

序

西川

天寶十四年，即公元七五五年，安史之亂爆發。次年玄宗自長安幸蜀，肅宗在靈武登基，杜甫在投奔肅宗的路上為叛軍所獲，被押解至長安，然後逃逸，再投奔肅宗。肅宗還京，杜甫在朝不順，被貶，後棄官，開始他的漂泊生涯，經秦州（天水）、同谷（成縣）、成都、夔州（奉節）、江陵（荊州）、岳陽、潭州（長沙）、衡州、耒陽等地，最後客死在從潭州到岳陽的船上。時在代宗大歷五年，即公元七七〇年，杜甫五十八歲。杜甫成為杜甫。

烽煙中的野獸、亂世中的山水、冷靜的月亮、死亡、飢餓、憂心、孤獨、遠方的朝廷、轉瞬即逝的繁華、回憶中的身影，被杜甫用格律謹嚴、修辭活躍的詩歌壯闊地表述出來，並加以確認。若唐代無杜甫，若安史之亂的刀劍馬蹄聲中不曾混入杜甫的哭聲，則我們今天感受到的歷史肯定會略有不同；我們今天對美、崇高，對文明、世界的感受和理解方式，也會略有不同。這天地一沙鷗、乾坤一腐儒實在是不得不發出自己的聲音，因為不寫他會死得更早。他最終書達死域，寫入永恆，老天看著他強迫症般的一舉一動。

杜甫的同代人鮮少以如此規模、如此氣血，如此逼視、記述個人與他人、個人與時代、個人與景物、個人與過去，使個人成為非個人。其前代詩人中這樣幹的也不多。杜甫的儒家入世表述自動進階為後代的文學榜樣，伴隨著「唐宋之變」，帶給中國詩歌、文化心智以巨大的啟示。若非杜甫對儒家書寫傳統的加持，以及中唐韓愈對儒家道統的回歸，則後世詩歌寫作的主流或可能偏向道家、佛家。中國繪畫在元代後期以後，走的就不是儒家之途。但杜甫雖係儒家詩人，亦未被「儒家」標籤所限，他其實是走到了人性和歷史的至深處。

杜甫詩歌所給出的另一個意義是：讓語言活下去，讓思維活下去。「倖存」這個詞尚不足以道出杜甫的全部。杜甫在

他自己的時代知音寥寥，他嘗在〈南征〉一詩中自嘆「百年歌自苦，未見有知音」。但他贏得了後世讀書人最高級的讚許。不過，他也惹得高擎漢末《古詩十九首》的明清之際的王夫之不悅，也許逆了清朝初年袁枚的「性靈」趣味。即使在今天，一邊讚美杜甫，一邊小情小調地文藝自適者也大有人在。

想像當年杜甫在紙頁上從右往左豎排寫下的文字：他每落墨一個字，文學史就多出一個字的分量和溫度。他提取出一只雞、一條狗、一只鳥的詩意；他提取出一棵樹、一道山泉、一聲悶雷的詩意；他即時書寫身在亂世的所見、所憶、所想，並不能肯定其詩歌會永久流傳。他只能一頁頁地寫，讓有的紙頁上文字滿篇，有的紙頁上文字少許。當他節約用字，他讓紙頁上的空白和他一同構築起一個叫「杜甫」的詩歌奇觀。其文字流傳後世意味著其空白也流傳後世。

美國作家、詩人艾略特·溫伯格 (Eliot Weinberger) 顯然理解這些紙頁上的空白，以及被空白凸顯出的墨跡。戰火、飢饉、動盪，種種威脅從未遁跡於這顆星球。也正因如此，一千三百年前那個可憐的老頭子似乎從未走遠，而且時時返回，憑著他的詩歌，他的精神，伸張他的偉大。現在，他又被二十一世紀的艾略特·溫伯格用另一種語言從左往右橫排續寫或改寫。杜甫從漢語的杜甫變身為英語的杜甫——其實他也變身為許多語言的杜甫。於是一個杜甫變成一群杜甫，變成世界的杜甫。

二〇二四年五月我到訪紐約，拜訪艾略特時，他告訴我用杜甫的語言、詩作寫了本杜甫自傳。這讓我很吃驚。當時我還不知道他具體如何行文，但僅僅「杜甫自傳」這個觀念，就把我點燃了：為什麼中國人裏沒有產生過這樣的寫作觀念？由此可以看出現代文學實驗、當代文學觀念之培養的大意義。我讀過一些人寫下的杜甫傳記、杜甫研究著作、杜甫詩歌的註釋本，但從未讀到過一本「杜甫自傳」！——杜甫的確應該有一本自傳！沒想到它來自英語！

臨別，艾略特送我一本他那時剛剛出版的《天使和聖徒》(Angels & Saints)。我後來翻讀這本主要與西方、西亞、北非有關的博學、高智力的書，與那麼多陌生的天使和聖徒相遇，感受到作者那半真半假的一本正經，對古文獻的強大占有、通透的世界觀，以及高妙的語言駕馭能力，時常有會心之感。掩卷之餘，我會自然猜想到艾略特的杜甫將以何樣面貌呈現。

我私心敬重艾略特·溫伯格。我一直覺得他是位重要的詩人，盡管他在隨筆寫作和詩歌翻譯方面也重要(《紐約時報》曾評價他為「世界偉大的隨筆家之一」)。2002年在紐約，在北島介紹我們認識之後，我讀了他不少作品，驚嘆於他語言的詩意、想像力的縱橫、知識的浩瀚；他洞察世事，在評價世界古今文學、文化、政治、人物時犀利而睿智。這並非我個人的看法。不同國家的詩人、作家們，對他的印象大致如此。艾略特像一位隱蔽的文學領袖。

他編選的《1950年後的美國詩歌：革新者和局外人》(*American Poetry Since 1950: Innovators and Outsiders*)一書幫助我們整理和認識了美國詩歌的當下。他是西班牙語文學的行家，他同時也對古今中國詩歌保持著一種特殊的興趣。溫伯格的著作《觀看王維的十九種方式》(*Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*)，獲墨西哥詩人、諾貝爾文學獎得主奧克塔維奧·帕斯(Octavio Paz)評析，已成為英語國家許多大學的中國文學經典教材或必讀書。他也是《新方向版中國古詩選》(*The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*)的編者。因為這本書，我才知道，原來美國大詩人威廉·卡洛爾·威廉斯(William Carlos Williams)也翻譯過卓文君、賀知章、孟浩然、王維、王昌齡、李煜等人的賦、詩、詞。

二〇〇六年——如果我沒記錯的話——艾略特來中國訪問。他隨一眾詩人旅及新疆南疆。回到北京，他跑到郵局給他夫人、攝影家妮娜(Nina)郵寄了一個沉甸甸的木箱。在美

國的妮娜充滿好奇地打開木箱，發現裏面裝的是艾略特在新疆戈壁上撿來的一塊大石頭！這和「千里送鵝毛」典故的輕盈正好相反，卻很有古風！

埃茲拉·龐德(Ezra Pound)翻譯了李白，阿瑟·韋利(Arthur Waley)翻譯了白居易，蓋瑞·斯奈德(Gary Snyder)翻譯了寒山。杜甫並非沒有被幾位大翻譯家翻成英文，從翟理思(Herbert A. Giles)到伯頓·沃特森(Burton Watson)、白芝(Cyril Birch)、弗萊徹(W. J. B. Fletcher)、王紅公(Kenneth Rexroth)、霍克思(David Hawkes)、山姆·哈米爾(Sam Hamill)、大衛·辛頓(David Hinton)等等，都翻譯過杜甫詩甚至出版過杜甫專集；宇文所安(Stephen Owen)甚至已經出版了六卷本的杜甫全集。但杜甫，一直等待著他的「自傳」。

當年苦難獲得了杜甫。如今杜甫獲得了艾略特·溫伯格。

艾略特的《杜甫一生》，薄薄的一本，並不是通常意義上的「杜甫自傳」。極富發明性的艾略特並沒有一句句翻譯杜甫，而是使用了來自杜甫的語句、意象、聯想和典故。這彷彿是一本杜甫的自言自語之書，初讀彷彿漫無目的。但艾略特深味杜甫的寫作，他讓我們認識到，苦難中的生命是由感受和言辭一寸寸織成，而時代、事件可以退後為生存的背景。艾略特使一個舊世界被重新表述，使落定的塵土被重新攪起，使一個古舊之人成為新人，而這個新人依然堅持其古舊。

他替杜甫拿捏每一個句子，讓它們起範兒，也就是讓每一個句子翹尾巴。他帶著我們斷斷續續地感受，斷斷續續地思考，讓我們自己也自言自語起來，甚至自言自語到絮叨，並在絮叨中覺醒。艾略特的行文略過艱澀的概念、詞匯，他不滯留於某一個句子，不被某一個詞語絆倒。既估且閒，既豐且約，悲喜從容，苦趣盈滿。必須說明的一點是，艾略特寫出的是一個現代文本。他把杜甫帶入現代文學，帶到當代生存與政治的現場，以誦讀古典詩篇的心態恐怕不能完全接

住艾略特·溫伯格的杜甫。但作為一個當代詩人，我要說，這本小書寫得很美。

美這個字在一般人那裏被用濫了。但其實，這是一種至難的品質。龐德曾在《詩章》(*The Cantos*)中重覆柏拉圖的話：美是困難的。

現在，艾略特·溫伯格的《杜甫一生》經由李棟既不陳腐也不走板而是恰到好處的翻譯，進入中文。杜甫得到艾略特，艾略特得到李棟，都是美事。於是，一個穿越了多個時代、多場戰火、多種語言的杜甫，帶著他的多重身影重返我們的生活現場。

二〇二五年三月十六至二十七日

香港中文大學出版社：具有版權的資料

Foreword

Xi Chuan

In year fourteen of the T'ien-pao era, 755 C.E., the An Lu-shan Rebellion broke out. The following year Emperor Hsüan-tsung fled the capital of Ch'ang-an for Shu (today's Sichuan), and his son Su-tsung took the throne in Ling-wu. Tu Fu went to join him but was apprehended by rebel forces and taken to Ch'ang-an. He escaped to rejoin with Su-tsung, but things did not go smoothly for Tu Fu in the court after Su-tsung retook the capital. He was demoted, ultimately resigning his post. This began his peripatetic life of drifting, which took him to Ch'in-chou (Tianshui), T'ung-ku (Chengxian), Ch'eng-tu, K'uei-chou (Fengjie), Chiang-ling (Jingzhou), Yüeh-yang, T'an-chou (Changsha), Heng-chou, and Lei-yang, before he died as a passenger on a boat traveling to Yüeh-yang from T'an-chou. It was the fifth year of the Ta-li era of the reign of Tai-tsung, 770 C.E., and Tu Fu was 58. Thus did Tu Fu become *Tu Fu*.

The animals between beacon fires; the mountains and waters in a time of chaos; the cold, still moon; the deaths, the hunger, the worries, the loneliness, the imperial court so far away; all lushness and splendor gone in the blink of an eye, the flickering shadows in memory—all of this is magnificently expressed, even affirmed, by Tu Fu in his poetry's vivid stylings and strict structures. If not for Tu Fu, if his cries had not crescendoed with the hoofbeats and sword clangs of the An Lu-shan Rebellion, then what we feel of T'ang dynasty history would be very different, indeed; the ways in which we come to our understanding of beauty and the sublime, of civilization and the world, would not be what they are today. This single sand gull between the heavens and earth, this crumpled pedant alone in the cosmos, needed to make his voice heard: his life depended on it. He wrote himself to death, but doing so he wrote himself into eternity—the heavens witnessing his every obsessive stroke.

Few of Tu Fu's contemporaries could use such scale, vitality, or scrutiny to write the relationships between self and other, self and era, self and environment, or self and the past—the self transcending itself and becoming a non-self. Few poets of previous generations, either. But Tu Fu's Confucian commitment to the world evolved into a literary model for later poets, bringing profound inspiration to Chinese poetry and the Chinese cultural imagination across the T'ang-Sung transition. Without Tu Fu's reinforcement of the Confucian tradition of writing, along with Han Yü's (768–824) return to Confucian orthodoxy, it is possible that the mainstreams of later Chinese poetry would have ended up being more Taoist or Buddhist. Chinese painting after the Mongol-ruled Yüan dynasty was not primarily Confucian, after all. But for all that Tu Fu was a Confucian and a poet, the label of “Confucian poet” cannot confine him: he is a poet of the depths of humanity and of history.

Another aspect of the significance of Tu Fu's poetry is this: if language is going to live, thought must live. “Survival” is not enough to accommodate the totality of all that Tu Fu was. Tu Fu had few kindred spirits; his poem “Journeying South” even sighs, “For a hundred years, singing of my sufferings, / never have I met a true friend.” But no one has earned higher praise from readers of later generations. Of course, by the late Ming and early Ch'ing he did irk Wang Fu-chih (1619–1692), for whom nothing was better than the “Nineteen Old Poems” of the Han. And early Ch'ing poet Yüan Mei (1716–1797), with his taste for spontaneity and sensual expression, didn't like him much, either. Even today, for everyone who praises Tu Fu, there are others whose literary tastes tend toward the delicate and light.

Imagine Tu Fu in those days, writing on pages vertically, from right to left: with each dip of the brush, literary history gained

the warmth and weight of a new word. He could draw out the poetry of a chicken, a dog, a bird; he could distill the poetry of a tree, a mountain spring, a muffled clap of thunder; with the world in chaos he wrote what he saw, what he remembered, what he thought—despite uncertainty about whether his poems would even survive. All he could do was write, page after page, some pages dense with text, others left sparse. Even when he economized on words, he made the blank space of the page join in on the building of that poetic marvel known as “Tu Fu.” The survival of his words thus also means the survival of that blank space.

The American writer and poet Eliot Weinberger understands these blank spaces, as well as the ink traces made vivid in that emptiness. War, famine, turmoil—such threats have never left this planet. Precisely for this reason, that poor old man from 1,300 years ago has never been too far from us, and each time he returns, his poetry and his spirit reassert his greatness. Now, in the twenty-first century, Weinberger is continuing—or rewriting—his story in a language written horizontally and from left to right. Tu Fu in Chinese transforms into Tu Fu in English—in truth, into Tu Fu in many languages. One Tu Fu becomes many Tu Fuses, becomes the world’s Tu Fu.

In May 2024, when I met with Eliot on a visit to New York, he told me that he had written an autobiography of Tu Fu, using language from Tu Fu’s own poetry. I was quite surprised! I didn’t know yet how he had structured his text, but just the concept of an “autobiography of Tu Fu” lit something up in me: why has such an idea never occurred to Chinese writers? From this we can see the importance of cultivating concepts of experimentation in modern and contemporary literature. I’ve read no small number of biographies of Tu Fu, academic studies of Tu Fu, annotated editions of Tu Fu’s poetry—but I’d never read an “autobiography of Tu Fu”! And there should be an autobiography of Tu Fu! Who would have thought it would be written in English?

Before we said goodbye, Eliot gave me a copy of *Angels & Saints*, his most recent book at the time. Later, as I browsed through this erudite, intellectually rich work—focused mainly on the West, West Asia, and North Africa—I encountered many unfamiliar angels, many unfamiliar saints. I could feel the author’s earnestness toward historical half-truths, his command of ancient archives, his penetrating worldview, and his subtle facility with language. It resonated again and again. When I closed the book, of course I began to imagine: what form would Eliot’s Tu Fu take, once he appeared on the page?

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I hold Eliot in the highest esteem. I’ve always felt him to be an important poet, though his poetry translations and his essays have had more impact (*The New York Times* once called him “one of the world’s great essayists”). Bei Dao introduced us in New York in 2002, after which I read many of his works and was simply amazed by the poetic quality of his language, the breadth of his imagination, and the vastness of his knowledge; his discerning view of the world, not to mention his commentaries on literature, culture, politics, and people, ancient and modern, from East and West and in-between, are sharp and insightful. Nor am I the only one to think this. Poets and writers from around the world share my impression of him. Eliot is a secret leader of literature.

American Poetry Since 1950: Innovators and Outsiders, which he edited, helped us organize and better understand the current landscape of American poetry. He is an authority on Spanish-language literature, and at the same time maintains a special interest in Chinese poetry, ancient as well as modern. His book *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, with additional commentary by the Nobel Prize-winning Mexican poet Octavio Paz, has become required reading for Chinese literature courses in many English-speaking universities, and is a classic text in its own right. He edited *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, which is where I learned

that the great American poet William Carlos Williams had in fact translated poetry by Cho Wen-chün, Ho Chih-chang, Meng Hao-jan, Wang Wei, Wang Ch'ang-ling, Li Yü, and more.

Eliot visited China in 2006, if I remember correctly, and traveled with a group of poets to southern Xinjiang. Upon returning to Beijing, he went to the post office to send a heavy wooden crate to his wife, the photographer Nina Subin. Full of curiosity, Nina opened the crate to discover a huge stone that Eliot had found in Xinjiang's Gobi Desert! This was the opposite of "a swan feather sent from a thousand miles away," as we say in Chinese, but with the same ancient spirit to it.

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Ezra Pound translated Li Po (Rihaku), Arthur Waley translated Po Chü-i, and Gary Snyder translated Han-shan, "Cold Mountain." Tu Fu has not been without his translators—great ones, in fact. From Herbert Giles to Burton Watson, Cyril Birch, W. J. B. Fletcher, Kenneth Rexroth, David Hawkes, Sam Hamill, David Hinton, and others—they have all translated Tu Fu's poetry, and some have even published dedicated collections. Stephen Owen has published a complete edition of Tu Fu, in six volumes. But Tu Fu has always been waiting for his "autobiography."

It was the hardships of those years that acquired Tu Fu. Now, Tu Fu has acquired Eliot Weinberger.

The slim volume of Weinberger's *The Life of Tu Fu* is not an autobiography in the conventional sense, of course. Weinberger has not translated Tu Fu line by line, but rather, with great inventiveness, has used Tu Fu's language, imagery, associations, and references. It thus reads like a book of Tu Fu's muttering to himself, seemingly aimless, in fact, on a first read. But Eliot understands Tu Fu's writing deeply, and he shows us that a life of suffering is stitched together, inch by inch, by speech and experience, as history and events recede into the background.

Eliot rearticulates the old world, kicks up settled dust, and revives an ancient figure into someone new—someone new who nevertheless remains true to his ancientness.

He molds each of Tu Fu's sentences so that they carry style, so that they stick out their tailfeathers. He guides us through intermittencies of feeling and thought, until we end up muttering to ourselves, as well, to the point of rambling—and then we wake up in our rambling. Eliot's lines avoid obscure concepts and vocabulary, nor does he get caught up on a single sentence or tripped up by a word. It is at once strong and leisurely, rich and restrained, sorrowful yet poised, and filled with hardship. And I should clarify: Eliot has written a modern text. He brings Tu Fu into modern literature, into the field of contemporary life and politics; a mindset used to classical poetry recitation will have a hard time grasping Eliot Weinberger's Tu Fu. But as a contemporary poet myself, I have to say: this is a beautiful little book.

"Beautiful" is an overused word. But the fact is, it is an exceedingly rare quality. In *The Cantos* Pound quotes Plato: "Beauty is difficult," he says.

Now, *The Life of Tu Fu* has entered Chinese through Dong Li's translation, in a Chinese that is not stale or off-key, but exacting and exact. Tu Fu found Eliot, and Eliot found Dong Li. A thing of beauty. And so, a Tu Fu who has been through many eras, wars, and languages, bearing his many forms, brings his multiple silhouettes back to the life of our present.

March 16–27, 2025

translated by Lucas Klein