短篇小说集,原名为《故事四十篇》,有人说阅读此书不难发现一系列面目古怪、装扮奇特的人物依次揭幕亮相,诸如友人 Colby“由于他演得太过火了,只能判处绞刑”。Paulklee、Goethe、Captain Blood 等角色,他们演出的现代式求婚、结婚和离婚悲喜剧,连吃蚊怪兽狃狃也被押上阵来,及众所周知的“大学教室里的刺猬群”故事。他们都属于巴塞尔姆的奇想幻觉和超乎常情的手笔与创作。他每有所作,必直入故事腹地,抓住事物的核心,使人一时摸不着头绪,只知他正纠缠于人世最荒唐无稽的现象中。细读他的作品,举凡无法解答的难题,他必提出反问,而对人人挂在口上又不值一提的陈词滥调和片言只语,他偏追根问底,非找个水落石出不可。正由于这种反常的思路和写作,倒能引人瞩目,唤起读

者的注意,而得到意外收获和启发。正如《纽约时报书评周刊》上说的,巴塞尔姆善于在微小别扭的联词中,找到无限严肃的深奥词义。此话不假。

冯亦代

1991年1月于听风楼

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◆ CHABLIS

My wife wants a dog. She already has a baby. The baby's almost two. My wife says that the baby wants the dog.

My wife has been wanting a dog for a long time. I have had to be the one to tell her that she couldn't have it. But now the baby wants a dog, my wife says. This may be true. The baby is very close to my wife. They go around together all the time, clutching each other tightly. I ask the baby, who is a girl, "Whose girl are you? Are you Daddy's girl?" The baby says, "Momma," and she doesn't just say it once, she says it repeatedly, "Momma momma momma." I don't see why I should buy a hundred-dollar dog for that damn baby.

The kind of dog the baby wants, my wife says, is a Cairn terrier. This kind of dog, my wife says, is a Presbyterian like herself and the baby. Last year the baby was a Baptist—that is, she went to the Mother's Day Out program at the First Baptist twice a week. This year she is a Presbyterian because the Presbyterians have more swings and slides and things. I think that's pretty shameless and I have said so. My wife is a legitimate lifelong Presbyterian and says that makes it O.K.; way back when she was a child she used to go to the First Presbyterian in Evansville, Illinois. I didn't go to church because I was a black sheep. There were five children in my family

and the males rotated the position of black sheep among us, the oldest one being the black sheep for a while while he was in his DWI period or whatever and then getting grayer as he maybe got a job or was in the service and then finally becoming a white sheep when he got married and had a grandchild. My sister was never a black sheep because she was a girl.

Our baby is a pretty fine baby. I told my wife for many years that she couldn't have a baby because it was too expensive. But they wear you down. They are just wonderful at wearing you down, even if it takes years, as it did in this case. Now I hang around the baby and hug her every chance I get. Her name is Joanna. She wears Oshkosh overalls and says "no," "bottle," "out," and "Momma." She looks most lovable when she's wet, when she's just had a bath and her blond hair is all wet and she's wrapped in a beige towel. Sometimes when she's watching television she forgets that you're there. You can just look at her. When she's watching television, she looks dumb. I like her better when she's wet.

This dog thing is getting to be a big issue. I said to my wife, "Well you've got the baby, do we have to have the damned dog too?" The dog will probably bite somebody, or get lost. I can see myself walking all over our subdivision asking people, "Have you seen this brown dog?" "What's its name?" they'll say to me, and I'll stare at them coldly and say, "Michael." That's what she wants to call it, Michael. That's a silly name for a dog and I'll have to go looking for this possibly rabid animal and say to people, "Have you seen this brown dog? Michael?" It's enough to make you think about divorce.

What's that baby going to do with that dog that it can't do with me? Romp? I can romp. I took her to the playground at the school. It was Sunday and there was nobody there, and we romped. I ran, and she tottered after me at a good pace. I held her as she slid down the slide. She groped her way through a length of big pipe they have there set in concrete. She picked up a feather and looked at it for a long time. I was worried that it might be a diseased feather but she didn't put it in her mouth. Then we ran some more over the parched bare softball field and through the arcade that connects

the temporary wooden classrooms, which are losing their yellow paint, to the main building. Joanna will go to this school some day, if I stay in the same job.

I looked at some dogs at Pets-A-Plenty, which has birds, rodents, reptiles, and dogs, all in top condition. They showed me the Cairn terriers. "Do they have their prayer books?" I asked. This woman clerk didn't know what I was talking about. The Cairn terriers ran about two ninety-five per, with their papers. I started to ask if they had any illegitimate children at lower prices but I could see that it would be useless and the woman already didn't like me, I could tell. 5 10

What is wrong with me? Why am I not a more natural person, like my wife wants me to be? I sit up, in the early morning, at my desk on the second floor of our house. The desk faces the street. At five-thirty in the morning, the runners are already out, individually or in pairs, running toward rude red health. I'm sipping a glass of Gallo Chablis with an ice cube in it, smoking, worrying. I worry that the baby may jam a kitchen knife into an electrical outlet while she's wet. I've put those little plastic plugs into all the electrical outlets but she's learned how to pop them out. I've checked the Crayolas. They've made the Crayolas safe to eat—I called the head office in Pennsylvania. She can eat a whole box of Crayolas and nothing will happen to her. If I don't get the new tires for the car I can buy the dog. 15 20

I remember the time, thirty years ago, when I put Herman's mother's Buick into a cornfield, on the Beaumont highway. There was another car in my lane, and I didn't hit it, and it didn't hit me. I remember veering to the right and down into the ditch and up through the fence and coming to rest in the cornfield and then getting out to wake Herman and the two of us going to see what the happy drunks in the other car had come to, in the ditch on the other side of the road. That was when I was a black sheep, years and years ago. That was skillfully done, I think. I get up, congratulate myself in memory, and go in to look at the baby. 25 30

【注释】

页	行	
1	标题	Chablis: 法国著名白葡萄酒。
	12	Cairn terrier: 一种苏格兰的狮子狗。
	15	Mother's Day Out program at the First Baptist: 浸礼会 第一教堂组织的母亲节集会。
	21	black sheep: 家庭中的不肖子。
2	3	DWI=driving while intoxicated 酒后开车。
3	4	Pets-A-Plenty: 爱畜商店。
	8	papers: 纯种狗证件。
	21	Crayolas: 儿童彩画笔。
	26	Buick: 美国别克牌轿车。

◆ ON THE DECK

THERE is a lion on the deck of the boat. The lion looks tired, fatigued. Waves the color of graphite. A grid placed before the lion, quartering him, each quarter subdivided into sixteen squares, total of sixty-four squares through which lion parts may be seen. The lion a dirty yellow-brown against the gray waves.

5

Next to but not touching the lion, members of a Christian motorcycle gang (the gang is called Banditos for Jesus and has nineteen members but only three are on the deck of the boat) wearing their colors which differ from the colors of other gangs in that the badges, insignia, and so on have Christian messages, "Jesus is LORD" and the like. The bikers are thick-shouldered, gold earrings, chains, beards, red bandannas, a sweetness expressed in the tilt of their bodies toward the little girl wearing shiny steel leg braces who stands among them and smiles—they have chosen her as their "old lady" and are collecting money for her education.

10

15

To the right of the Christian bikers and a bit closer to the coils of razor wire forward of the lion is a parked Camry (in profile) covered with a tarp and tied down with bright new rope, blocks under the wheels, the lower half of its price sticker visible on the window not completely covered by canvas. The motor is running, exhaust from the twin tailpipes touching the thirty-five burlap-wrapped bales stacked at the back of the car. There is someone

20

inside the car, behind the wheel. This person is named Mitch. The exhaust from the car irritates the lion, whose head rolls from side to side, yellow teeth bared.

In front of the tied-down red Camry, a man with a nosebleed
5 holding a steel basin under his chin. The basin is full of brown
blood, brown-stained blooms of gauze. He holds the basin with
one hand and clutches his nose with the other. His blue-and-red-
striped shirt is bloody. "Hello," he says, "hello, hello!" Gray insti-
tutional pants and brown shoes. There's a tree, an eight-foot western
10 fir, in a heavy terra-cotta pot between his legs. He appears to be
trying to avoid bleeding on the tree. "They don't have anything I
want," he says. A basketball wedged between the upper branches
on the left side. Immediately to the left and forward of the fir tree,
a yellow fifty-five-gallon drum labeled in black letters PRISMATEX,
15 a hose coiled on top of it; bending over the PRISMATEX, her back
turned, a young woman with black hair in a thin thin yellow dress.
Concentrate on the hams.

The tilting of the deck increases; spray. The captain, a red-faced
man in a blue blazer, sits in an armchair before the young woman,
20 a can of beer in his right hand. He says: "I would have done better
work if I'd had some kind of encouragement. I've met a lot of
people in my life. I let my feelings carry me along." At the captain's
knee is the captain's dog, a black-and-white Scottie. The dog is
afraid of the lion, keeps looking back over his shoulder at the lion.
25 The captain kisses the hem of the young woman's yellow dress.
There's a rolled Oriental rug bound with twine in front of the
Scottie, and in front of that a child's high chair with a peacock
sitting in it, next to that a Harley leaning on its kickstand (HONK
IF YOU LOVE JESUS in script on the gas tank). The owner of the
30 boat, sister of the woman in the yellow dress, is squatting by the
Harley cooking hot dogs on a hibachi, a plastic bag of buns by her
right foot. A boyfriend lies next to her, playing with the bottom
edge of her yellow shorts. "Sometimes she's prim," he says. "Don't
know when you wake up in the morning what you're going to get.
35 I'm really not interested just now. At some point you get into it
pretty far, then it becomes frightening."

"A smooth flight isn't totally dependent on the pilot," says the

next man. There's a bucket of raw liver between his knees, liver for the lion, he's up to his elbows in liver. Next, a shuffleboard court and two men shoving the brightly colored disks this way and that with old battered M-1 rifles. "I put two forty-pound sacks of cat food in the bed and covered them neatly with a blanket but she still didn't get the message." Further along, a marble bust of Hadrian on a bamboo plant stand, Hadrian's marble curls curling to meet Hadrian's marble beard, next to that someone delivering the mail, a little canvas pushcart containing mail pushed in front of her, blue uniform, two shades of blue, red hair. "Everyone likes mail, except those who are afraid of it." Everyone gets mail. The captain gets mail, the Christian bikers get mail, Liverman gets mail, the woman in the scandal-dress gets mail. Many copies of *Smithsonian*. A man sitting in a red wicker chair.

Winter on deck. All of the above covered with snow. Christmas music.

Then, spring. A weak sun, then a stronger sun.

You came and fell upon me, I was sitting in the wicker chair. The wicker exclaimed as your weight fell upon me. You were light, I thought, and I thought how good it was of you to do this. We'd never touched before.

【注释】

页	行	
5	13	leg braces: 护腿支架。
	14	"old lady": <俚>钟爱的女人。
6	6	brown-stained blooms of gauze: 沾血的纱布。
	23	Scottie: 苏格兰种爱犬。
	31	hibachi: 日本制造的煤炉。
		buns: "热狗"小吃所用的面包。
7	6	Hadrian: 哈德连(公元 117-138 年为罗马皇帝)。
	13	Smithsonian: 美国史密森学会会刊。