

Ancient Greece in the English Language

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When Shakespeare was in school in the latter half of the sixteenth century, he learned ‘small Latin and less Greek’, or so his friend, Ben Jonson, tells us. Until very recently, it was the norm for educated British schoolchildren to learn at least Latin in school (In fact, it remained a requirement for entrance to many universities until the 1960s -70s). Greek was always less widely taught, and to a smaller elite, but this did not prevent Greek ideas from coming into the English language, most often via the Latin route. The Romans were great admirers of Greek culture, and their poets often wrote of Greek myths and legends in their Latin works.

For this reason, we tend to refer to the Greek deities by their Latin names. Our planets are called e.g. Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Pluto rather than Zeus, Aphrodite, Ares and Hades, and things to do with war are called ‘Martial’ (after Mars, the god of war) rather than by an adjective derived from the Greek name, Ares. Still, some English words do come directly from the Greek, e.g. ‘aphrodisiac’ from Aphrodite, the goddess of love, or ‘erotic’ from Eros, the Greek name of Cupid. In recent years, too, at least one company has chosen to name its brand after a Greek goddess. But then, I suppose ‘Nike’ fits onto a sports shoe better than would ‘Victoria’.

There are many idioms used in modern English that refer to ancient Greek literature, mythology or history. If we are discussing a political situation, we might say that the government plans to bring in ‘draconian laws’ (after the harsh Athenian tyrant, Draco). Or we may choose an image from the myth of the twelve labours of Heracles

(Hercules) to describe difficult endeavours, all of which can be referred to as ‘Herculean tasks’. Heracles was a Greek ‘superman’ who killed his wife and children in a fit of temporary madness. When he regained his sanity, he had to perform twelve extremely difficult tasks as a penance. Most of these involved killing man-eating monsters, though a more flirtatious (but no less risky) one involved stealing the girdle of the Amazon Queen, Hippolyta. If the government is trying to root out corruption, we might say it is trying to ‘cleanse the Augean stables’ (The least heroic of the twelve labours was to muck out some very dirty stables). However, if after each problem the government solves, two more seem to spring up in its place, we may say it is like fighting the ‘many-headed hydra’ (after the monster that grew two new heads for every one Heracles cut off).

The government could, on the other hand, be facing a complex situation and decide to take a short cut. Then we would say it has decided to ‘cut the Gordian knot’ (derived from a story told about Alexander the Great). If it is attempting to introduce a system which is supposed to fit everyone, but in fact fits no-one, then we might refer to the system as being like ‘Procrustes’ bed’ (a one-size-fits-all bed used to torture and kill guests by a particularly unpleasant character in the myth of the hero, Theseus). However, if we believe all social, financial and environmental problems can be solved quickly and easily, we are living in ‘Cloud Cuckoo Land’ (from Aristophanes’ satirical comedy *The Birds*). In any case, we are probably looking back to an imaginary ‘Golden Age’ when everyone was prosperous and happy (This goes back to the poet Hesiod’s idea that there had been



an ideal, peaceful Golden Age before the Bronze Age).

References to Greek concepts may come up in other areas of conversation too. A friend returning from a conference in Jubala might tell me this about her stay:

‘The conference last week was *under the aegis* of the Jubala government. Actually, it was quite disappointing. The conditions in the hotel were *Spartan*, and as you know, my *Achilles heel* is that I’m claustrophobic and can’t stand small lifts and easily *panic* when I’m in one. It was miles from the conference centre, and there was no hotel shuttle

bus. I had to join the *hoi polloi* in the Underground, which was like a *labyrinth*, so I arrived each morning feeling I had run a *marathon*. Still, it gave me a *tantalizing* glimpse of what life could be like there in other circumstances. And I did manage to buy a cheap *Omega* watch.

‘No, I’m not going to complain to my boss — it would only open a *Pandora’s Box*, and he’d probably start *hectoring* me.’

Either an etymological dictionary, or a dictionary of mythology will explain all the words and phrases in italics.



Sisyphus’ Task

‘Most people who look to dieting as a means of losing weight consider the whole process a rather *Sisyphian* experience. Just like old Sisyphus, dieters often find that their goal weight rushes away from them’. What has Sisyphus to do with the task of putting off weight?

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the king and founder of Corinth. He was notorious as the most cunning knave on earth. For his misdeeds, Zeus sent the god Hades to bring him to the underworld personally, for some severe punishment. With an ingenious trick, Sisyphus had Hades chained and locked up for many days. While the god of the dead was held prisoner, no one could die. The sick and old suffered. The world was in chaos.

Years after, when the paramount trickster was led forcibly back to the underworld, he was condemned to ceaselessly rolling a large rock uphill. Every time Sisyphus, by the greatest of exertion and toil, reached the top, the rock slipped from his hands and rolled down again, so that his punishment was eternal.

Hence we have the idiom ‘a Sisyphus’ task’ to describe a task that requires continual effort but never pays off. Similarly, an endless and fruitless task can be described as Sisyphian.

永劫

讀薛西弗斯推石的希臘神話，法國存在主義大師卡繆 (Albert Camus) 想到荒謬與反抗的對立：石頭推上去了又落下來，薛西弗斯卻沒有選擇，還得一次又一次把石頭往上推。這種無奈當然是荒謬的。他要自我解救，就要認定推石是生命的意義所在。從這個悲劇神話，卡繆看到荒謬的真相。

中國也有同屬苦役的神話：吳剛伐桂。唐代段成式《酉陽雜俎》：“舊言月中有桂……月桂高五丈，下有一人，常斫之，樹創隨合。人姓吳名剛，西河人，學仙有過，謫令伐樹。”故事大家熟悉不過，卻鮮有人深究吳剛所犯何事，要受如此勞役，更不要說去思索其中的深層意義。說一句天命難違就混過去了。



命運同陷永劫的神話人物，都是受到天譴，幹着徒勞無功的苦役，永無休止。但在東西方所引起的回響卻截然不同：一個是存在主義的悲劇英雄，一個千百年來只是死寂月宮裏的配角。這究竟只是中外欣賞神話故事取徑偶有不同，還是東西方思維取向根本就是同途而異趣？

公文寫作研討會記要

二零零三年十一月十日，公務員事務局法定語文事務部假香港科學館演講廳舉行公文寫作研討會。香港教育學院語文教育學院院長陳永明教授應邀主講“公務中文傳意技巧”，論述公文寫作應注意的要點。

陳教授指出，語言不斷在變，中文也不例外。以香港為例，公文格式有新舊之分，讀音有從正、從眾之別。至於撰寫公文，除了錯別字，我們也應注意中文文法及行文邏輯的問題。

陳教授集中剖析公函的格式和用字遣辭。陳教授同意白話公函可略去傳統恭維語、頌揚語等套語，格式也不宜一成不變，可因應受文人身分等實際情況略為調整，最重要的原則是讓受文人讀起來感到舒服。

此外，中文公函修辭容易受英語影響，例如“你”、“我”等代名詞太多的話，讀來既囉唆累贅，又有違中文意合的特性。省去不恰當、多餘的代名詞，可令行文更簡潔利落，自然流暢。



陳教授強調結構的重要，指出行文必須顧及上文下理。中英文的表達習慣不同，行文結構因而有別。假如把英文公函的格式及用字生搬硬套，容易令中文公函上文不對下理。只要依中文的時序脈絡有系統地鋪陳，公函的邏輯便能更清晰，結構更嚴密。

陳教授又指出，公函的受文人不一定等同收信人，例如代部門去函報章，答覆市民的投訴，真正的受文人是報章讀者，不是報章編輯。因此撰寫公函時，必須清楚受眾的身分，照顧受文人的感受，設身處地，措辭才會合宜得體。

陳教授總結時強調，即使熟識公函格式，但中文修養欠佳，還是難寫好公函。歸根究柢，要寫出通順達意、措辭得體的公函，最重要是提升中文水平，而多讀多寫是提高中文修養的不二法門。

陳永明教授著作等身，著述涉及文學、哲學和音樂等領域，包括《哲人哲語》、《五線譜邊緣的躑躅》、《莫信詩人竟平澹——陶淵明心路歷程新探》等。陳教授另曾在電台及電視台主持《中文一分鐘》、《詩韻詞情》等節目，並擔任多項公職，包括香港語文教育及研究常務委員會委員、教育統籌局課程發展議會成員等，對推動香港的語文教學發展貢獻良多。

Beware of the Trojan Horse!



The Trojan Horse. What would come to your mind right away? Stealth? Ingenuity? Malice?

Thanks to the giant wooden horse conceived by the crafty warrior, Odysseus, the Greeks captured the impregnable City of Troy and ended the decade long war. Has it ever occurred to you that such a fascinating drama of military tactics may be re-staged right inside your PC? And you are oblivious to what is going on, like the poor Trojans whose city was taken just when they thought they had won the war.

‘Trojan Horse’ refers to those programs that infect your computer and open a channel which allows hackers to take control of your PC behind your back. They are imposters — programs that claim to be something useful but, in fact, cause mischief such as deleting files, changing system settings, stealing passwords, denying service and running vicious programs. The Trojan Horse contains malicious codes. Once triggered, they will cause loss or even theft of data. Worse still, your PC is used as a platform to attack other computers.



How and when are you likely to let the Horse enter your PC? Whenever you download a program, you are at risk. Chatting on the ICQ, opening an attachment, sharing files and allowing others to have access to your computer are but a few examples.

It is a common belief among Internet users that with virus scanners, their computers are immune to a raid by a Trojan Horse. Unfortunately, this is not exactly the case. While we can rely on anti-virus tools to detect the most common Trojan Horse programs, the most effective safeguard is to update regularly the latest virus signature.

All in all, it is the user’s constant vigilance that most strongly fortifies his computer against hackers’ infiltration. Be wary of what you receive when you are surfing the Internet, checking e-mails or cyberchatting. Avoid visiting suspicious websites. The Trojan Horse, like viruses and worms, is ubiquitous in the cyber world. Never ever let it in!

Learning and More

Jackie Mok

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What would it be like living and learning in a world city of culture and commerce like London? The picture I got from a two-week intensive language course in London is that language learning goes beyond grammar and vocabulary. It is also about understanding cultural differences.

Contrary to my expectation, English usage and grammar was not the main focus of the course. In spite of this, through intensive practice and group discussions under the useful guidance of our tutors, we made great progress in our language and communication skills during our study. I noticed that we often overlooked the fundamentals of English usage like tenses, prepositions and phrasal verbs when we tried to improve in such areas as vocabulary, grammar and idiomatic expressions. Moreover, we were from time to time tempted to translate from our mother tongue into English direct, particularly in conversation. As my classmates were practising professionals from all round the globe, including Iceland, Kuwait, Italy, France and Senegal, we had great fun in sharing and exchanging ideas. To overcome the difficulties in learning because of differences in our background (I was the only student working in a non-business sector), I asked questions for clarification or correction wherever possible so as to bridge the gaps in our backgrounds, in particular our cultures.



Rosetta Stone

A part from regular classroom practice, the school organised a broad spectrum of familiarisation activities to give us a wider exposure to the cosmopolitan and dynamic life in London. There was so much to see and explore in the city, and I spent much time visiting museums and galleries over the weekends. In the British Museum, I was taken up with the Rosetta Stone — an irregularly shaped block of black basalt bearing an Egyptian decree. It was first discovered near the Egyptian city of Rosetta by Napoleon's troop in 1799. Its importance stems not from the decree itself, but from the fact that it was inscribed in three different forms of writing: Egyptian hieroglyphics, demotic (or everyday) Egyptian and Greek. Efforts at translating hieroglyphics were once patchy. The Stone allows scholars to decipher the hieroglyphs, and more importantly, to discover that they had a phonetic value. To me it was indeed eye-opening.

I have no illusion that there is a panacea for dramatic improvement in my language proficiency within two weeks. But I am convinced that my firsthand experience of English life has benefitted me in a multi-dimensional manner, including understanding more ways for further study and gaining insights into different cultures.

觸目還是矚目？



“觸目”和“矚目”粵語讀音相同，兩者皆與視線有關，因此混淆用錯的例子並不罕見，如“矚目驚心”、“舉世觸目”等。

“觸”本義為用角相抵，引申指“碰、撞”。此字早見於古書。《淮南子·天文訓》：“昔者共工與顓頊（音“專郁”）爭為帝，怒而觸不周之山，天柱折，地維絕，天傾西北，故日月星辰移焉。”“觸”另解作“接觸”。蘇軾《定惠院海棠》詩：“明朝酒醒還獨來，雪落紛紛那忍觸。”由此引申，“觸目”表示“目光所及”，如“觸目皆是”、“觸目傷心”等。例如：“傳說帝堯在位時，天上突然出現十個太陽，令大地草木乾枯，哀鴻遍野，觸

目驚心，幸得后羿以箭射日，大地才重現生機。”“觸目”亦解作“顯眼；引人注目”，例如：“她那一頭染成七彩繽紛的長髮，非常觸目。”

至於“矚”，《漢語大詞典》解作“看見”。宋代沈遼《零陵先賢贊·素公》：“有塚嶙嶙，有池淵淵，不矚其人，惟餘蒼烟。”“矚目”猶“注視”，帶有較強的“主動”色彩。陳毅《七大開幕》詩：“試問九州誰作主，萬眾矚目清涼山。”若以近期發生的大事為例，我們可以說：“神舟五號順利升空，環繞地球飛行，實在是萬眾矚目的壯舉。”

Hampton Court Palace



During my stay in England this summer, I had a wonderful time visiting Hampton Court Palace. The Palace, which is set on the banks of the River Thames, began its illustrious history in 1513, when Cardinal Thomas Wolsey acquired the property as his residence. In the late 1520s, Wolsey was forced to present his palace to Henry VIII in a vain attempt to regain his royal favour.

The Palace is built of red brick with distinctive Tudor diamond patterns. Rows of chimneys top the building, each with a different design. One can just imagine how Henry's hunting party felt when, after a long cold day in the saddle, they saw wisps of welcoming smoke rising from the chimneys.

At the entrance to the inner part of the Palace stands the Clock Tower. Its astronomical clock tells the hour, the day, the month, the phase of the moon and the time of the high tides at London Bridge. It also shows the signs of the zodiac and the golden Sun travelling around an immobile Earth.

May Wong

Senior Official Languages Officer

Official Languages Division

Civil Service Bureau

The Chapel Royal is fit for a monarch. Its vaulted ceiling is painted in magnificent blue and gold. The Chapel is divided into two parts, the Chapel proper and the Royal Pew. In Tudor times the Royal Pew was divided into two large rooms, one for the king and one for the queen, with bay windows looking down into the body of the Chapel. Hence the king could attend to state affairs and hear Mass at the same time.



Henry VIII knew how to make his presence felt. In the Great Hall, the high table is placed on a raised platform next to the window, the source of light. As the king held a feast in the splendid hall decorated with pennants and royal arms, he was spotlighted for all to see. An interesting anecdote is that people at that time ate with a spoon as the fork was not invented until later.

After Henry other kings and queens took up residence in the Palace too. They rebuilt and added on to the original structure. Hampton Court Palace boasts sumptuous state apartments, a unique garden and extensive parkland. It houses a great dynastic art collection including paintings, tapestries and furniture. No wonder it has been claimed that the splendour of the Palace rivalled that of Louis XIV's Versailles in its heyday.



說好普通話 開創新天下

二零零一年，香港電台普通話台倡議各推廣普通話團體和學校組成“香港推廣普通話大聯盟”（以下簡稱“大聯盟”），共同籌劃活動，以帶動學習和多講普通話的風氣。

大聯盟先後於二零零一年和二零零二年舉辦“普通話日”和“普通話月”，今年更擴大規模，舉辦為期兩個月的“普通話節2003”。九月十四日至十一月十六日期間，大聯盟籌辦了一系列活動，包括：“2003年全港普通話歌唱大賽”、“普通話公開講座”、“學生普通話躍進大獎”和“全港普通話親子才藝大賽”等。這些活動備受社會各界支持，得到熱烈回響。

公務員事務局法定語文事務部是大聯盟的成員，過去兩年，除呼籲各政府部門積極響應外，更籌辦活動，

鼓勵同事多聽多講普通話。今年，我們為全港公務員舉辦網上普通話常識問答比賽；又在普通話節期間推出“普通話知多少”，每天在公務員事務局網頁介紹日常用語的粵普對照。以上活動的目的，是幫助同事說起普通話來，更流暢地道。

“普通話節2003”雖已圓滿結束，但推廣普通話的工作不會停頓下來。大聯盟已成立工作小組，策劃來年的活動，並決定建立網上支援中心，通過網上專頁，把“說好普通話，開創新天下”的訊息廣泛傳播。



多重身分的稱謂

在撰寫公函時，有沒有碰到稱謂的問題？用錯稱謂，小則貽笑大方，大則開罪他人。以下是幾個較常見的問題：

1 **問**：已婚女士的姓名若冠以夫姓，在稱謂上該如何處理？

答：根據《政府公文寫作手冊·公函》，已婚女士的稱謂若冠以夫姓，全稱時夫姓先行，本姓次之，如“陳張△△議員”、“黃李△△女士”。假如只提到姓氏，如“△議員”、“△主席”或“△會長”的話，則宜只用本姓，如“陳張△△議員”稱“張議員”，“黃李△△女士”稱“李女士”。

2 **問**：某協會的主席△先生身兼數職，既是該會主席，也兼任立法會議員。如致函該協會，上款應稱呼“△先生”、“△主席”還是“△議員”？

答：要視乎去信的目的而定。若為一般事務去信，例如答覆△先生代市民提出的詢問，可以稱呼“△議員”。假如涉及該協會的會務，例如答覆該協會的邀請或商討合辦活動的安排，則宜稱呼“△主席”，以切合其主席的身分。一般而言，如△君身兼立法會議員及某會主席，甚少稱“△先生”或“△女士”，而多稱呼其職銜，如“△議員”或“△主席”，以示尊重。

3 **問**：收信人的勳銜或榮銜該如何列出？

答：如須詳列收信人的勳銜或榮銜，可以英語縮略語表達，如“趙△△先生, G.B.S., J.P.”。“J.P.”一銜如必須以中文列出，則可省去“先生”、“女士”等稱謂，稱“△△△太平紳士”便可，如“林△△太平紳士, G.B.S.”。如收信人李△△先生的榮銜包括大紫荊勳章(G.B.M.)，則應稱呼“李△△大紫荊勳賢”。



上期“牛刀小試”遊戲答案：

圓日高山路口長
 橫雲細雨度斜陽
 扁舟橫渡無人過
 風捲殘花半日香

這種近乎謎語的詩體稱為“神智體”，也稱“謎象詩”，以圖寫意，令人自悟，能啟人神智，故稱之。漢字基本上屬於表形、表意的文字，形體由圖形逐漸變為筆畫，因此蘊含豐富的圖像元素。據說是蘇軾所作的《晚眺》(如圖)就是有名的謎象詩。各位讀者，可有興趣再動動腦筋，把圖中涵攝了詩境語彙的奇特字形(由右至左直排)“還原”為原詩的文字？(答案見本頁底部)



得獎名單如下：

姓名	所屬部門
Helen Wong	機電工程署
伍鴻財	社會福利署
張俊麟	黃大仙民政事務處
Joans Chow	房屋署
何燕媚	司法部

各得獎者將獲專函通知領獎。

答案：長亭短景無人畫，老大橫拖瘦竹邛。(蘇軾)。回首巖雲暮，扁舟巖巖渡竹邛。(蘇軾)。



Not-a-Mindboggler



This jumble of letters conceals some famous names from Greek and Roman mythologies. Each clue points to one name. Try and see if you can **circle** all those names out. The names may be spelt backward or forward, up or down, or even diagonally.

Clues

B (+ 6 letters)	The Roman god of wine and vegetation.
D (+ 4 letters)	The Roman equivalent of Artemis, the Moon-goddess and twin sister of Apollo.
M (+ 6 letters)	Messenger of the gods, also the name of the closest planet to the sun in the solar system.
C (+ 4 letters)	The Roman god of love, commonly represented as a winged infant.
M (+ 4 letters)	The nine Greek goddesses and patronesses of the arts.
M (+ 7 letters)	A monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man.
I (+ 5 letters)	The son of Daedalus, who fell to his death after flying too near the sun with the wings crafted by his father.
V (+ 5 letters)	The Roman blacksmith god and husband of Venus.
P (+ 7 letters)	The wife of Odysseus, who was famous for her faithfulness to her husband.
N (+ 8 letters)	A handsome youth who died of his hopeless obsession with his own image in the pond.
N (+ 6 letters)	The goddess of divine justice and vengeance.
C (+ 6 letters)	Fabulous creature, half-man, half-horse.
S (+ 3 letters)	The principal river of the underworld.
U (+ 6 letters)	The Latin equivalent of the Greek hero Odysseus.
P (+ 4 letters)	The last king of Troy.
I (+ 3 letters)	The goddess of the rainbow.
S (+ 7 letters)	The king of Corinth, who was condemned by Zeus to roll uphill a stone that always rolled down again.
P (+ 9 letters)	He made mankind out of clay, stole fire for them from heaven and taught them many arts.

To participate, please fill in the information below and send it, with the circled answers on the puzzle, to the Word Power Editorial Board, Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, Room 2315, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong before 16 February 2004.

Answers and names of winners will be published in the next issue of *Word Power*. Five prizes will be awarded. Lots will be drawn if necessary.

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神畫 · 神話

西洋繪畫中的希臘神話和傳說

公務員事務局
法定語文事務部
高級法定語文主任
陳慧思

維納斯 (Venus) 是希臘神話中愛與美之神。如果有一天她走進倫敦國家畫廊，看到歷代多位名家都以她為描繪對象，不知會否有點兒受寵若驚。假如她仔細欣賞畫廊的藏品，還會在畫布上看到眾神之王宙斯 (Zeus)、天后希拉 (Hera)、太陽神阿波羅 (Apollo)、智慧女神雅典娜 (Athena) 等等希臘諸神。

希臘神話和羅馬神話一脈相承，其中的故事和人物，一直是西方美術的重要題材。中世紀時，宗教畫是畫壇主流。到了文藝復興時期，人們重新探討古希臘的文學、藝術和思想。有些學者認為，神話題材在文藝復興時期流行起來，就是因為希臘神話給予畫家更大的創作自由。希臘神話不但有眾多性格迥異的神祇，還有凡人和英雄的故事。對藝術家來說，這都是極為豐富的靈感之源。羅馬詩人奧維 (Ovid) 的長篇詩歌《變形記》(Metamorphoses)，縷述了很多希臘神話和傳說。不少畫家都從中取材，利用相關題材作隱喻，抒情言志；又或利用神話中的角色，表達一些抽象概念，像愛情、慾望、貪念等等，猶如修辭學的擬人法。



十七世紀風景大師普深 (Nicolas Poussin) 所作的 *Echo and Narcissus* (~1629) (法國羅浮宮博物館Louvre藏)

欣賞以希臘神話為主題的畫作，除了可從構圖、用色、技法入手，也可以從畫面圖像去辨識畫中人的身分或作品描述的事跡。舉例來說，看到穿着有翅膀的飛鞋或手拿蛇髮女妖美杜莎 (Medusa) 頭顱的人，我們會知道他是希臘英雄普修斯 (Perseus)；看到葡萄葉、常春藤、酒杯、豹等元素，主角準是酒神狄奧尼索斯 (Dionysus)；如果是月桂冠、琴或太陽馬車，那人多半是太陽神阿波羅。不過，每一代的畫家，在描繪神



Echo and Narcissus (局部)，作者是受拉斐爾前派 (Pre-Raphaelist) 影響的英國畫家沃特豪斯 (J. W. Waterhouse) (1903) (英國利物浦Walker Art Gallery藏)

話和傳說時，都可能滲入當代對故事的詮釋，每多寄託。畫作的寓意和作畫年代的文化、觀念息息相關，是更深一層的研究課題。

工業革命後，眾多新畫派興起，如寫實主義、印象主義、抽象主義等等。隨着時代嬗變，新世紀的畫家有了更多描繪素材。可是，神話這個

古典題材並沒有湮滅，反之，好些現代名家採用新的表現手法，為傳統故事帶來了新面貌。這裏選刊的畫作，顯示了迷戀自己水中倒影終至化成水仙花的納西索斯 (Narcissus)，在古今畫作中的不同面貌。

希臘神話對西洋文學和藝術影響深遠，歷久不衰。掌握這方面的知識，不但有助我們了解西方文化，也讓我們在欣賞西方文學和藝術作品時，有更全面和深刻的體會。



西班牙超現實主義大師達里 (Salvador Dali) 所作的 *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937)，左方凝視水中倒影的納西索斯和右方拿着雞蛋的手互為映照。(英國泰特現代美術館Tate Modern藏)

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