

文訊

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Fact in Fiction



In her powerful poem “Starvation Camp Near Jaslo”, Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska remarks on the limitation of history: “History rounds off skeletons to zero./A thousand and one is still only a thousand.” Where history ends, fiction begins. It falls to writers to tell the stories of those uncouneted individuals, to question conventional understanding of what has come before us, to fill in the gaps and silences of a vanishing world, to show what might have happened or what nearly didn’t.

Historical fiction is an intriguing hybrid of fact and fiction. Set in the past and usually involving historical events and personages, this genre inevitably demands some reckoning with what remains in the archival records. Yet it is, first and foremost, a work of literature requiring a leap of imagination and creativity. For plot development or dramatic purposes, events may be concertinaed, settings relocated, gaps fictionalised, interactions embellished, dialogues invented. When historical records and fictional narratives are seamlessly blended, the line between reality and fantasy can become ambiguous. This refined skill in storytelling gives rise to anxiety among historians, who are concerned that literary representations of history could be mistaken as true and reliable accounts of the times. Hilary Mantel’s Man Booker Prize-winning historical novels, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*, for example, are wrongly taken by some as a factual depiction of the Tudor period. In one of her BBC Reith Lectures, Mantel contends that while history is many things, it is not the past. “History, and science too, help us put our small lives in context,” she pronounces. “But if we want to meet the dead looking alive, we turn to art.”

Hilary Mantel’s novels are neither the first nor the last to influence the way people view certain historic events or figures. The novel *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell, for instance, has allegedly shaped the popular perception of the American Civil War and Reconstruction era. This raises an interesting question. Do novelists have a duty to deliver an accurate account of the history they present in their work? Stephanie Merritt, a literary critic and the author of a popular historical thriller series, clearly thinks not. She declares, “A novelist has no real duty to anything except the

story he or she is creating, the characters who inhabit it and whatever view of the world he or she is offering with the novel’s ending.” Indeed, if historical adherence were the only criterion that mattered, one could only imagine the bleakness of a world without Shakespeare’s history plays, Homer’s *Iliad*, Luo Guanzhong’s *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (《三國演義》) and a whole raft of other beloved classics. However, maintaining a reasonable degree of fidelity to historical facts is a necessity of the genre. The setting, characters, dialogues, as well as political and social atmosphere—all of these aspects must ring true in order to achieve a sense of realism, which is the key to immersing readers in the alternative reality of the novel. Anachronisms and errors, such as characters with modern sensibilities, may snap readers out of their reading trance. The most satisfying works of historical fiction are often those meticulously researched and skilfully crafted in a way that strikes a delicate balance between hard facts and wild fancy.

When it comes to the blurring of fact and fiction, the reader has as much responsibility as the author, if not more. When we are mesmerised by the illusory world constructed by the author, it is always helpful to remember that fiction, historical or not, is fiction. There is no better way to pay tribute to a great novel than investigating the real history behind the story. To many readers, historical fiction is a stepping stone to reading non-fiction accounts and biographies. For example, Janet Lewis’s *The Wife of Martin Guerre* is based on a real-life case in the 16th century. Readers who are enthralled by the impossible moral dilemma of Bertrande, the fictional heroine, would probably want to read historian Natalie Zemon Davis’s *The Return of Martin Guerre* to find out what befell the real Bertrande. History and historical fiction, therefore, are not necessarily mutually exclusive; they complement one another.

History is ultimately driven by desires, fears, expectations and hopes—the very essence of humanity. Through historical fiction, we are treated to a glimpse of the private and human moments, and the inner lives of those who have shaped the world we live in today. Historical fiction at its best gives sense and meaning to the chaos of history, allowing us to see the present more clearly and reflect on how we have or have not changed. Pablo Picasso says it best: “Art is a lie that makes us realise truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand.”



The Cost of Truth

While most stories of the rich and the powerful in the Renaissance period have been left on the ash heap of history, the curious case of their contemporary, a French peasant by the name of Martin Guerre, retains its power to fascinate. This true story of the return of a man who may or may not be Martin Guerre after years of absence has been the subject of many works, including films, fiction and non-fiction books, and even musicals. Perhaps the most remarkable addition to this collection of work is Janet Lewis's short novel *The Wife of Martin Guerre*, largely told from the perspective of Bertrande de Rols, Martin Guerre's wife.

The novella opens with the 1539 wedding of eleven-year-old Bertrande and Martin of a similar age, the children of two rich peasant families in Artigues, an isolated French village. Everyone at the wedding is enjoying themselves except the newlyweds. They have never spoken to each other until the wedding day and Bertrande has only been told about the marriage the day before. The wedding ends with the child couple sharing a tray of custard and pastry in their new marital bed, oblivious to the significance of the day.

A 16th century farm is a self-contained world unto itself. The father rules his household like "some Homeric king" and expects "strict obedience and reverence" from those in his charge. Even Martin, the only son, receives severe punishment for minor acts of disobedience. When he goes on a bear hunt without asking for permission, his father's fury gets Martin two broken teeth and an aching jaw. This ordeal bonds the young lovers, who become "a camp within a camp". As time goes by, Bertrande's affection for her husband evolves into "a deep and joyous passion, growing slowly and naturally as her body grew". She gives birth to a son at the age of 20. However, little does she know that the pride she has in being the mother of an heir is a prelude to calamity.

One day, Martin once again disobeys his father by taking the latter's seed wheat to plant a field—a trifling matter for the good of the farm, but still seen as an act of insubordination. Fearing the old man's wrath, Martin tells Bertrande that he will be away for a little while, eight days at most, until his father comes round. Years pass. Martin's parents die in his absence and Bertrande tends the household, raises their infant son and blooms in beauty as she waits for her husband's return. Eventually, Martin's face fades from her memory, and she begins to resign herself to the fact that she has been abandoned.

Eight years later, her husband returns to the family. Or does he? The bearded man walking through the door resembles Martin, knows things that only Martin knows. He even has the same two broken teeth. He has changed though—a wiser, more thoughtful man than the one she

remembers. Bertrande is intuitively worried—for one thing, her husband, choleric and imperious, would never have spoken so gently to his own child. For a while, she puts her doubts aside, allowing herself to indulge in her husband's newfound kindness. Bertrande soon gives birth to a second son. Yet her happiness is perpetually shadowed by a nagging suspicion that the man who has returned is not her husband and that she has therefore committed the mortal sin of adultery.

As her uneasiness grows, Bertrande is confronted by a difficult choice: should she expose the impostor and ruin everyone's happiness, or should she stay quiet and let sleeping dogs lie? Bertrande's dilemma may remind some readers of the iconic scene from the 1999 film *The Matrix*, where Neo, the protagonist, is invited to choose between the red pill of truth and the blue pill of denial. While Neo chooses to be enlightened, Cypher, a crew member disgusted with the harshness of reality, betrays his comrades in exchange for being brought back into the Matrix, a simulated reality where he can live a comfortable lie. He declares, "Ignorance is bliss." In a similar sentiment, Bertrande's old housekeeper says to her master accusingly, "Madame, I would have you still be deceived. We were all happy then." What would we do if we were in Bertrande's place?

In barely a hundred pages, Lewis tells a compelling historical story of depth and power that raises contemporary questions about the value of truth, about identity and belonging, about moral choices and responsibility, and about a woman's capacity to act within a strict patriarchal society. Since its first publication in 1941, the book has been held by many as one of the greatest short novels in American literature. Robert Hass, a Pulitzer Prize winner, writes, "I don't know how many times over the years I've heard writers, making their lists of great neglected books of the 20th century, begin talking with excitement about *The Wife of Martin Guerre*."

Although Janet Lewis is best known for this work, she is as fine a poet as she is a novelist. Lewis stated in an interview, "Probably my poetry was better than my prose because poetry itself is better than prose, usually." A verse of her poem "Helen Grown Old" might serve as an accurate depiction of the fate of Bertrande as well as Helen of Troy, both trapped by love and duty in a male-dominated world:

*When the last flame had faded from the cloud,
And by the darkening sea
The plain lay empty of the arméd crowd,
Then was she free
Who had been ruled by passion blind and proud?*

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination.

John Lennon



爱情的真相

英國哲學家狄波頓(Alain de Botton)曾慨歎，浪漫小說不僅沒有啟發我們怎樣去愛，還耽誤了世人的幸福。人們受浪漫小說誤導，滿腦子都是不切實際的幻想，便會對現實中的伴侶百般挑剔，最後難逃分手下場。所以，為讀者着想，言情小說最好少寫浪漫虛象，多談愛情實相。狄波頓把這個理念付諸實行，撰寫了兩本暢銷愛情小說——《我談的那場戀愛》(*Essays in Love*)和《愛的進化論》(*The Course of Love*)，忠實記錄戀愛和婚姻的真實模樣。

《我談的那場戀愛》一反浪漫小說套路，重點不是放在男女主角如何排除萬難走到一起，而是聚焦情侶之間日常相處，從心理和哲學角度剖析兩性關係。男主角是居於倫敦的建築師，他從巴黎坐飛機回家時，對鄰座乘客一見鍾情，後來兩人成為情侶。小說每章各有特定主題，男主角以第一身角度憶述往事後，轉至內心獨白，緊扣該章主題，反思愛情的虛實。以故事首章〈浪漫的宿命論〉為例，男主角在飛機上結識理想情人，他一面理性地算出這件事的機率，一面思考自己為何無法視之為純粹巧合，結論是：相愛時你儂我儂，自然斷定這場邂逅份屬必然；日後感情轉淡相看兩厭，便會覺得那次相遇純屬偶然。

又如〈你愛上她哪一點〉這章，男主角某一晚聽着巴哈的樂曲，深情望着埋首閱讀的女友，覺得她的臉龐在昏黃燈光下就像天使一樣美。可是，當女友抱怨音樂害她無法專心看時尚雜誌，主人公詫異之餘，思緒也就跳到笛卡兒關於表象和本質的理論，自忖對方在自己心目中的完美形象，或許只是出於愛情的光環效應：

拿綠洲情結做例子，口渴難耐的人以為他看到了水……是因為需要這個信念。迫切的需要帶來紓困的幻覺：口渴引發水的幻覺，而對愛的渴望則引發理想情人的幻覺……難道我也是類似錯覺的受害者？

愛情大抵都是這樣：相遇乃命中注定，熱戀時纏綿悱惻，分手時傷心欲絕，然後再次墜入情網，展開另一輪循環。作者通過男女主角相識、相戀、相忘的過程，闡述和印證獨特的愛情觀。讀畢此書，就像看了二十四篇愛情論文。

《我談的那場戀愛》出版時，狄波頓僅二十多歲。隨着人生閱歷增長，他踏入中年後推出續作《愛的進化論》，探討戀愛的下一階段——婚姻。故事講述前

作男主角與舊愛分手後數年，移居愛丁堡，結識了新女友。主角的新戀情萌芽之際，作者隨即預告兩人將會結婚，然後生兒育女。他們會經常為金錢擔憂，其中一人會有外遇。兩人開始相戀的章節如此作結：“他們的生活中會有煩悶的時刻；他們有時會想殺了對方，偶爾也不免想自殺。這，才是真正的愛情故事。”

狄波頓事先張揚劇情發展，讀者或會感到掃興，但作者這樣鋪排自有深意：“對於愛情的開端，我們似乎知道得遠遠太多，對於愛情可以怎麼持續下去卻又輕率地置之不理。”從故事布局以至首尾兩章的標題〈浪漫主義〉和〈超越浪漫主義〉可見，狄波頓所關注的是：當浪漫不再，夫妻如何仍能抱持希望，讓婚姻得以延續。

狄波頓秉承前作風格，詳寫相處細節，描述兩人新婚後總是為“愚蠢瑣碎的小事”爭論不休——哪款杯子與家中的餐桌較相襯？睡覺前應該關窗還是開窗？應否早點出門前往已預約的餐廳？即使子女出生後，兩人也會偶爾為誰該負責熨被套這樣的雜務而爭吵。故事看似東拼西湊，卻是作者刻意為之。他曾戲言，浪漫小說的角色總是不用處理家務，不用工作掙錢，彷彿這些事情跟一段感情關係毫不相干，而現實中感情卻往往被日常瑣事一點點消磨殆盡。全書改以第三身角度評論，以寫實細節串連劇情，縷述兩口子的想法，為的是讓愛情故事具備他認為該有的特質：刻劃愛情的種種難題，充當讀者的指路明燈。

浪漫小說多在戀情開花結果時收筆，讓故事在最美好一刻結束；但現實就如狄波頓在《愛的進化論》所述，“結婚的對象不是感覺，所以自然無法將特定的感覺永久固定下來”。他指出浪漫主義強調要找到“對的人”，但每個人經過近距離檢視後，其實都有點不太對。最適合自己的伴侶，是能夠以智慧和風度調適雙方差異的人。碰上所謂“不對”的地方，要學懂以幽默和善意應對。

詩人聞一多大概也深諳此理。我們多以枕邊人鼾聲如雷為苦，他卻表示人世間最美妙的音樂，莫過於夜闌人靜，妻兒從榻上傳來的鼾聲。聞一多生活的時代，正值世局動盪不安，家人在身邊自在酣睡，詩人只覺歲月靜好，鼾聲如歌。

夜半被鼾聲吵醒，與其躺在牀上生悶氣，倒不如亮起牀頭燈，細閱狄波頓對愛情虛實的妙論。對愛情有更透徹的了解後，或許不必經歷苦難，也能達到聞一多的境界。



COMING FROM REALITY

A year before his tragic death in 2014, Malik Bendjelloul won the Academy Award for his first (and last) documentary film *Searching for Sugar Man*. Still, the masterpiece is not without its critics, who question the cherry-picking narrative of the Swedish director.

Searching for Sugar Man revolves around the search for Rodriguez, a mysterious singer-songwriter from the United States, who released two albums *Cold Fact* and *Coming from Reality* in the early 1970s. Although both records were commercial flops in his homeland, many of his songs, including “Sugar Man”, became great hits in South Africa, gaining Rodriguez the same popularity as The Beatles and Simon & Garfunkel. Yet little was known about Rodriguez. Rumours had it that he had killed himself on stage in front of a live audience. However, in 1997, two South African fans—one of them Stephen Segerman, a record store owner—made an unexpected discovery when they set out to find out what really happened to their musical hero.

They found that Rodriguez, whose full name is Sixto Rodriguez, was still alive and living in his hometown of Detroit, Michigan. He was entirely oblivious to his legendary status in South Africa. Nonetheless, with the help of his fans, he went on a concert tour there in 1998, finally earning his long overdue and well-deserved recognition.

Critics argue that Rodriguez, unlike the man depicted in *Searching for Sugar Man*, never was a nobody. He actually toured Australia in 1979 and 1981. By excluding key facts like Rodriguez’s Australian tours, Bendjelloul is accused of committing the sin of omission to tell a more impactful and emotional story. Similar criticisms ensue, questioning the honesty of Bendjelloul’s work and insisting that this film be thought of as nothing more than an exercise in myth-making. One reviewer asks, “Is it okay to bend the truth in order to make the story better than it really is?”

This question hints at an assumption about documentaries that they ought to give audience access to the truth of things. Yet, documentaries might be something more complex than merely presenting facts and documenting the reality.

In his book *Directing the Documentary*, Michael Rabiger raises two questions in the ongoing debate about the basis of documentaries: What is documentary truth? How objective is the camera? He points out that people assume documentaries are

objective because the camera is a mechanical recording device. However, documentaries do not bring us unmediated reality. Similar to fiction films, they are authored constructs of selected shots and viewpoints pieced together by filmmakers, who have to make subjective decisions in the filmmaking process. Sometimes, dramatic ingredients similar to those in fictional stories may also be found in documentaries. Following this line of thought, documentaries, as a film genre, are highly selective in nature.

With Michael Rabiger’s observations in mind, we might be able to look at the controversies surrounding *Searching for Sugar Man* in a different way. Before travelling to South Africa in 2006, Malik Bendjelloul had no idea who Rodriguez was. During his journey, he met Stephen Segerman, who recounted to his new acquaintance the story of how his digging into the past of a supposedly deceased musician turned into the rediscovery of a living legend. Realising the potential of this real-life fairy tale, Bendjelloul went on to make the film. While it might be factual that Rodriguez has had some sort of reputation in Australia since the late 1970s, the reality is that Bendjelloul’s work retells the story of Rodriguez mainly through the perspective of Segerman rather than that of an omnipotent narrator.

Werner Herzog, a renowned German filmmaker, emphasises the subtle difference between “fact” and “truth” in documentary cinema. He reckons that facts cannot be overlooked, but they neither constitute truth nor give us insight into it. Using books as a metaphor, he says, “The book of books is not the New York phone directory with four million entries correct.” Instead of solely focusing on “factual truth”, Herzog attempts to go beyond the mere facts of things in order to dig deeper into a documentary story for the sake of revealing a deeper stratum of truth—the “ecstatic truth”—which can inspire and enrich the audience.

By Werner Herzog’s standards, *Searching for Sugar Man* manages to reach beyond the surface of facts to the deeper emotional undercurrents, yet without muddling reality. It explores a universal theme that resonates with us all: coping with failure and success. After being dropped by his record label, Rodriguez simply carries on with his life, obtaining a degree in philosophy near the age of 40 and continuing to make a living as a construction worker. When he performed to sell-out crowds in South Africa in 1998, one would naturally expect him to be bewildered at his newfound success. On the contrary, he took to the stage with an air of absolute serenity and modesty. In *Searching for Sugar Man*, viewers can draw inspiration from a committed artist who preserves grace and dignity in the face of both adversity and prosperity.

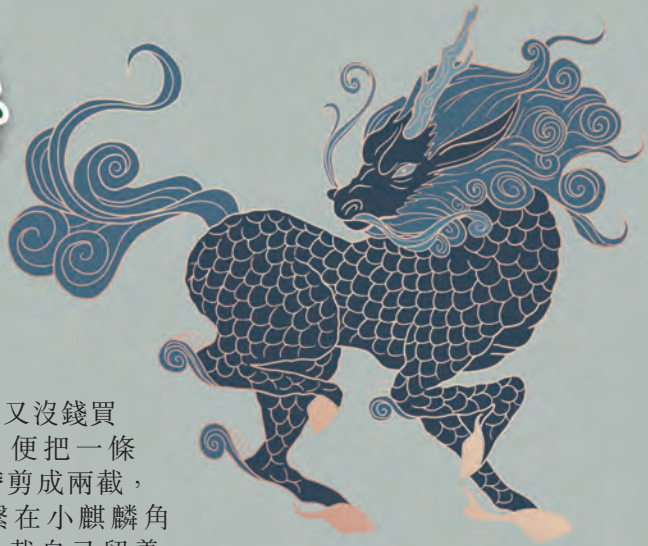
Instead of asking whether it is proper for a documentary film to bend the truth, a better question, in Michael Rabiger’s words, might be: “Must one show literal truth or can it be the *spirit of the truth*?”

Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality.
It’s a way of understanding it.

Lloyd Alexander



神獸物語



上古時代，洪荒大地孕育萬靈。青丘有九尾狐，叫聲像嬰兒啼哭，會吃人；晁爰山有類獸，樣子像狸，雌雄同體，吃其肉可免生嫉妒心。又有龍族居於四海，鳳凰族與麒麟族棲於西海鳳麟洲。天空不時有重明鳥展翅飛過，偶有羽毛從空中掉落，地上的人便趕緊上前拾起。重明鳥的羽毛蘊含超凡力量，附在箭鏃上能獵殺兇獸。女媧創造的人族雖較其他種族羸弱，但憑着團結、機智、勇氣，漸漸在這個弱肉強食、危機四伏的世界站穩陣腳。

蚩尤率領九黎吞併其他部落，黃帝與之展開連場激戰。當雙方在涿鹿決一死戰時，蚩尤請來風伯、雨師興雲布雨，頃刻天昏地暗、雷電交加。黃帝召來應龍，牠展開雙翼，在電光雷鳴中昂頭擺尾，把傾盆暴雨盡吸口中。風伯和雨師齊聲喊道：“起！”一股滔天巨浪憑空而起，朝着應龍呼嘯而去。應龍快要支撐不住之際，旱神女魃及時趕至，霎時間風停雨歇、赤地千里，戰局瞬間急轉。應龍乘機衝入敵陣，殺死蚩尤。女魃和應龍經此一役，神力衰竭，再也無力升天。女魃從此隱居北方，應龍則蟄伏南方山澤。北方至今乾旱少雨，南方潮濕雨霏，其故在此。

黃帝戰勝蚩尤後，統一華夏各族。為感謝神靈幫忙，並祈求風調雨順，黃帝身穿黃袍，在王屋山設壇祭天。一羣鳳凰拖拽着華麗斑斕的長長尾羽，從遠處飛來，在祭壇上空盤旋，鳴聲高亢清越。鳳凰是百鳥之王，品性高潔，非梧桐不棲，非竹實不食，非醴泉不飲，對人間煙火甚為不喜。牠們與黃帝打過招呼後，便振翅高飛，從此在世上消失。

人族大興，洪荒大地邁進新紀元，不單是鳳凰，其他神獸也紛紛遠離人間。可是，有幾隻麒麟卻留了下來。

其中一隻遇見了小時候的孔子。孔子年幼即異於常人，小伙伴都在玩家家酒，他卻愛拿着杯皿一本正經地學行祭禮。一天，他經過河邊，看見幾個小孩正向一頭小獸扔石塊，連忙上前把他們趕走，抱起小獸。只見牠額頭長得像狼，身體像麋鹿，蹄子像馬，尾巴像牛，渾身披着五彩鱗片，最奇怪的是，額上長出一隻短短的肉角。孔子一看到這隻角，就認出了是麒麟，遂脫下上衣，蓋在麒麟身上，又給牠包紮傷口。孔子自此每天都來河邊，和小麒麟玩一會兒，一人一獸成了好朋友。小麒麟性情溫和，連走路都小心翼翼，生怕踩到蟲子或花草。孔子想送點什麼給小麒

麟，卻又沒錢買禮物，便把一條紅絲帶剪成兩截，一截繫在小麒麟角上，一截自己留着。

麒麟顯得很歡喜，舔了舔孔子的手，忽然從口中吐出三卷玉書，示意孔子拿着。翌日，孔子再來時，小麒麟已不見蹤影。孔子自得玉書後，鎮日手不釋卷，終於成了學富五車、博古通今的至聖先師。

數十年倏忽而逝，孔子不覺已至從心所欲之年。有一次他隨魯哀公狩獵，因年紀老邁獨自留在帳篷裏，手持竹簡，俯首沉思。這時，一名內侍走了進來，說叔孫氏的家臣獵到一頭似牛非牛、似鹿非鹿的怪物，請孔子前往辨認。孔子急忙跑到林地，赫然看見一隻麒麟躺在地上，腿被打斷，已經沒了氣息。孔子俯身細看，發現麒麟的獨角上，繫着一條已褪色的紅絲帶。孔子悲不自勝，撫琴悲歌：“唐虞世兮麟鳳游。今非其時來何求。麟兮麟兮我心憂。”

千多年後，蒙古大汗成吉思汗南征西討，戰無不克。此時他正率領浩浩蕩蕩的大軍，準備進攻印度。軍隊前進至東印度鐵門關時，一隻鹿形馬尾、渾身泛着綠光的異獸攔在前面，並口吐人言：“讓你們的君主早日退兵吧。”軍師耶律楚材驅馬上前，對成吉思汗說：“這是神獸白端，屬麒麟族，通曉各國語言，秉性好生惡殺。麒麟擋道，是在告誡我們遵循天意，收兵以保全民命。”成吉思汗沉吟半天，終於下詔收兵。孔子和成吉思汗與麒麟的故事傳誦至今，連阿根廷大文豪波赫士(Jorge Luis Borges)也曾聽聞，並把這些故事收錄於《想像的動物》(Book of Imaginary Beings)一書。

凡人已很久沒見過神獸靈鳥。對現代人來說，神獸只存在於神話故事。或許偶爾仍有好奇的幼獸遊歷人間，逗留一段時間後，又悄然離去。如果聽到哪裏出現水怪、雪人、大腳怪等神秘生物，說不定正是來自海外仙山的神禽異獸呢！

假作真時真亦假，無為有處有還無。

曹雪芹《紅樓夢》



之乎者也

野史記載，宋太祖趙匡胤打算拓展外城，在宰相趙普陪同下親臨朱雀門視察，抬頭看見門匾上題“朱雀之門”四字，遂問趙普：“為何不只寫‘朱雀門’呢？加‘之’字有何用？”趙普回答：“有語助之用。”宋太祖聽後哈哈大笑，說：“之乎者也這些字，助得了什麼事？”宋太祖即位前本為武將，文言虛詞在他眼中或許沒什麼用，但對文人來說，用處大矣！

在談虛詞有何用之前，先給大家講個載於馮夢龍《智囊全集》的故事：某張姓財主苦於無子，便為獨女招了贅婿。不料沒多久，小妾竟給他生了個兒子，取名一飛。兒子四歲時，張財主重病纏身，在病榻中召來女婿，說：“小妾生的兒子不配繼承我的財產，我所有的都給你們夫婦吧。只要你們倆能保他們母子衣食無憂、有地立足就行了。”說罷拿出契書寫道：“張一非吾子也家財盡與吾婿外人不得爭奪”。女婿一看，心裏默唸：“張一非吾子也，家財盡與吾婿，外人不得爭奪。”便高高興興接收了丈人的遺產。張一飛長大後，先後兩次到官府告狀，要求分家產。第一名官吏看了契書後即駁回他的訴求，第二名官吏卻把家財判給張一飛，原因是他認為契書該如此解讀：“張一非，吾子也，家財盡與。吾婿外人，不得爭奪。”他對張家女婿說：“你丈人白紙黑字寫着‘吾婿外人’，你還有臉繼承家產？他故意把‘飛’寫作‘非’，不過是怕孤兒寡婦被你欺負罷了。”一份遺囑，兩種解讀，都是沒有標點符號惹的禍。

古時沒有標點符號，讀書人須自行斷句，一旦出錯，易生歧義。要明辨句讀，虛詞是重要標誌。比如廣東話常說的“打者，愛也”以至《論語》的“生而知之者，上也；學而知之者，次也”，“者”和“也”皆為停頓處。“……者……也”是常見的文言句式，其中“……者”是句子要說明的事物，“……也”則是說明事物的內容。掌握了這點，再讀同樣句式的文言長句，例如：“簡侮大臣無禮父兄勞苦百姓殺戮不幸者可亡也”（《韓非子·亡徵》），便能大致明白其意思了。

虛詞的另一用途是表達語氣。清代學者劉淇說：“構文之道，不過虛字實字兩端，實字其體骨，而虛字其性情也。”同一句話，只要語氣不同，所表達的意思大相徑庭。儘管現代即時通訊軟件有標點符號和各式各樣的表情符號，有時仍難免產生誤會。古文連

標點符號也欠奉，全憑虛詞才能準確傳達激切、舒緩、頓宕、感歎之情。韓愈的《祭十二郎文》被譽為“祭文中的千年絕調”。南宋文人安子順評論說：“讀韓退之《祭十二郎文》而不墮淚者，其人必不友。”此文之所以感人肺腑，除了情真意切外，與句末多用語氣助詞有很大關係。比如韓愈描寫得悉侄兒去世時的心情：

嗚呼！其信然邪？其夢邪？其傳之非其真邪？信也，吾兄之盛德而夭其嗣乎？汝之純明而不克蒙其澤乎？少者強者而夭歿，長者衰者而存全乎？

“邪”字與“乎”字用於句末時表示疑問或反詰之意。上文首三句以“邪”字結尾的反問句，凸顯了韓愈驚聞噩耗時如雷轟頂，茫茫然失魂落魄的情狀。隨後三句以“乎”字收結的反問句，層層遞進、直抒胸臆，讓人深深感受到作者悲慟之情。

對今人來說，要弄懂文言虛詞的涵義及作用，殊不容易。想不到古人對運用虛詞同樣大感困難。唐代文人杜溫夫在兩個月內給柳宗元寫了三封信，每封都洋洋灑灑上千字，另有文章十卷，請柳指正。柳宗元遂修《復杜溫夫書》，毫不客氣批評他分不清常見語氣詞的基本用法。柳宗元指出，“乎、歟、耶、哉、夫”是表示疑問語氣的虛詞，“矣、耳、焉、也”則是表示肯定語氣的虛詞，但杜溫夫卻把兩類虛詞混淆亂用。柳宗元建議杜溫夫認真揣摩前人名家使用虛詞的方法，自會有所得益。

文言虛詞複雜多變，除了上文所述，還有諸多妙用，且愈是常用的虛詞，用法往往愈為靈活。古諺有云：“讀書百遍，其義自見。”反復吟詠，咀嚼虛詞所表達的語氣，久而久之便能養成語感，平日閱讀古文時便可如劉淇所言，品出文章的真性情。

君子之言寡而實，小人之言多而虛。

劉向《說苑·談叢》

無法擺脫的孤寂

——《霜遇》劇評



署理一級行政主任李曉琳

疫情肆虐，人與人之間要保持社交距離，彼此變得疏離，臉上隨時戴着面具。香港話劇團《霜遇》的劇情雖與瘟疫無關，卻令人聯想到疫情下若即若離的人際關係。

《霜遇》講述一對男女相遇的故事。在冰天雪地裏，一對陌生男女在公園邂逅，二人在進退之間遊走，交織出一段撲朔迷離的關係。故事情節雖不複雜，述說方式卻不簡單。

《霜遇》的特點在於創新的舞台語言。男女主角的對話常常出現斷句，時而重重複複，時而欲言又止。完整的句子斷裂成數截，停頓與沉默帶有詩意的留白。巧妙的是，這種留白更能形成微妙的張力，推動角色的慾望和情感暗湧，使人物的思想感情、行為動機出現細膩變化。語言與詩歌一樣，吸引之處在於耐人尋味。“可能”、“或者”、“無咩”、“係咩”這類語義模糊的詞組貫穿全劇，需要結合語境和情境，才具有意義，帶來更多詮釋方向。劇中角色常常搖擺不定，徘徊在相反的兩端，說着自相矛盾的話，有時甚至違反邏輯，顯得莫名其妙。然而，這樣的語言卻令我感到很真實，甚至比流暢的語言更真實，它觸及人心深處，表現了人的恐懼、懦弱、焦慮，讓我回想起生活中多個有苦難言、百辭莫辯的片刻。

《霜遇》對於語言形式的探討，緊扣孤獨感這個主題。語言是人類文明的產物，人類渴望被理解、獲得回應，於是創造語言，與他人溝通，希望對抗和克服與生俱來的孤獨感。《霜遇》卻透過舞台語言的實驗提出質疑：語言真的能讓人擺脫孤獨感嗎？劇中主角好像在捉迷藏，以語言逃避或掩飾真實情感和想法。男主角多次說自己趕着開會，卻在原地徘徊不去。言語不一定有助理解人的內心，反而可能讓人更遠離真實，更感孤寂。相反，在那些靜默無聲的時刻，男女主角似乎更靠近彼此，戲劇張力更強，尤其在戲劇高潮一幕，二人在酒店房間離別，電話鈴聲此起彼落，二人凝視對方，不發一言，緊緊相擁，他把外套遞給她，目送她離開，轉身躺下，進入夢一般的情境。《霜遇》似乎向我們證明，戲劇不一定需要倚賴語言，有時候沉默比對話“說”得更多。

《霜遇》的主題內容、語言形式、舞台設計互相呼應，字與字之間的空白映襯着人與人之間的疏離，這種虛空也反映在舞台空間上。舞台沒有複雜的背景，只有白茫茫的雪地；沒有多餘擺設，只有一張牀（也是長椅）。舞台四面豎立着玻璃板，本以為是防疫措施，直到戲劇中段，台上先後下雨、下雪，才明白這個設計不但是技術所需，也是孤立和疏離的意象，讓觀眾深深感受到這種空白所帶來的不安和孤獨。這些感覺不但源於表現手法，也來自劇情的空白。角色的背景資料有限，只知男主角家有妻兒，從事白領工作，為了開會才來到女主角居住的城市。對於男女主角的過去、經歷、價值觀，甚或名字和年齡，觀眾一無所知。我們習慣通過舞台上的事件獲取大量資訊，當面對這樣一齣充滿未知的舞台劇，便不期然感到迷惘，不知所措。有趣的是，觀眾的無助感正好呼應角色所呈現的孤獨感，觀眾彷彿也成了舞台的鏡像。

《霜遇》迫使我們直視人類共同的生存境況——永遠無法擺脫孤寂。兩個孤獨漂泊的靈魂，情感和慾望無處安放，在街頭萍水相逢，互相慰藉。男主角沒扮演好自己的社會角色：作為員工，他失職被解僱；作為一家之主，他被趕出家門。女主角開場以衣冠不整的形象出現，似乎總是處於被拋棄的絕望邊緣。二人不善於表達自己，無法與社會連繫，在邊緣拼命掙扎……他們連名字也欠奉，可以是你，可以是我，可以是人海中任何一個。

《霜遇》雖然看似悲觀，但仍帶有一絲希望。舞台劇來到尾聲，男女主角失去一切，只剩下彼此。他們相依相偎，懷抱對未來的盼望，憧憬離開城市，到“另一個地方”、“一個完全唔同嘅地方”。女子說：“唔係咁㗎。”男子說：“所有嘢都係咁。”語畢，燈滅劇終。整齣劇對大部分事情都沒有下定義，看似模稜兩可，但又指向無盡可能，令人想起波蘭女詩人辛波絲卡（Wisława Szymborska）的詩句：

他們彼此深信
是瞬間迸發的熱情讓他們相遇
這樣的確定是美麗的
但變幻無常更為美麗

或者，生活裏種種的不確定正是希望之源。

101 FACTS ABOUT FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

With vivid imagination and captivating narrative, talented writers manage to get readers emotionally attached to fictional characters. Some of us might forget our best friend's birthday or deadlines at work, but will never fail to recall every single detail of our most beloved characters. Below are descriptions of some iconic characters from novels, both classical and contemporary. Write "True" if the description is accurate and "False" if otherwise.



- In the canon of *Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes moves to a small farm and keeps bees after ending his career as a consulting detective.
- In *Life of Pi*, Pi escapes to a small lifeboat when his ship goes down in a storm. Also in the lifeboat are four animals, namely a hyena, a pony, an orangutan and a tiger.
- In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby likes to use the term "old pal" to address his friends.
- Throughout Ian Fleming's series of *James Bond* novels, James Bond prefers to have his dry martini stirred and not shaken.
- In *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean is imprisoned for 19 years for stealing silverware from a bishop.
- In *Journey to the West* (《西遊記》), the Bodhisattva transforms three willow leaves into three hairs with lifesaving power, and gives them to the Monkey King.
- In the *Harry Potter* series, Harry Potter plays as a Seeker in Quidditch, a sport played by two teams riding flying broomsticks.
- In *The Little Prince*, the Little Prince has a rose with three thorns on his home planet.

Please send your entry by fax (2521 8772) or email (csbolrs@csb.gov.hk) to the Editorial Board of *Word Power* by **25 August 2022**. 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 ten to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

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- 《柏林蒼穹下》／《咫尺天涯》
- 《狂牛》
- 皇仁書院
- 齊白石
- 《快雪時晴帖》
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