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新英语新写作英汉对照

彼得·卡恩的第三个妻子

2006年度英国短篇小说精选
Selections of British Short Stories 2006

[英] 詹姆斯·莱斯登◎等著

罗益民◎译

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[英国]詹姆斯·莱斯登 等著

罗益民 译

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序

在英国,阅读小说的时尚,至少风行了整个十九世纪。坐在壁炉边,阅读小说,如痴如醉。这一时尚造就了狄更斯、萨克雷、特罗洛普和爱略特这样伟大的小说家,也就造就了英国小说的传统。为了传承这个传统,英国的小说创作,历久不衰,至今仍然领先于世界。英国文化协会,每年能够向全世界推出一本“新写作”,是个证明。

在中国,阅读小说,曾经很时尚,作者可以一夜成名。上世纪八十年代中国文坛大体如此。如今,写作还在进行,阅读小说却不再时尚。探究原因,当然还是我们的现代小说传统薄弱所致。可以理解,因为中国现代小说,是西风东进的结果。自由写作历史很短。因此,经常借鉴西方人怎样把文学写作发扬光大,是很有意义的。

英国文化协会一年一度由专家选辑的“新写作”,为我们提供了便利条件。“新写作”里包括长篇选载、诗歌、散文和短篇小说,我们先拿短篇小说做尝试,因为这个体裁篇幅较小,紧跟时代,更具创新性。

因此,我们新近与英国文化协会合作,通力推出一个“新英语,新写作”的英汉对照读物系列,首批四种,每种十万字,单独成书;力争篇篇新颖,译文上佳,为中国作者和读者接近最新的西方文学精品,做一点贡献。

苏 福 忠

二〇〇八年十二月

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彼得·卡恩的第三个妻子

James Lashon

Peter Kahn's Third Wife

In a jeweller's boutique in Bond Street, the young sales assistant was modelling a necklace for a customer who had come in to buy a gift for his fiancée.

'Something out of the ordinary,' he had said, and the assistant had shown him a cabinet with a necklace in it made of lemon and rose-coloured diamonds. The man had admired it, but after asking how much it cost, had laughed. 'Out of my league,' I'm afraid.

'Let me show you some other things,' the assistant had led him to another cabinet. 'These are more affordable. They're set with semi-precious stones.' The man had nodded and peered forward into the lit glass case.

'If you have any questions,' the assistant had said, 'I'll be happy to answer them.'

For a while the man had looked in silence at the things inside the case. 'I'll tell you what,' he had said abruptly, 'Let's have another look at that first necklace.'

'The diamond?'

'Yes.'

And so now she had taken the expensive necklace from its

Peter Kahn's Third Wife

James Lasdun

In a jeweller's boutique in Soho, the young sales assistant was modeling a necklace for a customer who had come in to buy a gift for his fiancée.

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彼得·卡恩的第三个妻子

詹姆斯·莱登^①

苏荷街一家珠宝时装店里，一位年轻的女店员在为一名顾客试戴一款项链，因这名顾客以往常来为他的恋人购置礼物。

“非同一般，非同一般，”他说，女售货员则在一旁陪着他观赏一个项链盒子里的项链，这条项链用柠檬黄和玫瑰红钻石镶嵌而成。这个男子看中了项链，但是问过价格之后，他大笑起来：“恐怕不是我辈买得起啊。”

“我让你看看别的款样。”

女店员引导他看了另一个项链盒子。“这些款式价格适中。它们镶嵌的宝石价格便宜一半呢。”

这个男子点了点头，向光线明亮的玻璃柜台里看了几眼。

“如果你有什么问题，”女店员说，“我很高兴一一解答。”

这个男子没有作声，往玻璃柜台里看了一会儿。“我跟你说明啊，”他不假思索地说，“我们还是再看看那第一条项链吧。”

“那条钻石的吗？”

“是的。”

就这样，现在她把玻璃柜里的那条昂贵的项链又取出来，戴

^① 英国青年作家，生于伦敦，住在纽约，已出版诗歌集和小说多种，近期出版长篇小说《七个谎言》。

case, and was modeling it for him while he sat in a chair opposite her, looking at how it lay on the flesh below her throat.

This was part of her job, but in her seven months at the boutique she still hadn't grown used to it. It made her self-conscious to sit and be stared at by a man she didn't know, and it seemed to her that the men themselves were uncomfortable. They either found it hard to look squarely at her in this moment, or else she would feel them peering too intently, as if they felt it their masculine duty to try to make a conquest of any woman who submitted herself so willingly to their gaze.

But this man was neither furtive nor brash. He was at ease in the artificial intimacy of the situation; intent in his scrutiny, but making no attempt to promote himself.

He was in his thirties, she guessed; dark and heavysset. Brown hair curled on his head in thick, tangled clusters.

He nodded slowly. 'All right,' he said in a bemused tone, as though not so much deciding as discovering what he was going to do, 'I'll take it.'

A moment later he was signing his name, Peter Kahn, on the three credit card payments into payments into which he had had to divide the transaction. Then he went out of the store, carrying the flat box with the necklace inside it in his coat pocket.

Over the next couple of years he reappeared in the boutique several more times to buy his wife anniversary and birthday gifts. The assistant, whose name was Clare Keillor, would model the pieces he was interested in, and each time she would experience the same calm under his gaze. It was as though for a moment she had been taken into a realm glazed off from the everyday world, where a form of exchange that was inexpressible in everyday hu-

在脖子上让他看，他呢，坐在女店员对面的一把椅子上，审视项链戴在女店员脖子下的肌肤上，有怎样的效果。

这是她工作的一部分，但是，她在这珠宝店工作了七个月了，对这部分工作还是不很适应。一个素不相识的大男人在对面打量她，她感到很不自然，而且在她看来，那些男人自个儿也不大舒服。他们要么在她试戴的那一刻不敢毫无顾忌地打量，要么她感觉得出来他们打量得过于专注，仿佛他们觉得成为男人这种角色，就是一心想把那些情愿接受他们打量的女人，攥在自己的手心儿里。

但是，这个男人看人既不偷偷摸摸，也不那么放肆；他打量得很专心，同时也无意把自己强加于人。

她估计，他三十来岁；黑黑的，结结实实的。棕色的拳曲的头发，在头上显得很厚，一绺一绺纠缠在一起。

他缓缓地点了点头。“好吧，”他说，口气有几分茫然，仿佛还拿不准下一步他到底怎么办似的。“我买下了。”

不一会儿，他把自己的名字“彼得·卡恩”签在一式三份划卡消费单上，他分三次付清这笔买卖。然后，他把扁平的项链盒子装进自己外衣兜里，走出了珠宝店。

接下来的两年里，这个男子来这家珠宝店购买了好几次东西，给妻子购买结婚周年纪念品或者生日礼品。那位名叫克莱尔·卡勒尔的女店员，凡是她感兴趣的珠宝首饰，她都会试戴，而且每次试戴，她都会经历一番在他平静的打量下才有的经历。有那么一个时刻，她进入了一种与这日常世界隔离开的天地，在人们日常交往中不可言传的交流，在这里却允许在陌生人之间

man terms, was permitted to occur between strangers.

She had no idea whether Kahn himself experienced anything resembling this, or whether he even remembered her from one visit to the next, but she found herself revolving the memory of the encounters in her imagination after they had passed, and when several months went by without Kahn coming back into the store, she would begin to wonder if she was ever going to experience their peculiar, almost impersonally soothing effects again.

On one occasion his cell phone rang while she was modeling a pair of earrings for him. He excused himself, saying that this was an important call, and she waited while he spoke. From what she heard him say, it became clear that he was in business as an importer of wines, and that he was trying to persuade a partner to bid on a consignment of rare French bottles that were coming up for auction. Evidently he was encountering resistance, and his tone became increasingly heated.

'Taste it!' he said. He proceeded to describe the wine in the most extravagant terms, which in turn appeared to prompt even more resistance. 'Well then, let's find customers who do give a damn!' he shouted. Then he snapped shut the phone.

Apologizing for the interruption, he tried to concentrate again on the earrings, but his mind was clearly on the altercation he had just had. The strong feelings it had aroused were still milling behind his eyes, and for a moment as he looked back at Clare, he appeared to forget why he was looking at her at all. He was just staring at her as though knowing there was some important reason why he was doing this, but not clear what it was. Then, as she looked back into his eyes, he seemed to stop struggling to remember, and simply accepted that was what he was doing. And now for the first time she did have the impression that

发生。

她不知道卡恩是否有如同这般的感受，也不知道他上次来过，下次是否还记得她，但是，她自己非常明白他们相遇之后，她就会想入非非，相遇的记忆转来转去，而且一连几个月过去看不见卡恩再来珠宝店，她便会捉摸自己还能不能经历他们之间那种特殊的、几乎是没有任何个人感情色彩却感到舒心的时刻。

有一次，她正在为他试戴一对耳坠，他的手机响了起来。他表示歉意，说这是个重要的电话，他通话的时候她就在一边等待。从他的话中，她听出来，他在做葡萄酒进口的生意，他在努力劝说合作伙伴在一批珍贵的法国瓶装酒上投标，因为这批酒会拍卖出售。显然，他遭到了对方的抵触，说话的声音不由得越说越热烈。

“尝试一把嘛！”他说。他继续描述这种葡萄酒，极尽夸大各种好处，但是他越说得天花乱坠，对方越不领情。“那好吧，让我们找一找那些就是吃他妈这一套的顾客！”随后，他把手机啪嗒一声关上了。

对电话打断买卖表示歉意，他试图再次对耳坠专心打量一番，但是他的心思显然在刚刚发生的争吵上难以释然。争吵唤起的心烦意乱仍然在他的眼睛后面作祟，一时间他向克莱尔回望，一脸茫然，忘记了他为什么一直在打量她。他这时只是盯着她不放，好像也知道他之所以目不转睛地看她，是有一些重要的原因的，却又弄不清楚到底是什么原因。后来，克莱尔回望他的眼睛，他似乎不再吃力地回想了，只是顺其自然，认定打量就是他正在做的差事。到了这个时候，克莱尔才第一次感觉到，他看她如同她看他一样；感觉到他也置身那种一清二楚的氛围中，在

he was seeing her as she saw him; that he too was in that lucid atmosphere, and was encountering her there with the same feeling of ease as she herself felt. Then the moment passed and they were each back in the everyday reality of their own lives.

He decided against the earrings, and left without looking at anything else.

Two more years passed. Then, on a hot morning in July, Kahn appeared once again in the store.

He stood in the entrance for a moment, adjusting from the boil and glare of the street to the store's air-conditioned dimness. He looked less youthful—fleshier and redder in the cheeks, but still handsome, and with a more developed air of consequence about him.

'I'm looking for a wedding gift,' he said, 'for my fiancée. Something a little... out of the ordinary.'

Clare looked at him for a moment before answering. He gave no sign of recognizing her, and despite knowing there was no reason why he should, she felt dismayed. A few minutes later, however, as she was modeling some new pieces for him, there was a startled motion in his eyes.

'Still here!'

'Yes.'

'I didn't recognize you. I apologize.' He gave an embarrassed grin. 'What you must think of me, already on to my second wife!'

'Oh, I wasn't—'

'Well, it happens.' He laughed, recovering his self-possession. 'Anyway, we're very much in love. What can I tell you?'

这种氛围中与她面面相觑，她有什么感受，他也有什么感受。接下来，这个时刻过去了，他们各自回到了他们自己生活的日常现实中。

他决定不要耳坠了，而且没有再看别的东西，便转身离开了。

一晃两年过去了。后来，七月的一个热烘烘的早上，卡恩又一次在这家珠宝店出现了。

他在商店门口站了一会儿，从大街上沸腾而晃眼的光线中向商店空调的暗淡光线过渡。他看上去少了些许青春的气息——脸颊则更加肉乎、更加发红，不过仍然很帅气，身上有股更为成熟的气息。

“我要找一件礼物，”他说，“送给我的情人。要有点……非同一般的。”

克莱尔看了他一会儿才回答。他没有流露出一点儿认识她的表情，只是一副他本来就谁都不认识的样子，克莱尔见了好不惊讶。然而，过了一会儿，她为他试戴一些新款饰物时，他的眼睛里露出了吃惊的神色。

“还在这里啊！”

“是啊。”

“我没有认出你来。真是对不起。”他说着难为情地笑了笑。“你一定有看法吧，我已在为我的第二个妻子买东西了！”

“呃，没有啊——”

“咳，还真就是这么回事儿。”他大笑起来，恢复了他镇定自如的样子。“好在呢，我们非常相爱。我跟你说什么好呢？”

‘That’s good. Congratulations.’

He bought a set of earrings and an expensive emerald bracelet: money was apparently no longer a great concern.

‘At least we can say I’m faithful when it comes to where I buy my wives their jewellery!’ he said in a parting attempt at jollity. Clare gave him a polite, sales girl’s smile. His phrase, ‘we’re very much in love’ had grated on her, and as he left the store, she decided it must have been the formula he had used in breaking the new to the wife he had cast off; we’re very much in love... as though he and his new girlfriend just couldn’t help themselves. Clare pictured the wife—a blur of disembodied pain, and the girlfriend, younger, fresher prettier. It struck her that Kahn hadn’t recognized her because she too had started to age.

There was that realm, the glassed-in sphere in which these encounters occurred, and then there was the real world, and Clare lived her life in this world also. She married a man named Neil Gehrig, an airline industry analyst, twelve years older than herself.

At a dinner one evening, someone praised the wine, and the host said, ‘Yes, it’s a Kahn.’

Looking at the bottle, Clare saw his name on the sticker at the neck: *imported by Peter Kahn*, and an unexpectedly sharp emotion went through her. Three or four years had passed since their last encounter, and she was caught off guard by the force of her own feeling.

‘He set up a company to bring over wines from the last small producers in France and Italy,’ the host was saying. ‘We grab everything we can afford off his list.’

“很好呀。祝贺，祝贺。”

他买了一对耳坠和一只很贵重的手镯；钱显然不再是令人担心的大事了。

“起码我们可以说，我给妻子们购买珠宝，是专找一个地方的！”他用一种告别时尽量快活的口气说。克莱尔还给他一个礼貌的女店员的微笑。他那句“我们非常相爱”的话在克莱尔的耳边嗡嗡回响，在他离开珠宝店时，克莱尔认定这句话是他的口头禅，用来向他抛弃的妻子通报消息的；我们非常相爱……仿佛他和他的新交的女友发展到了不得已的地步了。克莱尔想象他妻子的样子——一幅形体模糊的油画儿，而他的女友，更年轻，更鲜活，更标致。她猛然醒悟过来，卡恩之所以没有认出她来，是因为她也开始上年纪了。

那是一个特殊的领域，在玻璃柜里的氛围下，客户和女店员相互服务，还有一个真实的世界，克莱尔在这个世界里面度过自己的生命。她嫁给了一个名叫奈尔·杰里格的男人，一名航空工业的分析师，比她大十二岁。

一天晚上的晚宴上，有人赞赏葡萄酒好，主人说：“是挺好的，卡恩经销的葡萄酒。”

看了看酒瓶，克莱尔看见他的名字果真在酒瓶脖子的标签上：彼得·卡恩进口经销，她心中一下子泛起了一阵始料不及的剧烈冲击。他们最后一次相见，三四年过去了，她自己感情力量的闸门一下子冲开了。

“他成立了一家公司，专门从法国和意大利的所剩不多的小型生产者手中进口葡萄酒。”主人说。“他提供的酒单上，只要我们能买得起，悉数购买。”