

Lesson 39

What every writer wants

作家之所需

First listen and then answer the following question.

听录音，然后回答以下问题。

How do professional writers ignore what they were taught at school about writing?

I have known very few writers, but those I have known, and whom I respect, confess at once that they have little idea where they are going when they first set pen to paper. They have a character, perhaps two; they are in that condition of eager discomfort which passes for inspiration; all admit radical changes of destination once the journey has begun; one, to my certain knowledge, spent nine months on a novel about Kashmir, then reset the whole thing in the Scottish Highlands. I never heard of anyone making a 'skeleton', as we were taught at school. In the breaking and remaking, in the timing, interweaving, beginning afresh, the writer comes to discern things in his material which were not consciously in his mind when he began. This organic process, often leading to moments of extraordinary self-discovery, is of an indescribable fascination. A blurred image appears; he adds a brushstroke and another, and it is gone; but something was there, and he will not rest till he has captured it. Sometimes the yeast within a writer outlives a book he has written. I have heard of writers who read nothing but their own books; like adolescents they stand before the mirror, and still cannot fathom the exact outline of the vision before them. For the same reason, writers talk interminably about their own books, winking out hidden meanings, superimposing new ones, begging response from those around them. Of course a writer doing this is misunderstood: he might as well try to explain a crime or a love affair. He is also, incidentally, an unforgivable bore.

This temptation to cover the distance between himself and the reader, to study his image in the sight of those who do not know him, can be his undoing: he has begun to write to please.

A young English writer made the pertinent observation a year or two back that the talent goes into the first draft, and the art into the drafts that follow. For this reason also the writer, like any other artist, has no resting place, no crowd or movement in which he may take comfort, no judgment from outside which can replace the judgment from within. A writer makes order out of the anarchy of his heart; he submits himself to a more ruthless discipline than any critic dreamed of, and when he flirts with fame, he is taking time off from living with himself, from the search for what his world contains at its inmost point.

JOHN LE CARRE What every writer wants from Harper's

New words and expressions 生词和短语

confess

v. 承认

inspiration

n. 灵感

Kashmir

n. 克什米尔

interweave

v. 交织

afresh

adv. 重新
discern
v. 辨明, 领悟
indescribable
adj. 无法描述的
blur
v. 使... 模糊不清
yeast
n. 激动
fathom
v. 领悟, 彻底了解
interminably
adv. 没完没了地
winkle
v. 挖掘
incidentally
adv. 顺便说一下
pertinent
adj. 中肯的
flirt
v. 调情
inmost
adj. 内心深处

参考译文

我的认识的作家寥寥无几, 然而凡是我所认识和尊敬的作家, 都立即承认在他们动笔时, 不清楚要写什么, 怎么写。他们心中只在一个或两个角色。他们处于急切不安的状态, 而被当作是灵感。他们无不承认, 一旦“旅程”开始, “目的地”常有急剧的变化。据我所知, 有位作家花了9个月的时间写了一部关克什米尔的小说, 后来却把整个故事背景换成了苏格兰高地。我从未听说过任何一位作家像我们在学校那样, 动笔前先列什么提纲。作家在剪裁修改、构思时间、穿插情节、以至从头重写的过程中, 会领悟到素材中很多东西是他刚动笔时所未意识到的。这种有机的加工过程往往达到不寻常自我发现的境界, 具有难以言表的构思魅力。一个朦胧的形象出现在作家的脑海里, 他左添一笔, 右添一笔, 形象反而消逝了; 可是, 好像还有什么东西存在着, 不把它捕捉到, 作家是不会罢休的。有时, 一个作家一本书写完了, 但兴奋仍不消散。我听说一些作家, 除了自己的书外, 别的书一概不读, 犹如希腊神话中那位漂亮的少年, 站在镜前, 不能辨认自身的真面目。由于这个原因, 作家喋喋不休地谈论自己的书, 挖掘其隐晦的含义, 询问周围人的反应。作家如此行事当然被人误解。他还不如给人讲一个犯罪案件或一个恋爱故事。顺便说一句, 他也是个不可饶恕的令人厌烦的人。

这种企图消除自己和读者之间距离的作法, 企图用不了解自己的人的观点来研究自己塑造的形象的作法, 会导致作家的毁灭, 因为他已经开始为取悦他人而写作了。

一两年后, 一位年轻的英国作家发表了中肯的看法。他说, 初稿是才华, 以后各稿是艺术。也是由于这个原因, 作家同任何艺术家一样, 找不到可休息的场所, 找不到伙伴和活动使自己得到安逸。任何局外人的判断也比不上他内心的正确判断。一旦作家从内心的紊乱中理出头绪, 就应该按任何评论家想像不到的无情规范约束自己写作; 当他沾名钓誉时, 他就脱离了自我生活, 脱离了对自己灵魂最深处世界的探索。