

文訊

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一方水土養一方人

十一月下旬，北京馬路旁梧桐樹的葉子變黃了，在柔和的陽光下，隨風輕輕搖動，瑟瑟作響。在街上漫步，黃葉飄落到肩上、腳旁，讓人想起王昌齡《長信怨》的詩句：“金井梧桐秋葉黃，珠簾不捲夜來霜。”這裏還是一片秋去冬來的景象，東北的哈爾濱、黑龍江等地卻已是白雪皚皚，到處彌漫着混沌的冷霧。

過了長江，便是江南。江南的冬天總是姍姍來遲，雖然沒有北方那麼冷，但常常下微雨，刮起風時，又冷又濕，同樣教人難熬。在陰寒的冬日裏，蘇杭一帶的人整天埋怨身上的衣服潮乎乎，冷得人直打哆嗦。到了盛夏，江南名城又熱得像火爐一樣。北京、東北城市的夏天雖然也是驕陽似火，但烈日炎炎的日子沒有江南的那麼長。

一方水土養一方人，南方人和北方人順應氣候，各自發展出獨特的生活和文化。在南方人眼裏，東北是個會凍掉人耳朵的地方。此話雖有點誇張，但東北冷起來真的不是開玩笑，就算是北京人都害怕。北京房子的窗大都只是鑲了一層玻璃，但在東北三省，建築物窗戶的玻璃都是兩三層的，室內還有火炕保暖。南方氣候炎熱，房子不用那麼耐寒，大多牆壁高，前後門貫通，便於通風換氣。

到了冬天，東北會下雪，雪花又大又白，飄起來紛紛揚揚。這時，江河都結冰了，人們穿上厚厚的衣服，在冰上迴旋飛舞。有些人還會在冰上刨出一個大窟窿，光着身子跳進水裏，開始一年一度的冬泳。北京很少下雪，但湖泊也會結冰。十二月下旬，北海公園擠滿滑冰高手。不懂滑冰的人也會來湊熱鬧，坐在小小的冰車上用棍子抵着冰面，推動車身前進，雖沒有什麼花式動作，但在湖面滑來滑去，也挺好玩的。

湖上滑冰沒有江南人的份兒。然而，他們也有自己的冬日情趣。江浙一帶的人冬天會到郊外散步，碰上細雨濛濛的日子，會撐一把傘，沿着田隴的阡陌信步而行，偶爾停下來欣賞淡如水墨的遠山風景，這份閒情是在冰天雪地生活的人無法享受的。到了初夏，江南又有另一番景致。杭州

人愛遊西湖。麗日當空，他們佇立在湖畔的垂柳下，讓南風輕撫臉龐，看芙蓉在水中蕩漾，這就是古詩《對蓮》所描述“古柳垂堤風淡淡，新荷漫沼葉田田”的情景。還有，寒天也好，熱天也好，錢塘江的澎湃潮聲不斷敲打江南人的耳鼓，不少北方人遠道而來，就是為了一嘗聽潮之樂。

東北的冬天漫長，土地長期覆蓋着霜雪，能種的蔬菜很少，主要是土豆、蘿蔔和大白菜。巧婦難為無米之炊，東北人在吃方面沒那麼講究。他們喜歡燉菜，什麼都燉，土豆燉茄子、白菜燉豆腐，配上酸菜、饅頭和肉，這就是東北人的家常便飯。“靠山吃山，靠水吃水”，江南土地肥沃，是魚米之鄉，菜式自然細緻多樣。無錫排骨甜中帶鹹，杭州叫化雞肉嫩味美，揚州蟹粉獅子頭肥而不膩，名菜數之不盡。跟東北菜不同，江南烹調除了燉，還有蒸、燒、炒等，變化多端。

沒有去過東北的人，很多都以為在風寒雪深之地生活的人必定冷漠如冰。事實可不是這樣，在這片冬季漫長的大地上到處充滿人情。東北人，特別是農村人十分樸實，鄉土情誼深濃。他們熱情爽朗，待人處事實實在在，偶有客人過訪，無不倒屣相迎。江南人也同樣好客，但比較講求禮數，沒有東北人那麼率性。江南是靈秀之地，春花秋月、小橋流水讓人培養出感情豐富細膩的性格。多年來，這裏孕育了許多文人墨客，王羲之、李白、蘇軾、李清照便是佼佼者。

江南物產富庶，繁榮昌盛，人民生活多姿多彩。這塊寶地四季分明，風光綺麗，難怪唐代文人白居易說：“江南好，風景舊曾諳。日出江花紅勝火，春來江水綠如藍，能不憶江南？”東北沒有江南那麼好山好水，而且冬長夏短，但在數九季節，一家人躲在屋裏，圍着火爐，邊吃邊聊，哪怕門外大雪紛飛，室內卻溫暖如春。其實不論南北，一家人共聚一堂，樂也融融，外面天氣是冷是暖，也不太重要了。





The Coldest City on Earth

When will you say the weather is chilly? For most people in Hong Kong, they will complain “it’s freezing cold” when the mercury drops to 10°C. But in Yakutsk, “chilly” means -50°C. With temperatures hovering around -40°C in the winter months, the Russian city, located to the east of Siberia, is considered by many as the coldest city in the world.

There is one rule for those who visit Yakutsk in winter: don’t stay outdoors for more than 15 minutes even you have bundled up. This is no bluff. Cold air can easily penetrate even your double-layered thermal gloves and socks, and numb your fingers and toes in an instant. Just a five-minute walk to a corner store could bring you frostbite. When venturing out in the cold, you are not advised to wear glasses. At -40°C or so, the metal sticks to your cheeks, and you will find it hard to take your glasses off.

Shrouded in ice and fog, Yakutsk, home to over 250 000 people, is a city of otherworldly beauty. Against a hazy white backdrop, fur-clad locals, like snow angels, are often seen scurrying across streets. During the holiday season, beautifully adorned Christmas trees shimmer with an array of lights amidst snowflakes in public squares. To have a rare and brief moment of boisterous joy outdoors, the Yakuts huddle together in front of the trees, next to snow-capped bronze statues of legendary figures, which stand solemnly in the dark, completely unfettered by the cold.

Yakutsk’s cold weather—even by Siberian standards—makes the city a natural freezer. There is no problem with keeping food frozen in an open area. At road-side markets, fish are nicely bundled and arranged on wooden racks like bouquets of flowers sprinkled with snow. Growing crops is a forlorn hope in Yakutsk as the entire city stands on hard frozen ground. Fish and reindeer meat, often served raw, are the main staples of Yakuts. Dairy products are also widely consumed. *Salamat*, a creamy sour porridge made of wheat and butter, is usually eaten on feast days.

Far away from other settlements, Yakutsk is a secluded world. In summer, when Lena River thaws, people can take a long boat ride to get there. But for most of the year, the Siberian city is connected to the outside world by plane, or a road scarily known as the “Road of Bones.” This road was built in the 1930s by inmates from labour camps. Many forced labourers died

during the construction, and their skeletons made up part of the foundations. In the eyes of many, life in Yakutsk is miserable and gloomy. An old poem has it that: “Fearing the winters / Endless and icy / Nobody will visit / This wretched country / This vast prison house for exiles.”

Yet, Yakutsk isn’t as backward as most people think. With a rich endowment of diamonds and gold, the snow kingdom maintains a vibrant economy. Also, there are myriad lakes and rivers in the region. Local folklore goes that the god of creation flew around the world to dole out riches and natural resources. When he came to the region near Yakutsk, his fingers grew numb and he just threw everything away. And that’s why Yakutsk is a blessed land, despite its extreme weather.

Being long used to the frigid temperatures, Yakuts seldom grumble about the climate. Perhaps the only inconvenience is that they have to leave their car engines running for hours to fight against parts freezing over; gases from exhaust pipes make the air foggier and cloudier. Otherwise they go about their business every day. Schools are closed only when it is below -55°C. When the thermometer hits -20°C, they shout happily, “It’s a cosy, warm day.” Then with sleeves rolled up, they gather in parks and the marketplace, chatting as pleasantly as if in warm spring. What is their secret to enduring the cold? “A few shots of *russki chai*—literally Russian tea, which is actually vodka—can keep us warm and energetic whole day,” they reply.

When it comes to what to wear, Yakuts don’t have much choice. Fur, fur, fur. In the city, almost without exception, people are dressed in animal hides from head to toe. It is not uncommon to see women wearing rabbit fur coats, stylish head-hugging hats of Arctic fox and trendy reindeer boots. Animal lovers’ eyes will pop out of their heads when they are there. But clothing ethical issues aren’t the locals’ concern. Survival is.

Yakuts love their city, their culture and their icy surroundings. The cold weather barely registers in their minds. As they always say, the bitter winter is perhaps like the long workweek and the summer the brief weekend. When asked if they want to live somewhere else, most of them proudly reply, “No. It’s cold here and the conditions are harsh, but we are fine.”

Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything.

Billy Graham

A Cold Night and a Warm Train

It was January 2018, and an unprecedented cold spell had hit New York. In the wee hours of a Sunday, scores of homeless people, mostly wearing expressionless faces, boarded the E train, which plies between the Jamaica Centre in Queens and the World Trade Centre in Manhattan. Transforming their backpacks into pillows, they stretched across the seats and buried themselves beneath filthy blankets, worn-out suitcases by their sides. They hopped on the train with a humble wish to have a night's undisturbed sleep.

It was warm inside. The rough sleepers soon sank into an exhausted slumber. A man was snoozing near a pizza box, and another one clutched a bag of discarded cans while dozing off. Snoring sounds were faintly audible amidst the drone of the train. A middle-aged man took off his soaked shoes to dry his socks. When seeing journalists who were there to cover a story of the homeless, he asked in a tired voice, "Here to help us?"

According to a survey conducted in 2017, the number of rough sleepers around New York City hit a new record, close to 4 000, an alarming increase of 40% over the previous year. During sharp, frosty nights, they descend into the subway, which is open and heated around the clock. The E trains, in particular, are a haven for the destitute because they run underground for their entire ride, shielding the passengers from the cold. When temperatures are low, police officers and outreach workers gather at the endpoints of the subway lines to see if the less fortunate need help. But it is a daunting task as most of them decline whatever the officers propose.

As the night went on, more and more street sleepers got on the E train. Charity workers in orange parkas paced through the cars and found that only very few of the unhoused riders were appropriately dressed for the cold weather. Without any warm gear to wear, one of them wrapped up his legs with garbage bags. In one car, a pale-faced man bent over, shivering in a wheelchair wedged into a corner. When asked if he needed medical attention, he responded, "I'm good. I'm good." In another car, there was a man bundled up in bedsheets, with his bare, calloused feet exposed intermittently.

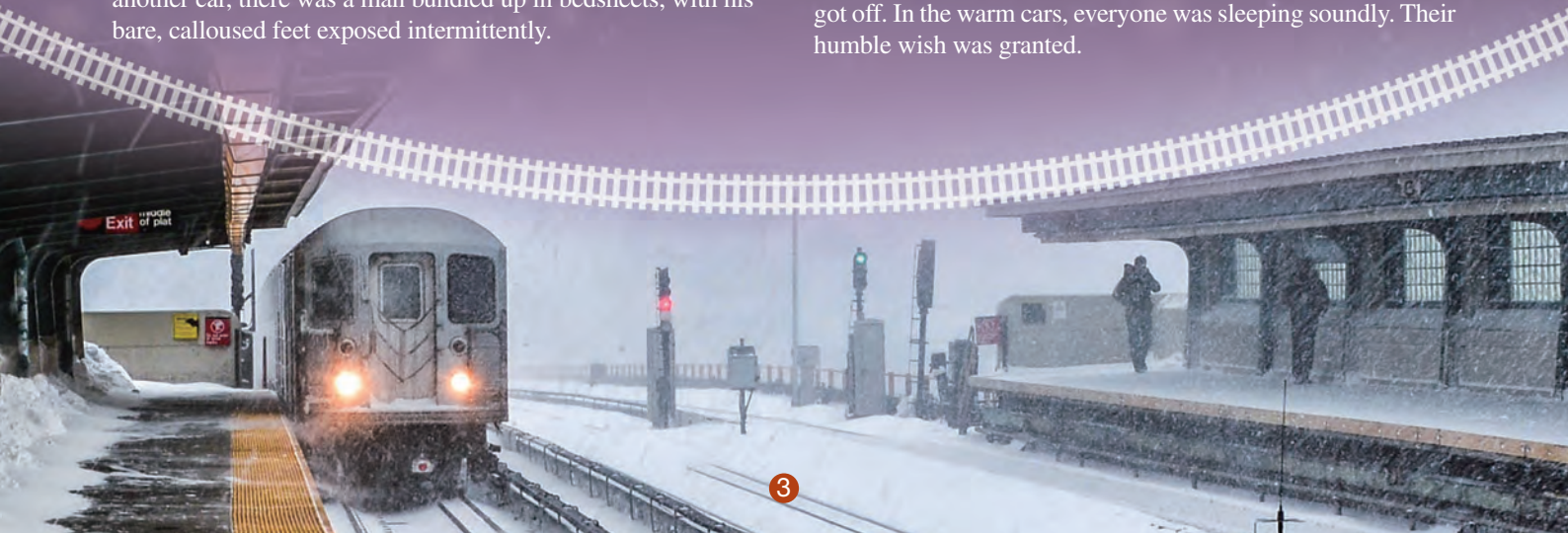
If there was a choice, no one would like to sleep on trains. In the interviews with the unhoused riders on the train, one sad story unfolded after another. A young woman became homeless after she was kicked out by her mother years ago. Although she had finished some college courses, she was unable to land herself a job. Frustrated and hopeless, she plunged into suicidal depression. "It's the first time I've slept on a train. If the weather is warmer, I usually sleep on the streets, in tunnels and sometimes under bridges. But tonight, it's so cold out there," she said.

A thirty-something musician was among the riders on the train. Having been victimised by schizophrenia since young adulthood, he spends most of his days in Pennsylvania Station, playing gospel music. On unbearably wintry nights, the E trains are his shelter. "It's much safer and warmer to sleep here. A lot of other lines pass through bad neighbourhoods," he said, "and people snatch your stuff away while you're sleeping."

For the street sleepers in New York City, the culture on each train line is different. While the mentally ill prefer bedding down on the E, alcoholics and drug addicts opt for longer lines because they are less conscious of the weather, and a longer haul promises a longer sleep. This mobile population has annoyed a number of commuters who grumble that the homeless riders always litter the cars with tissues, bottles or vomit. Some even say that they take up more space than they have paid for. Yes, this is a well-grounded complaint. But sad to say, the unpaid seats are also the space many a street sleeper desperately needs to avoid the sub-zero temperatures outside.

In response to the complaints, officials say that homeless people, like anybody else, must comply with the rules: they cannot obstruct movement or stretch across seats. It is fair enough. But they also emphasise that being homeless is not a crime, and everyone, housed or unhoused, has the same right to ride a train.

The train slowly pulled into the World Trade Centre Station, the last stop of the E line. A recorded message asking all riders to leave the train bellowed out from the loudspeaker. But no one got off. In the warm cars, everyone was sleeping soundly. Their humble wish was granted.



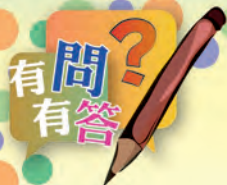


BOILING HOT OR FREEZING COLD

Brrr! It's a freezing cold day! Winter is usually mild in Hong Kong, but sometimes it's cold enough to make you shiver uncontrollably. Summer is a different story here, always muggy with frequent onslaught of unbearable heat waves. Since there are so many different types of weather, there are many ways to describe weather conditions. Join us for some language fun as we dive into a pool of weather vocabulary:



- It's biting cold**—We use this expression when it is extremely cold: *It's biting cold, and I can feel my fingertips growing numb.*
- There is a nip in the air**—A “nip” is a pinch, not as strong as bite, so this means “there is a feeling of cold”: *There's a nip in the air, now that autumn is here, so why not curl up with a good book to keep warm?*
- It's Arctic outside**—This phrase is self-explanatory: *It's Arctic outside, and looks as if it might snow again.*
- It's like the dead of winter out there**—**Dead of winter** is “the middle of winter, which is usually especially cold”: *It's like the dead of winter out there. A thick layer of ice is formed on the edge of the canopy.*
- Brass monkey weather**—While some people think “monkey” means the brass trays of a naval ship where cannonballs used to be stored, others argue that it refers to the bronze statues of the Three Wise Monkeys. When the temperature plummets, metal objects, whether trays or statues, contract. So this humorous phrase is used to describe nippy weather: *I am so sick of the brass monkey weather. I've been constantly cold for months.*
- It's boiling / sweltering / baking / roasting**—People use these phrases when they complain about very hot weather: *“It's boiling / sweltering / baking / roasting in here. Can we open a window?” she said loudly, sounding annoyed.*
- It's a scorcher**—A scorcher is an extremely hot and sunny day: *It's a scorcher. The observatory has issued a heat warning. So don't stay outdoors too long.*
- Sultry**—The word means “uncomfortably warm and with air that is a bit wet”: *It's hot, sultry and muggy. Can you think of any other adjectives that aptly describe Hong Kong's summer?*
- It's a sizzler**—When something such as hot oil or fat sizzles, it makes hissing sounds. Sizzler is an informal way of describing a very hot day: *It's a sizzler today. Let's go for a dip!*
- Dog days**—This expression means the hottest days of the year: *It's 38°C outside. We're well into the dog days of summer.*



1. 問：“特定要求”還是“特訂要求”？

答：“特定”解作“特別指定、規定”，例如“特定人選”，也指“跟一般不同的某一個”，例如“特定環境”。至於“特訂”一詞，並非規範詞語，辭書並無收錄。

2. 問：“元配”還是“原配”？

答：“元”、“原”二字都有起始、最早的意思。“元配”與“原配”兩詞都見於辭書，指第一次娶的妻子。“元配”和“原配”完全相通，兩個寫法均可。

3. 問：“瞭如指掌”還是“了如指掌”？

答：這個成語出自《論語·八佾》：“子曰：‘不知也。知其說者之於天下也，其如示諸斯乎！’指其掌”，本指天下事如掌中物，易於了解，後比喻對事情了解得非常清楚。內地和台灣的辭書大多“瞭如指掌”與“了如指掌”兼收，香港的辭書則只收“瞭如指掌”。

4. 問：“責成”還是“責承”？

答：正確寫法是“責成”，意思是“指定某人或某機構負責辦好某件事”。至於“責承”一詞，辭書並無收錄。

5. 問：“林林總總”還是“林林種種”？

答：正確寫法是“林林總總”。“林林總總”語出唐代柳宗元的《貞符》：“唯人之初，總總而生，林林而羣”，意指人或事物眾多，例如“超級市場的物品，林林總總，應有盡有。”

6. 問：“致哀”還是“誌哀”？

答：“致”可解作“向對方表達”，“誌”可解作“銘記”。“致哀”和“誌哀”都有表示哀悼的意思，但用法稍有不同。

“致哀”是表達哀悼之意，例如“往喪家致哀慰問”，或“向死難者致哀”。“誌哀”特指以某種形式表示哀悼，例如“下半旗誌哀”、“臂纏黑布誌哀”。

熱食與冷食

自古以來，中國人對吃有一套獨特理念，認為食物要味道好，首先要“熱”。《呂氏春秋·本味篇》引述有中華廚祖之稱的伊尹說，每種食材本身都帶有不好的氣味，必須適度用火，“時疾時徐”，方能“滅腥去臊除羶”，炮製出美饌佳肴，可見中國人深信熱食、熟食才可令人大飽口福。這套“火為之紀”的飲食觀念，西方人不是特別注重。食物只要味美，冷熱皆可入口。

東西方對冷食熱食的看法從喝水習慣可見一斑。根據傳統中醫理論，熱水可以溫暖人的五臟六腑，保持體內的陽氣，裨益甚大。為了健康，熟諳養生之道的中國人一年四季，從早到晚都喝熱水、溫水。西方人沒有溫固陽氣的概念，無論是冬天還是夏天都愛喝冷水、冰水。有朋友到家中茶敘，他們會按客人喜好奉上飲料，冷熱不拘。傳統中國人可不會這樣子，有客到訪，他們總會盛意拳拳為對方沖泡一壺熱茶，很少會給客人倒一杯冰凍的開水或果汁。

要延年益壽，中國人認為水要熱喝，食物要熱吃。南朝道教思想家陶弘景在《養性延命錄》一書中提到：“凡食，先欲得食熱食，次食溫暖食，次冷食。”文學著作也有對“不吃冷食”的描述。比如在《紅樓夢》中，賈寶玉說愛喝冷酒，薛寶釵便勸他說：“酒性最熱，要熱吃下去，發散的就快，要冷吃下去，便凝結在內，拿五臟去暖它，豈不受害？”熱吃熱喝對身體有益的觀念在中國人心中根深柢固，難怪我們一日三餐都偏愛熱騰騰的食物和飲料。

談到烹調，中國人相當注重火候，相信溫度能激發出食物的香味，通過煎、炸、蒸、煮、炒、燉等方法，令食物變得更滋味可口。清代美食家袁枚在《隨園食單》中曾說：“物味取鮮，全在起鍋時及鋒而試；略微停頓，便如霉過衣裳，雖錦繡綺羅，亦晦悶而舊氣可憎矣。”中國人吃飯時也常常說“趁熱吃，菜涼了就不好吃了”。這句話跟袁枚說的一樣，意思是所

有的菜肴，山珍海錯也好，清粥小菜也好，剛起鍋的才最新鮮可口。

對於熱吃，西方人似乎沒有中國人那麼執着。反之，他們燒菜時盡量保持食物原汁原味，避免營養流失，所以他們很喜歡吃生冷的蔬菜沙拉，吃牛排也不要全熟。中西烹調理念截然不同，兩者有何分別，僅僅看一眼廚房便可知曉。中國人的廚房往往熱火朝天，常常傳來滾油爆炒的聲音；西方人的廚房油煙比較少，煮食時很少用猛火，炒菜的聲音也是輕輕的，安靜得多。

中國人愛熱吃，也愛熱鬧，吃飯時喜歡用圓桌，團團圍坐，方便談話。菜肴放於桌子中央，一同分享，氣氛融洽熾熱，體現古人所謂“飲食所以合歡也”的精神。正因如此，中國人特別愛吃火鍋。大伙兒圍着熱滾滾的鍋子，觥籌交錯，鬧鬧哄哄，把各式各樣的肉類或蔬菜涮熟，同時涮出濃情厚誼。看來熱的食物真的可以溫暖人心，把人拉得更近。

西方的餐桌主要是正方或長方形的，絕少看到圓桌，大家只能與坐在附近的親友交談。西方人不慣共享食物，進餐時，食物大多是先行分配在賓客的餐碟上，依次享用頭盤、餐湯、主菜和甜品，所以在西方的宴會上，像中式聚餐中不停敬酒、互相讓菜的熱鬧場面十分罕見。

中西文化習俗不同，飲食之道迥異，繼而發展成中國人愛吃熱食和西方人常吃冷食的現象。熱食還是冷食更美味、更健康，各有說法，恐無定論。然而，《黃帝內經》記載了“熱無灼灼，寒無滄滄”的理論，說明吃東西必須注意溫度，太熱或太涼都對身體無益。過熱的食物會燙傷唇舌，太冷的食物又會冰壞牙齒。其實，冷熱食物都可以令人垂涎三尺，只要烹調有法，溫度得宜，便既可滿足味覺享受，又能收養生之效。

好言一句三冬暖，話不投機六月寒。

《增廣賢文》



THE SECRET IS THERE IS NO SECRET

Yip Kin-wa
Senior Quantity Surveyor
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If the above title has caught your eye, it has done the trick. This is a so-called oxymoron, where contradictory words are put together, often intentionally to impress. Don't get me wrong. This is not an article on abstruse linguistics, but just a casual sharing of some motley things I find interesting.

Oxymorons are commonly found in films, songs and books, epitomised by familiar titles like *Back to the Future*, "The Sound of Silence", *The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, etc. They are intended to create a dramatic effect to arouse the interest of the reader or audience. A theory has it that humans have a natural tendency to make sense of things—a genetic trait for survival—and anything that appears to defy our common sense would grab our attention.

The title of this article was inspired by the philosophical theme—"there is no secret ingredient"—expounded in the animated film *Kung Fu Panda*. Although the film title is not an oxymoron, the story itself is oxymoronic: a large, lumbering panda which seems too clumsy to learn martial arts finally becomes a kung fu master. Apart from these examples, I am eager to share with you a less commonly known one—*Stationary Traveller*. This oxymoron is in fact the title of a concept album by the English rock band *Camel*, released a few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As you browse through the Internet, you may notice that oxymorons are more common than you think. They are one of the devices used now and then in advertisements and news headlines to gain attention. Yet, oxymorons are also found in literature, such as the classic line "parting is such sweet sorrow" in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. They are also found in the Bible ("the last shall be first, and the first last") and in Zen teachings ("everything is emptiness; emptiness is everything").

Oxymorons are also ubiquitous in our daily lives, though many of them may not really be meant as funny or satirical. We just use them as stock phrases, without much thinking about their prima facie incongruity. For instance, we have no qualms about "original copy", "same difference", "never again", "click the start button to shut down", and so on.

If you are analytical (or trying to be so, like me), you may discern that oxymorons often comprise a deliberately chosen modifier (such as an adverb) to create the illusory contradiction. For example, if you replace "pretty ugly" with "very ugly", or

"constantly varying" with "always varying", the illusion will be gone. Other oxymorons serve to widen the meaning of the subject word, like "open secret" ("secret" is extended to cover something which is open to everyone), "virtual reality", and "no comment is a comment". Do they ring a bell?

Certainly there are oxymorons which are more than sheer wordplay. They reflect a mixed or confused state of emotion or matter, like "love hate" or "bittersweet". Take myself for example. I have had a deep, inexpressible bittersweet experience raising my children. Similarly, "order in disorder" is not a fancy notion but the essence of the chaos and complexity theory. The theory seeks to study the order that emerges from random interactions of all kinds, from predicting shopping habits and weather forecast, to emergence of consciousness. Incidentally, the title of an introductory book on the subject is oxymoronic: *Simply Complexity*.

Many other oxymorons are just as intriguing or thought-provoking. Take a look at the following:

- Do nothing, and everything will be done—does this saying of Lao Tzu really work?
- The biggest lesson in history is that humans never learn from history—sad but true.
- Absence of evidence is not an evidence of absence—does it sound like Sherlock Holmes?
- Saying nothing is saying something—watch out...should I say or should I not say?
- Every climax is an anti-climax—paradoxical?
- Disconnect to connect—go offline to talk to people right in front of you.
- Less random to look more random—this reminds me of the shuffle modes of music players. Are they really random? Or just seemingly random?

Arguably, some of the above examples may be more of an antithesis (with contrasting ideas) than an oxymoron (with conflicting ideas). They are anyway included for their appeal in one way or another.

So finally, we have "less is more", and I will leave it to you to explore your favourite oxymorons or create your own.

When the weather is hot, keep a cool mind. When the weather is cold, keep a warm heart.

Ajahn Brahm



冷暖人間

人生由無數零碎片段編織而成。在滾滾紅塵裏，一生匆匆而過，有教人回味無窮的日子，也有不堪回首的歲月，點點滴滴，悲喜交集。新詩詩人呂付平觸覺敏銳，默默注視身邊的人事世態，以筆名啞者無言譜寫人生樂章，深情細膩地刻畫人間的陰晴冷暖。

人人都會犯錯，可是並非每個人都有機會彌補過失。高三那年，啞者無言跟同學開了一個玩笑，多年後想為那場惡作劇道歉，可惜已無法補救。在詩作《口信》中，他述說自己當年少不更事，假冒女同學之名在橡皮上寫上“我喜歡你”幾個字，然後放進男同學的文具盒裏。他囑託好友把這樁舊事轉告男同學，希望他不要介意；還有，女同學已結了婚，生了孩子，家庭和睦，叫他不要再惦記她了。不久，詩人收到回覆，得知男同學的近況，當下呆着，心裏滿是愧疚。他在詩的結語寫道：“李炳穩，我高中時的同學／在二零一一年夏汛來臨之前，他走失於一條河流／生前在地方法院工作／患抑鬱症多年”。

在繁忙的城市裏，人們大多不會留意擦身而過的路人。然而，啞者無言在熙來攘往的街上碰到一個陌生人，把他寫進《乞討者》裏。那人叫王五，是個乞丐，年紀不輕，臉上經常掛着無奈的表情，每天在街上流浪，“不厭其煩地向走過他的潛在施捨者

擠出笑臉”。不過，詩人只是冷冷地觀察着他，“一次也沒有給過他錢／也不曾有過絲毫的內疚和同情”。後來，王五不見了。詩人說：“我再也沒有看到他。我甚至無法去核實和考證／我筆下的這個乞討者，是不是就叫王五／雖然我聽見過別的乞討者，也這樣叫過他”。

千里姻緣一線牽，有緣相聚，就要珍惜，《農夫》中的主人公深明此理。他是個戇直溫柔的漢子，從蕭瑟寒冷的北方，來到明媚溫暖的江南，種下莊稼，娶了妻子，當了父親。夫婦二人胼手胝足，辛勤耕作。農夫疼愛妻子，什麼都依着她，日子久了，便養成她的壞脾氣。某天清早，妻子對鏡梳頭，農夫叫了她一聲，她就嘆了一聲。農夫形容“這飽滿充盈的回應／

引來了窗外的陽光和清風”。他不介意妻子無理取鬧，常常跟自己說：“我只介意光陰如梭，將來我腿腳不便／耳聾眼花，再也追不上／那個能對我發脾氣的人”。這對夫妻雖然天天吵鬧，但仍是相濡以沫，甘苦與共。

然而，像農夫和他妻子那麼幸福的人實在不多，有些人命途坎坷，每天都在掙扎求存。啞者無言身邊有些人服毒、上吊，有些人患病、遇到意外，從此在他的眼前消失。在《那些遠去的名字》中，詩人嘆道：“我的生活圈子那麼小／小到一個小村，一座學校／一個社區，一個單位，一條路”，但讓人難過的消息依然那麼大，大得令他哭泣。生之留戀，死之悲哀。人從哇哇一聲落地開始，便要經歷生老病死，誰也不可逃避。那些消失的名字，有熟悉的，有陌生的，已成為詩人“記憶裏的黑白照片”。

生活雖是充滿唏噓，但也有動人的一刻。在《行走的火車》裏，一個患有高血壓、頭髮斑白的老婦人在火車上揉着痠痛的腿和脖子，身旁擱着“一箱用草紙包了一層又一層的土雞蛋”，不怕千里迢迢，坐二十多個小時的火車，為的是要南下照顧孫女兒。三年後，掛上了老花眼鏡的老婦人要回北方老家去。在漫長乏味的旅程中，她“抱緊自己的行李。抱緊行李中的／幾貼特效膏藥和幾張孫女的照片／前者用以治療疼痛，後者用以緩解思念”。

詩人又寫了另一個窩心故事。一個年輕父親在陽光和煦的冬日帶着快三歲的女兒到湖邊公園去，等待加班的妻子回來。他坐在公園長椅上，抱着孩子，“手心裏放着她嬌小和柔軟的手”，用溫柔憐愛的目光看着她。小丫頭睡着了，他“輕輕拍着她／就像三十年前，一位母親在勞動間歇，拍着她的兒子那樣”。縷縷陽光輕撫着父女兩人的臉，“將一個周末曬得慵懶而溫馨”。這首《溫暖》的詩讓人感到活着的意義。

啞者無言用淺白的文字、生動的畫面詠嘆冷暖人生，詩句平淡中見真摯，素樸中見絢爛。僅僅這幾首詩已構成了人生縮影，值得讀者深思細味。



寒來暑往，秋收冬藏。

周興嗣《千字文》



Weather Talk



As temperatures rise and fall, catchphrases like “Blimey! It’s nippy!” and “Bit warm out, isn’t it?” echo off the walls of offices, shopping malls and supermarkets. Weather is an interesting topic of conversation. How much do you know about it? Take our quiz below.

- 1 The heat index is a combination of two things. What are they?

- 2 What is the name of the condition suffered by people with an irrational fear of snow?

- 3 In the 1890s, an American physicist discovered that air temperature could be determined by counting the chirps of an insect. What was the insect?

- 4 Where do slugs usually go in winter?

- 5 Why are hot days sometimes called the “dog days of summer”?

- 6 How many times a year does the sun set and rise at the North Pole?

- 7 “Phew! What a scorcher!” Apart from referring to a hot day, a scorcher was used to describe a woman. What kind of woman was it?

- 8 There is a six-letter adjective that describes something pertaining to winter. It starts with “h” and ends with “l”. What is the adjective?

- 9 The maximum number of possible hours of sunshine in one year is approximately 4 380. But the Norwegian town Rjukan is shrouded in the shadow for quite a long period in a year. How long is the period?

- 10 A much-loved bear in children’s literature finds himself left outside on a frosty day, and ends up blanketed by snow before being rescued. What is the name of the bear?

Please send your entry to the Editorial Board of *Word Power*, Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, Room 2310, High Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong before 20 February 2019. Watch out for our coming issue to see if you get all the answers right, and better still, if you are one of the lucky five to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

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| 1. 錯 | 6. 對 | 11. 錯 |
| 2. 對 | 7. 錯 | 12. 錯 |
| 3. 錯 | 8. 錯 | 13. 對 |
| 4. 錯 | 9. 對 | 14. 錯 |
| 5. 對 | 10. 對 | 15. 對 |

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Issue No. 75 (March 2019) : Thorny Problems

二零一九年三月第七十五期主題：難題

Issue No. 76 (June 2019) : Humour

二零一九年六月第七十六期主題：幽默

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 71 for details. 歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第七十一期。

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