

趙茱莉博士

和米蘭昆德拉

《生命中不能承受的輕》的相遇

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「與人文對話」的課程中很多時都會觸碰到人生的不同問題。一個教經典的老師，自己又有沒有一個人生中被經典感動和啟發的時刻呢？

通識教育基礎課程署理主任趙茱莉博士今期再和大家分享她和米蘭昆德拉《生命中不能承受的輕》的相遇，不但是一個好機會去認識一本經典，亦是一個不同的角度去了解Julie其人。

1

大通報：作為一名教授經典的老師，課後都是一個有血肉的人，在你自己與經典相處中，有沒有什麼對你影響很深的書？

我不會說自己因讀了某一部經典，從此便走上不同的路：閱讀塑造人格性情是一個漫長的過程。中學時我和許多人一樣，狂啃金庸、梁羽生、徐速的小說、他主編的《當代文藝》的作品；又應英文老師的要求，課外讀了不少文學名著的簡化讀本，如《雙城記》、《簡愛》等。我讀的學校沒有圖書館，當時公共圖書館寥寥可數，都是路途遙遠，不是輕易可達，但報章雜誌會連載小說，《老人與海》大概是報上讀來的，而印象最深刻的，是在《明報週刊》讀了《天地一沙鷗》的連載中譯本。大學時主修英文，卻跟著文青讀魯迅、臺灣文學，新潮文庫的翻譯作品。之後又有傷痕文學，都是成長路上的重鎮。其後重回校園，在《流動的饗宴》再遇海明威，更發現了米蘭昆德拉的精彩。隨便數來，記得的都

Her encounter with Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* of Dr. CHIU Chu Lee, Julie

In Dialogue with Humanity takes us through different classics and makes us think about questions that we encounter in life. Does a teacher of the course also have moments in life when he or she was touched by classics?

In this issue, Dr. Julie CHIU, Deputy Programme Director of the GE Foundation Programme, shares with us her encounter with Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Here's a chance to get to know not only a classic, but also Julie as a person.

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UGE News: A teacher of classics is also a human being of flesh and blood. Looking back at your encounters with classics, is there one that has influenced you greatly?

I won't say my life was changed forever by the reading of one single classic. **We are what we read, but it's a long and gradual process.** When I was in secondary school, I was like many teenagers of my time, passionately devouring martial arts novels by Jin Yong and Liang Yusheng. I remember being drawn also to wartime romances of Xu Su, and to short stories in the literary magazine he founded. Added to that, there were the readers required by


the English teacher, abridged literary classics like *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Jane Eyre*. My secondary school did not have its own library, and public libraries were few and far away from home. But newspapers and magazines abounded in serial fiction, and I can still recall vividly my first encounter with *The Old Man and the Sea*; *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* was actually published in *Ming-pao Weekly* in two installments—not quite what you would expect today of an entertainment magazine about movie stars. In university, I was an English major, but followed the drift to read up on Lu Xun and the like, modern Taiwan writers, translated fiction in the “New Wave Literature” series. Subsequently, “scar literature” became the rage, forming one of the remarkable landmarks in my youthful journey. Years after graduation, I became a full-time student again.

Her encounter with Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

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大通報：作為一名教授經典的老師，課後都是一個有血肉的人，在你自己與經典相處中，有沒有什麼對你影響很深的書？

The
Unbearable
Lightness of
Being



2

大通報：似乎和與人文對話有點像？

是文學作品，點滴構成今日的我。

上學期有同學偶爾提起《生命中不能承受之輕》，開啟了久未喚起的記憶，不如就談談這本書。這是捷克作家昆德拉的小說，背景是布拉格的春前後數年。昆德拉借四個人物糾結的愛情故事，講存在的輕與重，而貫穿敘事和作家現身說理的一條重要線索，是尼采的「永劫回歸」(eternal recurrence of the same)。

記得第一次接觸這個詞，是工餘修讀翻譯課程的時候。有個科目叫文化與翻譯，目的是擴闊譯者的文化視野，為其翻譯工作打好基礎。科目內容涵蓋甚廣，希臘神話、聖經故事、宗教改革、法政哲學理念等，都有觸及。

也許是吧！但它側重文化知識的掌握，不鼓勵討論。它的閱讀資料也有不少原典選篇，包括尼采提出「永劫回歸」的段落。如果人生裏所有的際遇都曾經發生，而且還會不斷重複，你如何面對？**會不會有一些經歷，使得你的人生無悔，那怕它無止境地重複，那怕當中有痛苦悲傷，你都會欣然接受？**這是個很有趣的問題，昆德拉用一本小說回應它。

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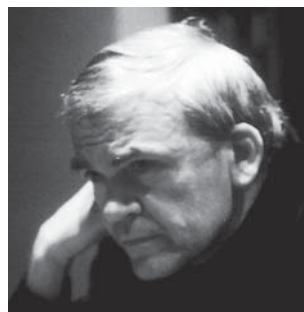
UGE News: Even as a teacher of classics, you are also a vivid person after lessons. Reviewing your journey with those classics, is there any book that influences you a lot?

I was reconnected with my literary sensibilities through Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, and made new discoveries such as Milan Kundera. All that I have just recalled are fictional works. Guess I have always loved a good story, and Aristotle gave me a good excuse for the indulgence: literature is more philosophical than history.

Last term, a student happened to bring up *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in class, which brought back many long lost memories. Let's talk about this book today. For a long time, "foreign lit-

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UGE News: It seems to have much in common with *In Dialogue with Humanity*?



erature" for us meant Anglo-American works, plus occasional pieces of works from Western Europe; *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* opened the door to a different world. Milan Kundera shows us the spiritual oppression after the Prague Spring, which Chinese readers had yet to learn about. Through the complicated romantic relations among four characters, Kundera talks about the lightness and heaviness of existence. An important thread running through the plot as well as the author's intrusive narrative is **Nietzsche's idea of "eternal recurrence of the same."**

Which takes us back farther in time, when I first encountered the phrase over a part-time translation programme. There was a course called Culture and Translation, meant to give translators some cultural sophistication as groundwork for translation practices. The course covered a wide range of subjects, touching on Greco-Roman myths, biblical stories, religious and legal reforms, political and philosophical ideas.

In a way, yes, but the course focused more on the transmission of cultural knowledge and did not encourage discussion. The readings included selections from classics, such as Nietzsche's paragraphs on the "eternal recurrence of the same". If every event in our life has happened before and will go on repeating, how would you face it? **Is there any experience in life that, once you've had it you'll have no regrets, that even if it comes with suffering and sadness, even if it will recur without an end, you'll still happily accept it?** This is an interesting question, and Kundera wrote a novel in response.

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大通報：回應尼采？小說是否很艱深？

也不算是，但其實我是先看*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*那套電影的，它改編自昆德拉同名小說，主角是Daniel Day Lewis - Juliette Binoche。有些人覺得電影「九唔搭八」，我覺得還不錯，儘管它

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大通報：那麼讀原著是否好些？

絕對是！讀到原著，才明白到電影雖充份演繹了故事情節，卻略去穿插對白和敘事之間的哲學思考。其實，作為一篇小說，作家是不宜打斷故事，跑出來跟讀者討

人生沒了重量的話，
便失去質感，
不知如何是好。



頗為怪異。布拉格之春的背景固然吸引，而男主角Tomas拈花惹草、來者不拒，竟到如斯境界，也是一絕！離開影院，最記得的是Tomas與Sabina交歡時，她戴著的禮帽，還有Tomas淪為清潔工人時引誘他的長頸婦人。但是，風流倜儻的城市醫生，何以會認定舉止笨拙的小鎮侍應，並為了她返回蘇聯入侵後的捷克？既是認定了Tereza，何以會繼續和Sabina繼續曖昧關係，還到處留情？Tereza和Sabina本是情敵，怎麼竟發展出真摯友誼？Sabina忠於Tomas和Tereza兩位朋友，為何命不能自拔地背叛真誠愛他的Franz？兩段愛情故事，放在蘇聯坦克駛入布拉格的背景，有何喻意？電影展現的情節令人荒爾、動容，卻也教人不解。

論角色或解讀其行為的。但是，昆德拉邊說故事邊philosophise，效果卻出奇的好；拍成電影，這些philosophizing便只好隱退。我覺得，電影展現了一種浮淺的「輕」，卻表達不了與之相對的「重」。

我讀原著，先看的是韓少功的中譯本。我讀書時喜歡由頭開始讀，如果有序言便先看序。韓少功在譯序中特別提到，昆德拉以貝多芬交響曲中一句詠唱歌詞，回應尼采的永劫回歸。歌詞是德文的「Es muss sein」，即是「非如此不可」的意思。如果人生並非如尼采所言是永劫回歸，而是只有一次呢？這單一的人生旅程，有必然性嗎？人生既然沒有「take two」以證明其「非如此不可」，它便是「輕」的。

《生命中不能承受之輕》的「輕」，代表瀟灑隨心的人生，沒道德包袱也無情感羈絆，但又令人不安，生命總似有所欠缺；相對而言，「重」是認真是必要，給人壓力卻很實在。

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UGE News: A novel in response to Nietzsche? Is it difficult to understand?

No, not really. Actually, I saw the movie adaptation first, which goes by the same name as Kundera's novel: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Daniel Day Lewis and Juliette Binoche played the lead characters. Some dismissed the movie as nonsensical and odd, but I rather enjoyed it. Prague Spring and the ensuing march of Russian tanks into Prague gave weight to the movie, but the extent to which Tomas was a womanizer was mind-blowing! One can't easily shake off the symbolic images of his sexual adven-

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UGE News: Will it be better to read the novel?

Definitely! After reading the original work, I realized that the film only conveys the plot but not the philosophy—the author's reflections sprinkled between the dialogues. Normally, we don't want the novelist to jump in and comment on the characters. But as Kundera tells the story, he stops every so often and philosophizes about the actions and about life, and the result is—great! When the book became a movie, all the philosophizing had to be omitted. I'd say the movie does show us the "lightness"—perhaps in a shallow way—but not the contrastive "heaviness".

As for the novel, I first read it in Han Shaogong's Chinese translation.

tures—the bowler hat of his exquisite sex-friend Sabina, and the long neck of the gaudy housewife he seduced after cleaning her windows. The movie-goer can't help wondering: Why would a doctor from the city, charming and promiscuous, take a clumsy waitress from some obscure backwater as the love of his life, and even returned to Soviet-occupied Prague for her, only to become a cleaner? Devoted to Tereza as he was, why did he continue his amorous relation with Sabina and chase after other women? What motivated Tereza and Sabina, obvious rivals, to become true friends? Loyal in her own ways towards her friends Tomas and Tereza, why would Sabina betray her lover Franz? What is the significance of the Soviet invasion as a backdrop of the two love stories? The movie was amusing and touching, but it was also confusing.

When I read, I like to start from the first page, and read the preface if there is one. In Han's translator's preface, much weight is given a line quoted from Beethoven's Opus 135: "Es muss sein!" This is a German expression meaning "it must be," which helps Kundera to think through Nietzsche's idea. Kundera asks: What if life is not a matter of "eternal recurrence of the same", but happens only once? Is there a must-be for this one-off life journey? If there is no second life to prove that this life is better (must be) or worse, then life is "light".

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, "lightness" refers to a life where we do as we please, untouched by moral burdens or emotional fetters. Yet somehow it disturbs us, as if something essential is missing. By contrast, in a life of "heaviness" every step is serious and necessary; it gives us pressure but also a feeling of steadiness. **Life without weight is one without texture, leaving us lost and confused.**

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大通報：那麼讀原著是否好些？

Tomas處身一個令人窒息的年代，但他好像每件事都輕飄飄，通過發展一段段「性友誼」，自得其樂。不過他不知如何，愛上了Tereza，一個仿似被放在籃子裏、順水漂來、夢中握著他的手不放至天亮的女子，「重」的表表者。

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大通報：這個故事你覺得很深刻？



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大通報：怎樣影響到你？

Tomas身邊什麼女人都有，但Tereza竟成為他生命的中心，唯一讓他感受到存在重量的人。

Tomas不太清楚自己的動機，「輕」與「重」的碰撞下亦產生許多相處問題，而書中不時會出現那一句歌詞：「非如此不可」。Tomas選擇了回到鐵腕統治底下的捷克與Tereza在一起，儘管有很多痛苦，但既是「非如此不可」，就去接受它，因為這樣才把握到意義。與Tomas對照的是Sabina，她堅守「輕」的堡壘，可說是失去了「愛」的能力。

現在我還可以記得這麼多細節，是因為當時感受真的很深。有時好像是機緣巧合，串連起許多偶合的事，卻成就一種必然。我是因為一個偶然的原因去了讀翻譯，在課程中一個科目讀到尼采，又偶然看了這一齣電影，某次與中大同學聚舊，他剛讀完這本書，硬塞給我說：「快看！」就是這個中譯本。又因為韓少功的序寫得吸引，我一口氣把書看了兩次，再找來英譯本又看了一次。本來好像割裂的不同經驗，突然間好像可以拼在一起，而且是美妙並指向甚麼的。書中某些影響是頗深的。

不是說有了這本書你的人生就有了翻天覆地一百八十度的轉變，而可能是幫我解決了當時的一些困惑和問題。就像是人生中…我們都在追求自由，對嗎？

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UGE News: Will that be better to read the original book then?

Tomas lived in a suffocating era, but he took everything easy and gain happiness through his many “sexual friendships”. He didn’t know why but he fell in love with Tereza, a woman who seemed to have come to him in a basket drifting down the river. It was a woman who fell asleep tightly holding his hand in hers, and would not let go until day-

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UGE News: So the story makes a strong impression on you?

break, an extreme case of “heaviness”. She became the center of his life and the only person who let him know the weight of life.

Tomas didn’t understand what he was trying to get, and the clash of “lightness” and “heaviness” led to endless conflicts, amidst which the line “Es muss sein” recurs. Tomas chose to go back to Czechoslovakia and lived with Tereza, though the country was now under an oppressive rule. Although life would be full of sufferings, since “it must be,” they accepted it. That would be the only way to find meaning. Unlike Tomas, Sabina guarded her fortress of “lightness,” and in the end lost the power to “love”.

The fact that I can still recall so many details after all these years, shows that it has made an impact on me. Sometimes, mere chances and coincidences may become certainties. It was by chance that I took up translation studies and came across Nietzsche in one of the courses. And then I happened to watch that movie and get the novel in a reunion with an undergraduate friend, who had just finished the book and urged me to read it. From Han Shaogong’s preface, I got the incentive to read that book twice, after which I also explored the English translation. Our life is full of fragmentary events like these, but if we really think about it, we can make out a thread connecting the dots, as if leading to something wonderful. The conviction I gathered from the book had influenced me greatly.

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UGE News: How?

Not in the sense that it has changed my life completely, but it provided me with a way to resolve some of my doubts and queries. Like, we’re all striving for freedom in life, right? You follow your whims and intuition when faced with various crossroads in life.

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大通報：怎樣影響到你？

你可以好率性而為，跟住感覺走，但當你率性而為跟住感覺走的時候，那條路是不是你希望的？你是否必須如此？

人經常都會猶豫：每做一個抉擇，選了A不能做B，選了B就不能做A，那該怎去選擇？但當你有種「非如此不可」的想法，就算你是憑直覺率性而為的抉擇，你都可以告訴自己它其實是有重量的。這個決定未必可以用理性解釋，或是權衡利害輕重而得出，而是因緣際會你做了這個選擇，這就是你人生裡面的「必然」。

我覺得這個想法可能會使你的人生快樂一點。

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UGE News: How did this book alter your thoughts?

But when you do that, how can you be sure you'll end up on a path right for you? The way you've been going—does it have to be?

As human beings, we hesitate all the time: at each critical moment, if we choose A we lose B, and if we choose B we lose A. How do we come to terms with it? If you believe in the "es muss sein" of each decision, then even one based on mere intuition carries weight.

It may not be rational at all; in reaching it you may not have weighed all the harms against the benefits. Certain causes and conditions are thrown together, and you come to a decision. You are at peace with it: it is what has to be. Such kind of faith, I say, makes your life happier.