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## 室内游荡

## Wandering Indoors

西川 *Xi Chuan*

北京师范大学 *Beijing Normal University*

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有一次我问我同事、小说家莫言，他的某部长篇小说写了多长时间，他说没白天没黑夜地写了40多天，然后是修改。我知道有的小说家需要每天完成一个平均字数，500字，或者1000字，但莫言的工作方式是疾风暴雨。一年中，他多数时间并不在写小说。他喝酒，练书法，旅行——更具体的我说不上来，比如他每天会有多长时间发呆等等——不过这并不意味着他不写作时就与写作隔绝开来。他说他每一部小说通常要在肚子里转上三四年的时间。中文称作“打腹稿”。

Once I asked my colleague, the novelist Mo Yan, about one of his novels and how long it took him to complete it. He said he wrote day and night for more than forty days before moving on to the revision phase. Some novelists feel the need to write an average number of Chinese characters per day – say 500 or 1,000 characters – but Mo Yan adopts a swift working style. He does not write for most of the year, but rather drinks, practises calligraphy and travels. I do not know more details, like how long he might spend hours gazing into the middle distance each day, but this would not mean he has cut himself off from writing. Before putting anything down on paper, he said he usually needs to think about the narrative and characters for three or four years – a process called *da fugao* [lit. “working out a draft in the stomach”] in Chinese.

无所事事，游手好闲，晃荡，或游荡，都是作家、诗人们不可或缺的生活状态。别人看不懂这创造的成本，所以约瑟夫·布罗茨基曾经被苏联当局宣判为社会寄生虫。本雅明在《发达资本主义时期的抒情诗人》这本书中曾专门讨论过波德莱尔在巴黎的游荡。他观察人物，散漫自我，好像怀揣着秘密，好像地下工作者。当然也有作家不喜欢游荡。据说当别人问萨缪尔·贝克特的岳母贝克特是干什么的时，贝克特的岳母说不知道，只知道他总在睡觉。据我自己的经验，睡觉分好几种：一种是脑子里在翻腾着什么，是假睡；一种是深入梦乡，在另一个世界、另一类场景、另一种逻辑中旅行；当然也有像 W.B. 叶芝这样的人，放纵自己于半梦半醒之间，进行自动写作。

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Doing nothing, loafing about and wandering around are all indispensable for writers and poets, in their creative process. This investment of time can be difficult for non-writers to understand, and that is why Joseph Brodsky was charged with social parasitism by the Soviet authorities. Walter Benjamin discusses Baudelaire's wandering in Paris in his *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, igniting scholarly interest in the flâneur. He wandered in a carefree manner, yet observed people as closely as a secret agent might. Of course, there are writers who do not like to wander around. It is said that Samuel Beckett's mother-in-law did not know what his job was when asked, but said one thing for sure was that he was always sleeping. Based on my experience, there are several types of sleep: one involves having something churning around in the mind, which is fake sleep; the other is deep sleep, travelling in a different world, utilising a different logic. Indeed, there are people like W.B. Yeats who indulge themselves between wakefulness and sleep, and write automatically.

法国作家玛格丽特·杜拉斯晚年说她用了一辈子的时间才学会了浪费时间。——真是羡慕她呀！在浪费时间上我没那么专业，我有时候就是发发呆，或者上网浏览一下乱七八糟的新闻，或者出门乱走，或者在周末逛逛旧货市场。诗人欧阳江河说我是一个乏味的人。我同意。我可能太乏味了：我对酒精过敏。我同事们有时出去喝酒，干脆就不叫我。所以我没能学会混社会。我对打牌、打麻将、赌博之类的事情没有任何兴趣。与人约会的时候倒是有，我会约朋友在咖啡厅、饭馆，甚至画廊见面，但纯粹为了海聊而见面的时候，随着年龄的增长越来越少，总得有点什么事情必须见个面。我也旅行，在国内，去国外；名胜我已经看得差不多了，现在我更喜欢走在马路上看人和商店的橱窗。

The French writer Marguerite Duras reflected in her latter years that it took her a lifetime to learn how to waste time. I do envy her. I am not a professional in time-wasting. Sometimes I am absent-minded, or browse the mind-boggling news on the internet, or wander around aimlessly outside, or visit an antique fair on the weekends. The poet Ouyang Jianghe described me as a dull person. I agree. I might be too dull: I am allergic to alcohol. Thus, my colleagues sometimes do not ask me to join them when they go out for a drink. That is why I fail to fit into society. I have no interest in cards, mahjong or gambling, etc. But I do meet my friends in cafés, restaurants, and even galleries. As I get older and

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older, the time for broad-ranging discussion seems to lessen. It seems there must be a reason to meet someone in person. I travel domestically and abroad and have seen many notable places of interest. Nowadays I prefer to wander around, window-shopping and observing the passers-by.

年轻时我曾经在黄河两岸，在中印度和北印度，做过长途旅行，一个人在路上。旅行记忆成了我重要的精神财富。它们在文学观念上对我意义重大。它们使我越出书本，越出身份，切实感受到什么是人间冷暖、他人的存在，以及世界之大，以及我本人的渺小。它们培养了我的多重自我。认识远方，认识地平线；走向未知，不一定就会走进未来，也可能一下子掉入过去，或者陷入危险，但我心甘情愿。远方。远方。远方。海子在诗中说：“远在远方的风比远方更远”。当然我与海子不同的是，我也会在远方回望我的出发地：在国外回望中国，在国内的异乡回望我居住的北京、我的社区、我的街道、我的邻居，以及种种琐碎事物中再普通不过的自己。

When I was young I embarked on long, solitary journeys, along China's Yellow River and across central and northern India. These travel memories are a precious spiritual treasure for me, and they have had a great effect on my literary outlook. They enabled me to escape the boundaries of books and identities to experience the warmth and cruelty of the human world, the existence of others, the broadness of the universe and my own insignificance. They cultivated my multifaceted self. Allowing me to know far-off places, the horizon. The path to the unknown may not necessarily lead to the future, but rather to the past or else into danger. Nonetheless, I am willing to give it a try. Far-off places, far far away. Haizi wrote in a poem that "[b]eyond is a far away wind that is far and farther still"<sup>1</sup>. But the difference between us is that I will look back at my starting point from afar: I look back at China when abroad, and at my home in Beijing when elsewhere in China, at my community, my roads, my neighbours and, among a host of trivial things, the most insignificant -- me.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted the translation from Yin. Available at: <https://radiichina.com/yin-hai-zis-haunting-luminous-poem-september/>

我还有另一个接触远方的方式：我在大学里教书，不时要接触年轻人。他们来自各地，来自不同的家庭；他们每一个人都有一个过去，这形成了他们不同的文化趣味、对事物的不同见解。他们每一个人身上也同样存在一个远方。与学生打交道就是与远方打交道，与他们的方言、父母、习惯、迷茫、失落、担心、梦想打交道。

I have another point of access to the far off: as a university professor I often meet young people. They come from different places and families. Each of them has a past that shapes their individual taste of culture and interpretation of the world. Each of them has their own concept of "the far off", as well. Communicating with students is communicating with this; with their dialects, parents, habits, confusions, losses, worries and dreams.

对一个诗人而言，独处是必要的，胡思乱想是必要的，做白日梦是必要的，会见过去时代的影子、一只小鸟、一只蜘蛛、一只蚂蚁是必要的，这些都是写作的成本。我听说法国诗人亨利·米修每周必有一天不接电话，不与任何人说一句话。在沉默中，诗人、作家、艺术家、成功和不成功的思想者们，内心盈满起来。而新冠疫情强化了我的书斋生活。

For a poet, it is essential to spend one's time being solitary, daydreaming and letting one's mind wander. It is also necessary to meet the shadows of the past, a bird, a spider, an ant. I heard that the French poet Henri Michaux allocated one day a week when he would not answer the phone or say a word to anyone. It is only in such silence that poets, writers, artists, successful and unsuccessful thinkers can replenish their souls. For me, the Covid pandemic has contributed to more time spent in the study.

我的书房里堆满了各类书籍，约有 1 万来册，没细数过。我曾经做过中央美术学院的图书馆馆长，成天与图书打交道，所以我的估计应该差不多。书房里也有我从各地旧货市场淘回来的不值钱的古董。我对旧东西有一种天然的亲切感，尽管我自诩是一个热爱文学实验的人。我对战国

和汉代的思想者们、唐代和宋代的诗人们、画家们怀着当代亲切感，有时我觉得我就是他们中间的一员。所以在写到他们的时候我不会只使用仰慕的口吻，我会跟他们开玩笑，甚至会挤兑他们。我能唱几首古歌，例如李白的《子夜吴歌》、柳宗元的《渔翁调》，当然，当一个人开车在路上的时候我也会听摇滚乐、世界音乐和最新的电子音乐。在书房里工作累了的时候，我会翻翻画册，或者面对我书架上、墙壁上的中国和日本古画发呆。日本古画都是我最近从网上拍来的。其中一轴 15 世纪贤江祥启的山水小品，其用笔、用墨、构图，完全是南宋夏圭的路数。极好。怎么就落在我手里了呢？

My study is full of all kinds of books, about ten thousand, though I have not counted carefully. My estimate is probably fairly accurate, since I was once Library Director of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, dealing with books all day. There are also some cheap antiques in my study that I hunted out at antique fairs in various places. I have a deep affinity with old things, even though I claim to be a lover of literary experiments. I feel close to the thinkers of the Warring States period and the Han dynasty and the poets and painters of the Tang and Song dynasties, as if we were contemporaries. Sometimes I feel like I am just one of them. So, when I write about them, I joke with or even mock them instead of simply writing in an admiring tone. I can sing a few ancient songs, like Li Bai's *Ziye wuge* [A Song of An Autumn Midnight] and Liu Zongyuan's *Yuwendiao* [The Fisherman's Song]. Of course, I also listen to rock music, world music and the latest electronic music when driving alone. When I get tired of working in the study, I often flick through artists' books, or gaze at the ancient Chinese and Japanese paintings on the wall or at my bookshelves. Those ancient Japanese paintings were all recently bought online. One of them is a landscape sketch by the Japanese painter Kenko Shokei from the 15th century. With its brushwork, ink techniques and composition, the sketch painting is exactly in the manner of the Chinese painter Xia Gui of the Southern Song dynasty. It is excellent. How come it has become mine?

生活中我主要的角色是诗人，但这并不意味着我总在写诗。我会有大段大段的时间没有灵感，或者有了一个动机却不知道如何开始一个句子，一个段落。所以就写诗而言，我没什么计划。当然大的方向我会有。诗歌写作也并不总是令人愉快的：一首略长的诗，我费了不少功夫，但最终

无法写成，只好放弃。这种情况不是发生了一次两次。长诗写作没有那么依赖灵感，但由于它不可能在瞬间完成，也许需要花上几个月的时间，就像写一部长篇小说，而为了保持一个工作状态，为了第二天回到前一天的兴奋度，我必须小心不受外物打扰。若遇到打扰，我会暴跳如雷，心绪尽毁，然后需用一周以上的时间让尘埃落定。写作是一件相当脆弱的事。诗人翟永明说：写作者甘苦自知。

My main role in life is to be a poet, but that does not mean I am writing poetry all the time. I often have long periods of time without any inspiration, or do not know how to start the first sentence or paragraph despite feeling motivated to write. So, with regard to writing poetry, I have no masterplan. But, of course, I have a general direction. Writing poetry is not always pleasant – I put considerable effort into writing a reasonably long poem, for instance, but could not finish it and had to give up. This did not just happen once or twice. Writing long poems relies less on inspiration. Nevertheless, it may take several months, just like writing a novel. Meanwhile, to maintain a working state and to return to the same level of excitement the next day, I must be careful not to be disturbed by other things. Otherwise, I will be furious and my mind will be in turmoil and I will need a week or more to settle down. Writing is very fragile. In the words of the poet Zhai Yongming: the joy and pain of writing are only known to the writer themselves.

老实讲一年中写诗占我的时间并不太多。我不得不在不同的角色间进进出出。我的案头工作分几块：写诗、做翻译（现在已基本停止）、做中国古典文学研究（已经出版了《[唐诗的读法](#)》），做中国古代绘画研究（即将出版《[北宋：山水画乌托邦](#)》）。此外，我还总是被要求做些不在我计划之中的事情，例如被要求画点画，因为古代中国文人中一些人是会画点画的，人们觉得我也应该会画点——我的确能画点，但主要是在年轻时代画过一点，后来放弃了；近年来我已屡次被邀请参加画展，是文人画展，不是专业画家的画展。我也被要求写点书法——我不是书法家，但别人觉得既然你是个文人，好歹你得能写个字吧。我也被要求就一些文学和社会问题写文章，被要求接受采访，被要求编书。生活总是被打断。有一本某出版社要求我编的书，已经被

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我拖了好几年而没有完成。我需要为此使用到的很多图书资料也在我桌子附近的柜子上堆了好几年。不知何时是个头。

To be honest, writing poetry does not take up much of my time during the year. I have to juggle different roles. At my desk I may be writing poetry, translating (now basically stopped), researching Chinese classical literature (*Tangshi de dufa* [How to read Tang poetry]) and ancient Chinese paintings (*Beisong: Shanshuihua wutuobang* [The Northern Song dynasty: Utopia of landscape paintings]). In addition, I am often asked to do unexpected tasks. For example, I am sometimes asked to do some painting, because some literati in imperial China were proficient painters so people think that I should be able to paint, too. Indeed, I can paint to some extent and used to paint when I was younger, but I gave it up. In recent years, I have often been invited to show my work in exhibitions – those for literati instead of professional painters. I have also been asked to do some calligraphy – I am not a calligrapher, but again people think that as a man of letters you must be capable of writing a few characters in calligraphy. I have also been asked to write articles on various literary and social issues, to give interviews, and to compile books. Life is always interrupted. There is a book that a publishing house asked me to compile that I have been working on, on and off, for several years. The shelves by my desk are piled high with books and other materials I need for this project. I do not know when it will end.

我的研究与真正的学者们的研究完全不是一回事。我的研究是围绕着我的写作来的。这种情况作家们之间一说就明白。我曾建议北京一家出版社出版英国作家安东尼·伯杰斯的《莎士比亚评传》的中译本。这本书解放了我对莎士比亚的认识。过去我对莎士比亚的了解统统来自正儿八经的老套的学术著作、西方文学史之类，但伯杰斯为我复活了一个莎士比亚。对莎士比亚这样的人来，知识有其民主性：一个历史大人物的哲理言说与一个街头混混的胡扯也许有着相同的意义。诗人泰德·休斯也著有一部厚厚的莎士比亚研究著作。作家研究作家，一定是两个生命的相遇。我喜欢这样的阅读。

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My research is completely different from that of real scholars. It revolves around my writing – a scenario that is easy for other writers to understand. I once suggested that a publishing house in Beijing publish the British writer Anthony Burgess’s *Shakespeare* in Chinese translation. This book reconstructed my knowledge of Shakespeare. All of my understanding of Shakespeare used to come from old-fashioned, serious academic works, Western literary histories, etc., but Burgess brought a new Shakespeare to life for me. For people like Shakespeare, knowledge has a democratic nature: the philosophical statements made by a renowned historical figure may be just as significant as the ramblings of a vagrant. The poet Ted Hughes also wrote a thick monograph on Shakespeare. When a writer studies another writer, it must be the encounter of two lives. I like this kind of reading.

我出版过 5 部翻译作品，其中包括豪尔赫·博尔赫斯、切斯瓦夫·米沃什、盖瑞·斯奈德的作品。抱歉我都是从英文翻译的。除了英文，我早年也学过一点点法语，但现在已忘得差不多了。一个有趣的现象：世界上许多诗人都翻译过其他语言中的诗人，但小说家们一般不做翻译。所以我也算是一个“诗人翻译家”。现在，尽管我已经不再在翻译上花太多功夫，但我从翻译工作中获益良多：除了掌握别人的写法、别人的写作观念，更重要的是，面对另一位诗人的作品，我必须保持客观。翻译是为读者服务的，所以我必须尽量准确，所以我不得不查阅词典和参考书，不得不请教别人。另外，我长期在大学里任教。从 1993 年至今，很长时间里我曾任教于北京中央美术学院，给本科生教中国古典文学，给研究生教中国当代文化研究。2017 年初我调至北京师范大学。教书，意味着我必须能够教一套客观知识，并能够引导学生思考。这与纯粹的文学写作截然不同：写作的主观性很强。当翻译工作和教学工作带给我的客观性，以及我由早年经验所造成的多重自我，渗入到我的写作中来，我能清清楚楚地看到我与其他诗人的不同。

I have published five books in translation, including works by Jorge Luis Borges, Czesław Miłosz and Gary Snyder. Sorry to say, I translated them all from the English versions. I learned a little French in my early years, but I have forgotten most of it by now. It is an interesting phenomenon: many poets across the world have translated other poets, but novelists generally speaking do not do translations. So, I can also be counted as a “poet-translator”. Although I no longer spend too much time on

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translation, I have benefited a lot from it: mastering others' writing methods and conception. More importantly, I must remain objective when facing the works of another poet. Translation is for readers, so I have to be as accurate as possible; I have to consult dictionaries and reference books, and I have to consult others. In addition, I have been teaching in universities for a long time. From 1993 to the present day, I have primarily taught at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, teaching Chinese classical literature to undergraduates and Chinese contemporary cultural studies to postgraduates. I joined Beijing Normal University in early 2017. Teaching means I must be able to impart objective knowledge and guide students to think. This is very different from pure literary writing – writing is very subjective. I could clearly see the difference between me and other poets when the objectivity brought to me by translation and teaching, combined with the multifaceted self created by my early experiences, all penetrated my writing.

在古代中国，诗人们很有可能同时也是学者，也是官员，也是隐士，但现在，诗人、作家们基本上仅仅是诗人，仅仅是作家。我曾说过诗人骆一禾和欧阳江河“一个人就是一群人”，我希望自己也是如此。

In ancient China, poets were also probably scholars, officials and hermits. But now, for the most part a poet is a poet and a writer is a writer. I once said that the poets Luo Yihe and Ouyang Jianghe are examples of those who embody multiple roles, and I aspire to do likewise.

一个诗人或一个作家、一个艺术家，他最终要解决的问题——除了纯粹属于其文学艺术领域的专业问题——恐怕总绕不过去他究竟想要一个怎样的生活的问题。我们对社会生活不满意、对政治生活不满意、就是因为我们有更高的要求，这要求不一定直接来自我们的政治诉求，它也许来自我们的审美。但现实是，我们很有可能处处碰壁。那么我们究竟应该怎样处理我们自己的生活呢？不一定是最好的，但至少应该是可以接受的。在这也难于达到的时候，我们也许就会进入 as if 的生活状态，as-if-life。就是说，生活中不具备的文化、物质、社会、政治条件，你假

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装它们是具备的，以此保持一个自由创造的心态。As if 这个连接词的思想含义我是从波兰人亚当·米奇尼克那里学来的。还需要我进一步解释吗？

For a poet, a writer, or an artist, the ultimate challenge – aside from professional issues in literary and artistic fields – is the unavoidable question of what kind of life it is that they want to live. We are dissatisfied with the social and political realms because we have higher expectations. These expectations do not necessarily come from our political views but may instead come from our aesthetic values. The reality, however, is that we are likely to run into walls everywhere. So, what should we do with our lives? Our lives do not necessarily have to be perfect, but they should at least be acceptable. When this is difficult to achieve, we may enter a hypothetical state of the *'as if'*, an *as-if-life*. In other words, you can pretend you have the cultural, material, social and political conditions that are not available in reality so as to maintain a free and creative mindset. I learned the essence of the conjunction *'As if'* from the Polish historian Adam Michnik. Do I need to explain further?

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