

## IV

### Introductions and Brief Essays



# 序

韓維民

研究中國文化的西方學者何其多，所出版的各種研究成果—尤以儒道二家的研究為最—豐富了中外各大學的圖書館藏。如今研究儒道二家的學術難處並不在於它是一未經開發的處女地，而是吸引眾人眼光和努力精耕細耘的稻田。

慕禮生先生來台灣講學十餘年，浸淫中國文化精髓日久，加上他原本對西洋文學、文化、宗教豐富的學識，著書立作，因而在這綠田中插入一株新芽。他的這部作品所採用的題材雖然是美國奧克拉荷馬州的本土景色和風土民情，但在行文之中卻植入論語和老子的英譯文，使這二部中國的經典不僅僅成為 *Engendering*（以下譯做「再生」）的一部分，而更為巧妙的是「再生」也變成儒、道二家經典的一部份。再者，儒道二家思想和美國（西方）文化之間的相異點，藉由書中角色的對談，一一道出箇中道理。

以中國人的觀點，我們必須承認我們無法跳脫出中國人的觀點。我們不禁要問，透過外國人的角度，是否能找出我們在論語和老子中看不到現代價值和意義？我們也迫切的想知道論語和老子對於中國的現代化有何助益？或是在以西方基督文明為全球普世價值的框架下，中國人是否融入這一體系中、是否與之對抗、或是建構一全新的普世價值？我們最終的關懷為中國文化能否再生？或許問這樣的問題，太沈重也太廣泛，而且不切實際。因為這樣一來，我們極容易用一種功利實用的眼光詮釋經典和慕禮生個人思想的內涵。而且更糟糕的是，我們會在讀這部作品前，早為它設下一個框框，無法盡觀它的全貌，徒增遺珠之憾。現在讓我們回到作品本身，針對書中特別之處提出筆者個人的看法。

「再生」題材取自慕禮生個人在八〇年代初期旅居奧克拉荷馬州的實際生活經驗，和在奧克拉荷馬州大學任教大一新生英文課的教學實況。本書共分二部分，其一為作者記錄自己在大學任教的實況，而作者本身亦是書中的角色之一。其二為作者在奧克拉荷馬州州境內和諾曼鎮（Norman），所做短程旅遊的所見所聞。文中以第一人稱的觀點直陳鋪述，而敘述者就是慕禮生本人。因此，我們很難區分書中的慕禮生和現實生活中的慕禮生，想必這也是作者的原意。但是在以下

的討論中，筆者認為有必要將兩者區分為二，書中的「慕禮生」加以引號以示辨別，而現實生活中的慕禮生則不變。

慕禮生分別將論語的英譯文植入「再生」的第一部分，將老子植入第二部分。在第一部分，故事情節中，「慕禮生」以一位隨車旅遊作家的身份，為整個故事開場。他隨身攜帶一本筆記記錄他途中的所見所聞。「慕禮生」不僅無數次提醒文中人物，也明白告訴讀者：他是一位忠實的記錄者，他猶如一台錄音機和錄影機隨時隨地，完整記錄下每一個場景與每一位人物的對話，做一最忠實的呈現。試看他與他的學生之間的對話，就可有一清晰的概念：

“Professor Morrison”—J—“What do you mean ‘the story of your life?’”  
“Yeah”—Darla—“Quit writing and explain!” Goofy look at classmate audience. “Now he’s writing down the dumb *question* I asked!” Peering into notebook.<sup>1</sup>  
That’s what you *said*, isn’t it, Darla?”—author-instructor.  
“Too strange!”

「慕禮生」隨身帶著紙筆一直忙著寫東西，這引發故事中人物——包括他自己的學生——的好奇心，他們不斷地詢問他到底在寫些什麼、為什麼要描寫諾曼鎮等等，像這樣的問題也浮現在每位讀者心中：

「他寫作的目的是什麼？」，「諾曼鎮的重要性在哪裡？」等等。書中人物與讀者都在問相同的問題，如此一來慕禮生在有意無意間讓讀者有深入其境的臨場感，這不僅拉近作者與讀者之間的距離，也更進一步能讓讀者彷彿融入故事情節中，成為書中的角色人物之一。這也是慕禮生不區分書中的「他」和現實書中的他的原因之一。再者，慕禮生間接地指涉現在尚未褪色的一些文學理論，認為作者與讀者之間有著一不可橫跨的鴻溝，或是像宣稱作者已死等等的概念。

論語和老子的英譯文被作者大量地引入原文中，這種寫作技巧可能會讓讀者，在開頭的幾個章節裡，會有種摸不著頭緒的感覺。而且幾頁讀下來，讀者可能本能地認為這樣一來會與中國的古典作品格格不入。然而如果我們仔細閱讀經典的譯文與原文之間的關係，我們不難發現論語和老子的譯文已經巧妙地被慕禮生應用融入「再生」文本中，且與原文有著相輔相成的效果，也充分流露出作者匠心獨具之處。

本書作者的描述筆法是客觀、平鋪直述的報導寫作，在文中我們看不出他所敘述的人物情景的目的為何，我們不禁要問為什麼這個人物出現在這裡？他的重要性在那裡？為什麼那裡出現一棟大建築物？

<sup>1</sup>譯文：（「慕禮生教授」，J問，「你所說的『你生命的故事』指的是什麼？」

「對呀！」，達拉問，「不要光寫趕快解釋給我們聽！」傻傻看著在場的同學。「現在他正寫下我問的這個蠢**問題**！」眼睛盯著看筆記本。）

讀者若想要在文本中找到答案，是不太可能的。一旦與所引的經典原文對比，我們所需的解答或許就在其中。我們若以冰山為喻，冰山浮出水面的一部分為「再生」原文，而在水面底下所隱藏的另一大部分是經典的引文。我們不能單只看任何「再生」原文或是經典引文，因為任何一方皆是整部「再生」的一部分。我們必須將兩者對照來看，方能看出全貌。而我們也可以進一步發現慕禮生的主觀見解和個人的評論並不是完全付之闕如，而是間接透過引文表露。所以我們身為讀者，必須在慕禮生所描述的表象外尋找出主觀深層的含意。試看以下的引文就可以清楚的看出他的筆法：

*How could he induce the common people?* Black red-(backward) capped worker, white salmon-halter-topped secretary Chow Mobile approach. **To be loyal and respectful?** Black ketchupping something on tailgate, secretary leaning away from up-sputtering Diet 7-Up, finger still in pull-ring. **“Approach them with dignity,” said the Master.** “Yale Industrial Service.” **“Then they will respect you.”** “Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Amarillo, El Paso.” **“Show kindness toward your children.”** “You got any milk today?”—Tony, peach-fuzz moustache. **“And they will be loyal to you.”** Robin reaching him a half-pint.<sup>2</sup>

乍看之下，在上述的引言中粗體斜字的論語譯文似乎與「再生」原文沒有關係，但是仔細推敲季康子與孔子的對話：「使民敬忠以勸，如之何？」而孔子的回答是：「臨之以莊，則敬；孝慈，則忠，舉善而教不能，則勸。」<sup>3</sup> 顯而易見的是，這段對話的內容是孔子教導季康子如何教化人民。而故事情節是敘說美國社會中、下層（尤其是下層）勞動人物的工作情形以及對話。把季康子與孔子對話與「再生」的人物情景並置處理，慕禮生雖然沒有直接地說出他運用這段文字的意圖為何，但我們不難推論出，他似乎是利用孔子闡揚的思想概念，針對美國社會提出有某種程度的諍言。在美國資本主義高度競爭社會裡，下層民眾並不享有很多的國家資源，和社會競爭力，他們處在社會的邊緣，幾乎永無翻身的可能，美國大都會區的貧民窟，可為之見證。資本主義向來不主動為下層民眾請命、謀福，尤其在經濟全球化的今天，資本主義的擴張早已不侷限於一國或是一地區內，全球化的多國企業在母國的總公司遙控位於全球各地的工廠，進行所謂的全球專業分工：上層領導規劃、中層執行、下層生產。而往往下層人民所得是最低，付出的勞力也是最多。下層民眾所受到經濟上的剝削，早已是

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<sup>2</sup>譯文：**使民戴黑紅帽子的工人**，白肉桂色帽頭的秘書走近。**敬忠以勸，如之何**黑色似蕃茄醬的東西黏在車的後檔板，秘書身子斜避噴出的7-Up汽水，手裡拿著拉環。**子曰：「臨之以莊」**「耶魯工業服務」**則敬**「杜沙，奧克拉荷馬州市，阿馬里歐，國家」**孝慈**「你今天喝牛奶了沒？」東尼——桃紅色的鬍子**則忠**羅賓給他半品脫。

<sup>3</sup>論語「為政篇」。

全球的現象。這也是爲什麼每當WTO舉行年度會議時，總會有大批的民眾抗議，資本主義過度的全球化的問題。下層民眾所受到制度性和有系統的排擠和漠視，使他們更爲邊緣化，進而漸漸的成爲（和導致）主要的社會問題。

然而，這段文字似乎透露出：某程度上，爲政者必須擺脫資本家的控制，對其人民肩負起道德使命——安民、養民和教化。教化的功能不再是爲政者的治術之便，而是安養人民，使其基本生活不至匱乏，再者，使人民在安養之餘，能有道德良知的洗禮，臻於至善。在整本書中，像這樣的例子屢見不鮮，在慕禮生的筆下似乎透露出一項訊息：孔子與儒家中心思想所強調，爲政者所應負起教化人民的道德政治，在某些程度而言具有其亙古的普世價值。<sup>4</sup>

進一步來說，儒家在中國傳統中，尤其是在宋儒以後，整體而言是有重德的傾向，進而影響了歷代的政治思想以及制度。這方面學術的專論已多，我們姑且不在這方面細談，「再生」故事情節的安排，略能看出慕禮生對於這方面的看法。描述如下：

Downtown lunchtime stand, facing Justice Building. Wind strengthening, street dust whip-up, heat unabating. "EQUAL AND EXACT JUSTICE." Lawyers, secretaries, workers. "TO ALL MEN." Unequally hungry. "OF WHATEVER STATE OR PERSUASION." OKC Police car #276 passing, two white cops. "RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL." Judge exiting Justice, black tassel loafers. "—THOMAS JEFFERSON." "**Govern the people by regulations,**" said the Master. "Storage by the Hour." "**Keep order among them by chastisements.**" Girl passing author almost says hello. "**And they will flee from you.**" Takes seat, park bench, glances back. "**And lose all self-respect.**" "Galleria Tower," "Parkside Motor Hotel."

Downtown departure. Willis Shaw Express, 5120 (number familiar, seen earlier?). Full-bodied Indian babe in Hawaiian oversmock, jay-walking. Hospitex white rig, blue stripe running lengthwise. Dolese cement truck, yellow letters on black rotating cylinder. "**Govern them by moral force.**" Author, soaked blue workshirt, Levis, approaching heat-exhaustion. "**Keep order among them by ritual.**" Blue pants, blue shirts, BFI garbage men. "**Then they will keep self-respect.**" Red "Day's Inn," orange super-saturated roof, yellow sunburst. "**And come to you of their own accord.**" Roadside pass-by images: Peterbilt white cab through windshield, correction, open side window. White ground, lightning thrust in baby blue, yellow-outlined. Robin exhausted, silent.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 中國歷代君王、書生、儒士皆浸淫在儒家經典的教義中。雖然付諸實行的效果有限，或有於政治現實、或有於一己之私，把聖人之言當作政治口號和目的。然而，我們仍不能忽視儒家所謂的聖人之道、勤政愛民、愛民如子教條式的語言所帶來的影響力。因爲一、二千年來這些觀念早已深入人心，姑且不論在現實政治環境中，政治人物是否真的能實行聖人之道，但是筆者認爲，儒家政治思想的價值在於，它提供統治者（政治人物）一種政治道德內化的修養依據，以及一種以人爲本的思想哲學。整體而言，儒家思想深信透過和諧的群我關係，人的價值能在人世間得到最大的滿足，而爲政者必須肩負起德行風範，確保人世間的和諧。

<sup>5</sup> 譯文：市中心區的午餐小販，面對著司法大樓。風漸強，街塵揚起，熱氣未減，「平等而真確的正義」律師、祕書、工人不同程度地餓著肚子。「無論國籍和宗教信仰」OKC警車#276駛過，兩位白人警察。「宗教的或政治的」法官走出法院，幾位遊手好閒的黑人。「湯瑪士·傑佛

在這段文字中，很明顯地慕禮生將實景實物的描述與論語的說理文字並置。文中描述一棟司法大樓以及在周圍人們的活動實況。重點在於湯瑪士·傑佛生揭櫫的政治法治名言與論語的為政篇孔子闡述他的為政治國之道。傑佛生所提出的理念是法治正義的精神，而孔子（和後世儒家統治階層）所言是比較近乎道德倫常的精神——治民以德，齊民以禮。這是中國與西方歐美國家民主政治最大不同的地方。民主政治精神是儒家和中國傳統各家思想中極所欠缺的，這也是漢學界所共同認定的結果。慕禮生在文中對於這種差異，並沒有提出任何直接的價值評論，說明何者為優為劣，但我們不難察覺出慕禮生語帶保留地指出西方可供中國學習之處。畢竟中西的政治思想源遠流長，各有二千多年的歷史，在自己獨立的文化圈中曾發揮高度的智慧火花。然而，爾後中國政治思想是否能在傳統的道德倫常中，發展出似傑佛生揭櫫的理想，這正考驗著我們，是否能再一次發揮智慧的火花。

再者，慕禮生不僅將論語的文句溶入自己的作品中，並且把「再生」中的人物，依照仿孔子和孔門弟子的對話教學方式，做一種超時空的呈現。在書中，Jan為「慕禮生」所授大一英文課的一位學生，故事中「慕禮生」與他的學生在課堂上對中國儒家思想有一個精彩的討論。慕禮生將論語顏淵篇的仲弓問仁的片段，植入「再生」書裏的這段對話中。他巧妙地把「仲」與「弓」原本寫在一起的名字給分開來，成為「仲」、「弓」兩字。而「仲」、「弓」英文音譯被慕禮生拼為「Jan」和「Jung」，中間夾帶reverse interviews等字，而Jan和Jung就是孔子的學生仲弓。<sup>6</sup>此舉，孔子的學生仲弓（Jan）變成「慕禮生」的學生Jan，反之亦然。慕禮生刻意地將整個論語孔子與弟子二千

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生」到之以政「計時存物箱」齊之以刑有位女孩做打呼狀經過作者民免坐下，公園板凳，回頭瞄幾眼而無恥「葛立塔」「公園汽車旅館」。

市中心出口，威力·蕭快車，5120（熟悉的號碼，似曾相識）壯碩的印地安小孩，穿著夏威夷的套頭襯衫，橫穿馬路。Hospitex白色船具，藍色條紋縱常延伸。Dolse水泥卡車，在黑色轉桶的黃色字母。道之以德作者，濕透的藍工作襯衫，Levis牛仔褲，熱昏地快步向前走去。藍褲子，藍襯衫。FBI收垃圾的工人。齊之以禮紅色「天天旅館」，深橘色的屋頂，從雲隙照下來的陽光。有恥且格路旁的「經過的圖像」Peterbilt自計程車透過擋風玻璃，修正，車窗開著。白色地面，藍色閃電刺叉，黃色輪廓。羅賓吐出煙，無語。

<sup>6</sup>小說的原文如下：

OU Memorial Union; **Jan**. Reverse interviews. **Jung**. Will Rogers Cafeteria. **Asked about Goodness**. “Along with stealing a high chair”—Alison—“I had two Moose Heads.” **Said the Master**: “Then we went to Legends.” **“Behave away from home.”** “Half a gin and tonic.” **“As though in the presence of.”** Bogart’s. **“An important guest.”** “The guy said ‘No way!’ So my big sis took me home.”

Sam interviewing Darla; Debbie with a case of giggles; Jan, white sweater, heavily made-up. **“Deal with the people.”** Pool of secretaries. **“As though you were officiating.”** Central table. **“At an important sacrifice.”**

多年前古代中國私塾的教學對話情景，與故事情節中的「慕禮生」與學生二十世紀末現代美國大學的教學對話情景兩相對比、呼應，進而將孔子與「慕禮生」做一巧妙的結合，也凸顯出本書作者欲與中國聖賢齊名的企圖心。

「再生」的第二部分實為第一部分的延續，但是故事的場景已由大學校園轉移到奧克拉荷馬州和諾曼鎮，其中有都市景觀和鄉野景色的描述。老師學生之間的對話已不復見，取而代之的是「慕禮生」獨自悠遊於奧克拉荷馬州境內和諾曼鎮所訪得的風土民情。此部分的中國經典引文已不是論語而是老子，而慕禮生對於老子的英譯文的處理已達爐火純青的地步。舉例來說：*The weapons of the soldiers cannot avail against him.* Dove made out of the words, “Jesus is Lord” (Abundant Life Fellowship). *How is it so?* “Preaching the Power in the Name of Jesus.” *Because he is beyond death.*<sup>7</sup>乍看之下老子譯文與「再生」文字之間有著互不隸屬、各自獨立的關係。但是如果把兩段文字放在一起念，我們不難發現兩段文字一經結合後，產生新的含意。我們可以很清楚看到在慕禮生的巧妙安排下，老子的話似在說明耶穌的肉體不死。而在新約聖經中，耶穌基督存在世上的軀體，為上帝話語（*logos*）的化身，這也就是所謂的「道成肉身」。在本書中雖然沒有任何聖經的文字，但是其中的關聯性，洋溢於「再生」的字裡行間，呼之欲出。再者，老子的譯文如果沒有像耶穌般的人物，則老子玄妙、神秘主義式的哲思讀來就少了那一份真實與逼真；而耶穌在世行義，若沒有背後深沈、普世的宗教情操和中心哲學思想為之支持，那麼耶穌基督則與同時代所謂的異端無異，於今早為人們遺忘。

在本書中，還有一個非常值得讓我們注意的一點，那就是「慕禮生」曾數次被詢問，他是否意圖討論宗教議題時，他的回答是否定的。然而他卻在有意無意間，詳細描寫旅遊途中所看到的每一個教堂。雖然教堂是奧克拉荷馬州的「天然」景觀，教堂林立，但是教堂在書中佔了相當的分量，這是不爭的事實。<sup>8</sup>慕禮生雖未明顯提出或討論宗教的議題，不過基督宗教無論是在美國或是西方世界，甚至於在亞洲都佔有舉足輕重的地位。近年來，學者將國與國之間的衝突，歸因於文明的衝突。更有甚者，哈佛大學政治學者Samuel Huntington所提出的文化衝突理論，就以宗教信仰為區分各文明區的指標。宗教與文明之間有著緊密的相連性。這是一項留意世界思潮的人無法避免的

<sup>7</sup> 譯文：兵無所其刃耶穌是主（豐滿生命友誼會）何故以主耶穌的名佈道以其無死地。

<sup>8</sup> 在小說中除了宗教議題外，慕禮生所描述的範圍極為廣大，尤其是家庭議題方面，男女關係，商業活動，小人物的日常生活以及愛國情操等等包羅萬象。



重要議題。以中國人的角度而言，我們所關心的是基督宗教對我們的文化衝激有何重要性？會產生正面或是反面的影響？若是正面的，那麼中國文化的未來發展的走向是否是傾向基督教化？若是反面，中國與西方（尤其是以美國為首的基督新教的西方國家）衝突面會不會擴大到戰爭的局面？這是近百年來大家一直在問的問題。<sup>9</sup>

慕禮生的作品雖然不是針對如此的議題提出任何全新的看法，或是企圖解決可能的衝突，但是在其文字中我們仍然可以找出他對基督宗教與中國傳統思想基本差異的關心與看法。試細讀文中的描述：*Tao is the. “HOLY SPIRITUAL LOVE.” Mysterious secret. “Eve.” Of the universe. “Adam.” The good man’s treasure. “Jesus.” The bad man’s refuge. Thou who hear say ‘Come.’” Beautiful saying. “We love you.” Can be sold at the market. “PASS IT ON!”*<sup>10</sup> 我們姑且不談這段複合文字所帶的文字趣味，但是慕禮生把基督宗教所注重的愛的觀念和中國人所注重的道並列，這是令人值得深究的。<sup>11</sup> 道的含意極廣，無論是對中國文化有興趣，或是致力研究的外國人士、本國人士，都可能注意到儒家所持的道和道家所言的道有些差異。儒家之道是正人倫之道，以重名分、以政人事、以理是非。儒家是人之道。這人之道是需要天之道的契合，天人之道（合一）的觀念才能顯現出來。因為道家講求的是天、地、自然與人的關係，並不僅侷限於人事的紛擾而已。依照金關濤和劉青峰的說法，自漢建立後，儒生講求天人相應以及織緯之說，使得道家思想與儒家思想合流。<sup>12</sup> 人倫之常與天理運行相呼應。天人合一並非儒家一己之功，而是結合道家對天地宇宙的冥思而來。然而，我們試著以廣義的角度說道是宇宙生成的奧祕，萬物的根源，也是天地宇宙運行次序的來源，而人類生存在這天地之間，人類生活次序也理

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<sup>9</sup> 至今羅馬教庭與中國大陸尚未建立正式外交關係，其中除了高度政治因素外，不外乎就是文化和宗教的因素。前不久，羅馬教皇諾望保祿二世就針對教廷數百年來在中國傳教，因文化的隔閡，所造成的誤解和衝突，做出道歉一事。由此可見，政治或是軍事衝突可一時化解，但是宗教的衝突需要長久時間的包容和諒解。

<sup>10</sup> 譯文：道者「聖靈之愛」萬物「夏娃」之奧「亞當」善人之寶「耶穌」不善人之寶「你聽到他人說『來』」美言「我們愛你」可以市尊「傳下去」。

<sup>11</sup> 道的概念幾乎無所不包，但是道並非新約聖經約翰福音中所言的道：「太初有道，道與神同在，道就是神」。中文聖經的譯者把希臘文中的（logos）譯成中文的道，其用心可以理解，因為在一開始基督教對中國人而言是陌生的，利用中國思想中的一個最為重要的概念與基督教神學思想相結合，在某些方面而言是有助益基督教在中國的傳教。然而就已實際思想的觀點而言（logos），能不能與道並列，這還是個思想史上重要的課題。筆者認為這是基督教來華近五百年後，所應該讓人值得注意的地方。

<sup>12</sup> 見中國現代思想的起源：超穩定結構與中國政治文化的演變（第一卷），香港：中文大學出版社，2000，頁 23-32。

應是這一大次序裏的一環。所以大致上，我們可以說道是規範宇宙運行生成的道理，也是人世間的道理，但是道並不是人格化的道，也並不具有類似基督神性的道。

這段文字透露基督宗教愛所包含的概念恰恰與道有類似之處，也有不同之處。「再生」的第二部分談的不僅是儒道的觀念，也將愛與道做一番詮釋。愛並不單指是男女之間的愛情。聖經上說：上帝甚愛這世界，所以祂差遣祂唯一的兒子到這世界上來拯救世人。而這愛的觀念不僅是上帝創造宇宙的動力，它本身就是上帝的化身。基督教徒深信上帝因為愛而創造宇宙，而耶穌也因為愛而替人類在十字架上死去。教徒受到上帝愛的感受而信，信仰本身就是愛，愛不僅使上帝與我合一，愛也調和上帝與個體自我（教會）之間的次序與規範。另一方面，道並沒有類似基督教組織化和教義化的信徒。相對來說，所謂得道之人，皆參得宇宙萬物造化之理（並非造化之功）。得道即是得到天地的道理，進而天地與我合一。天人合一和與上帝合一皆是中西思想的兩大主流，在此有一明顯的比較。這樣的文字和論說雖然並不存在於書中，但是如前所介紹，故事情節中林立的教堂和慕禮生刻意所用的道的引文，讓我們不得不將注意力放在愛與道的比較上。筆者雖然在這方面著墨不多，寥寥數語，信能讓讀者在閱讀「再生」時，有另一角度的思考空間。

最後值得注意的一點是，本書的第一部分論語的譯文是按先後次序引入故事情節中，而在第二部分，老子譯文是按倒序的方式引入故事中的。書的結尾恰巧是老子的開頭，這意味著結束並不是真正的結束，事實上它是另一個開始，「道可道，非常道……」

結束是另一個開始，本書結構安排隱隱約約透露出這部書的主旨……「再生」。

# L'anima e il cielo stellato

Flavio Ermini

## 1

Nelle pagine che seguono, cinque saggi interpretativi si schiudono su opere e autori di ogni tempo e luogo, ne approfondiscono la conoscenza e s'intrecciano con l'essenza propria dell'uomo: la sua radicale ricerca della verità in un continuo aprirsi alla vita.

Segmenti di pensiero si aprono allo sguardo su molti tracciati della letteratura, ma non vi è passaggio a una teoria generale, a un disegno unitario ed esaustivo. Proprio questa prerogativa rende l'opera avvincente.

In *Particolare e universale* Madison Morrison ci indica che anche in ambito letterario vale quanto scrive Wittgenstein: "Non è soltanto necessario imparare caso per caso che cosa si debba dire su un certo oggetto; è anche necessario imparare come se ne debba scrivere. Si deve imparare, sempre di nuovo, il metodo per affrontarlo."

Morrison, come pochi altri pensatori, cerca di mettersi di fronte alla storia della letteratura senza cedere alla tentazione di sovrapporvisi.

Costatare per lui non vuol dire entrare in possesso. Penetrare sempre più a fondo nel senso di un testo non significa transitare attraverso le verifiche di una critica a priori, né vuol dire condurre le conoscenze acquisite sotto il dominio degli orizzonti istituzionali della logica. In un testo, ci ricorda Morrison, "il nostro principale interesse non va a ciò che i lettori hanno trovato . . . ma a cosa nell'opera ha permesso loro di trovarlo."

Questa distanza fra la mente e l'oggetto della sua attenzione risulta salutare al fine di sperimentare nell'interpretazione critica quello speciale nomadismo che facilita la trasformazione di un testo in un nuovo testo.

Morrison si pone di fronte alle opere sapienziali indù e cinesi, ai testi di Omero, Virgilio, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Whitman . . . dopo aver compiuto un faticoso processo di liberazione dagli archivi disciplinari della critica letteraria. E fa della sua opera, *Particolare e universale*, la sede tumultuosa di un orizzonte interpretativo che adotta un'ottica strettamente investigativa e descrittiva, fondata su un personale sentire e una sempre rinnovata passione.

## 2

*Particolare e universale* costituisce un'esemplare lezione di metodo, che si sottrae a progetti teorici codificati, permettendosi così di attribuire a ogni scoperta un carattere di apertura e di ulteriore sviluppo.

Davanti a un testo ci poniamo frequentemente la domanda: nell'interpretazione, è meglio affidarci ai nostri sensi o a quelli di un sapere fondato su una logica precostituita? Troppo spesso noi trascorriamo quasi inavvertitamente da un livello all'altro, incorrendo in non lievi errori di valutazione.

Morrison ci rivolge l'invito ad avvicinare i cromatismi delle opere letterarie con occhi depurati, in una reinvenzione teorica alla quale sia estranea ogni sistematicità. Ci dice che presentare e non spiegare resta la prima regola da seguire per dare attendibilità a qualsiasi asserzione. Solo così quanto poteva inizialmente restare al di là del nostro controllo—e apparentemente indicibile—affiora, per essere a sua volta presentato e non spiegato. Proprio per non precludersi la possibilità di nuove indagini “è inutile,” come efficacemente spiega lo stesso Morrison, “stringere il cappio della definizione attorno al collo della letteratura.”

Palese è la finalità delle pagine che seguono. Trasformare il lettore stesso in interprete, invitandolo a un'assoluta confidenza con autori e opere.

### 3

È una storia piena di peripezie quella che Madison Morrison ci racconta. L'itinerario disegnato va dalla cultura classica indù al pensiero democratico di Emerson, Whitman e Thoreau; dalla verità filosofica del *Lao-zi* all'epica occidentale e ai suoi elementi allegorici; spingendosi fino alle figure dell'esperienza nella tarda letteratura inglese moderna.

È un andirivieni incessante lungo più spazi letterari di ogni tempo e luogo, alla ricerca delle più intime corrispondenze, soprattutto là dove più acuti si fanno i contrasti.

Lungo questo cammino, fatto di frasi da cui si levano saperi e richiami, Morrison è il viandante che non può vivere senza elaborare le diversità dell'esperienza. Refrattario alle dinamiche istituzionali della letteratura cerca il centro tra i poli estremi che Kant riconosceva nell'“anima” e nel “cielo stellato,” spogliandosi di ogni intenzione e di ogni partito preso, e affidandosi a una lingua ormai votata alla vertigine dello spazio e intenzionata ad avanzare con il peso delle proprie ragioni e non con un potere.

Morrison chiede di ipotizzare la fine di ogni poetica fondata sulla nozione di proprietà, sia spaziale sia temporale, a favore di una poetica senza mete e senza punti di partenza. I poli estremi dell'“anima” e del “cielo stellato” sono presenti, ci dice, in ogni autore, sì, ma anche in ogni poetica, nella storia della nostra letteratura come nella storia di tutte le letterature.

È una lotta con il limite. È il rifiuto della tipologia e della classificazione.

Madison Morrison è un pensatore difficile da collocare. È un viandante inarrestabile che si affida al rovesciamento dello sguardo per ottenere un punto di vista sempre eccentrico. Lo spazio letterario in cui s'inoltra non è garantito nemmeno dall'aristotelico "cielo delle stelle fisse," perché anche questo è tramontato per lui. Sembra dirci che non c'è patria se non la consapevolezza del cammino.

Ecco il motivo di una teoria che si misura con il tumulto di una produttiva asistematicità, consentendo che le molteplici aree disciplinari s'intreccino in una reinvenzione teorica del tutto indisciplinata. Tanto che non è dato di sapere a quali polarità corrispondono le nozioni di "particolare" e di "universale," se, rispettivamente, all'"anima" e al "cielo stellato," o viceversa. Chissà. Ma forse per Morrison l'universale è il particolare, e il particolare è l'universale; esattamente come per i buddisti "il nirvana è il samsara, e il samsara è il nirvana"; ovvero come per i poeti l'"anima" è il "cielo stellato," e il "cielo stellato" è l'"anima."

Morrison sa che unire la propria voce al coro di quelli (e sono i più) che si conformano a quanto appare canonizzato e ragionevole potrebbe portare al mutismo. Per questo propone una lingua di pudore e di riconoscimento che consenta a brandelli della nostra anima di affiorare, senza abituarsi a quanto è consolidato. È perentorio Morrison quando afferma: "C'è un corpo filosofico al quale arriviamo non tanto tramite il ragionamento progressivo, quanto piuttosto tramite il consenso poetico."

Alla fine di tanto peregrinare tra l'"anima" e il "cielo stellato," Morrison indica che se presso una radura è possibile sostare questa non può essere che la passione. Come scriveva Marina Cvetaeva: "La passione è l'ultima possibilità dell'essere umano di esprimersi, come il cielo è l'ultima possibilità di essere—per la tempesta."

## Preface to *Every Second*

MM

Culminating a sequence of books called ARES and initiating another called HERMES, *Second*, like Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, is concerned with struggle and flight, a motif that it shares with the Biblical *Every*, whose paradigmatic hero is Moses, also known for struggle and flight. Both books had their origin a quarter century ago in a divorce journal, which, as I recall, had lifted, Hermes-like, passages from every dreary book of the Bible and every book of Homer's epics, along with class notes for teaching them. Such indiscriminate homage and such literal didacticism eventually had to be reconceived, in a sifting process that filtered out the lumps of domestic argument and literary struggle. Nonetheless, epic is a difficult and compendious form, and if there be no *longueurs*—catalogues of miseries and triumphs, of ships or demons; of proverbs and place names inserted for mnemonic convenience—then we rapidly decline into the novel, a genre based upon the writer's experience instead of the world's more patent realities. (Yes, Santa Claus, there is a Virginia.)

But how to be at once both objective and personal? The "MES" of HERMES—the trilogy *Magic Every Second*—begins with an autobiography, was conceived from the first as personal (see the French possessive *mes*) and yet was required to tell the truth about IT (not Information Technology but *das Es*, a collective Id). Here objectivity is poorly served by a first-person narrator, hence the ubiquitous "author." Hence too the other clamoring voices: in *Magic*, those of Osiris and Hermes Trismegistus, in *Every*, of David and Herod, in *Second*, of Achilles and Odysseus, of Homer and Vergil.

Teaching Homer had begun at Harvard when one was 22 and only ended 40 years later with retirement in Asia. Teaching the Bible proved more intermittent, though in later years continuous, if one counts a course that included Dante, another, Tasso, yet others devoted entirely to Spenser and to Milton. I refrain from repeating observations of mine, recorded in *Particular and Universal*, concerning the Greek, the Italian and the English epic poets, or for that matter, concerning Vergil, our first self-conscious universalist and the subject of *Second*.<sup>3</sup> What I have tried to do that none of *them* (or so it seemed to me) quite succeeded in doing is to make the universal fully particular. If Homer *is* Odysseus, if Odysseus, Homer, why keep them pried apart, as in the novel? For what, finally, do we gain by fictionalizing reality, a process parodied at the end of *Second*.<sup>2</sup>

Whose story is it, however, that one should tell is another question. To divorce us from the journal once and for all it had seemed best to reapply the in situ method—practiced first in *Revolution*, then realized more purely in *Realization*—to the representation of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus my second round-the-world venture, with stops in Tel Aviv,

Amman and Beirut; in Istanbul, the Greek islands and the Peloponnisos; in Brindisi and Naples (to say nothing of a visit, on yet a third round-the-world outing, to Mantua, the haunt of Vergil's youth). All this travel in search of Everyman was intended to locate him in his Biblical and Homeric habitat.

What is universal, what particular? (Or like *nirvana* and *samsara* are they one in the same?) The physicality of our cultural geography (familial, social, national, and—as we are latterly wont to say—“global”) is in the end a particular, but also a universal, given. Can we transcend nationality, race, gender and class? In our dreams of Democracy we hope so, but the literature of the human race has rarely been democratic.

## On the Question of the Personal

MM

In the Preface to *Every Second* I suggested that the theme of my life during the years of my divorce and its aftermath is mirrored in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. In the diptych's subsequent pages I shadow the identities of biblical and classical heroes. Such *imitatio* is of course well known to Christian and classical traditions, however much it may strike the modern sensibility as artificial. (Nothing, for example, seems to us more contrived than Vida's overwriting of Vergil so as to imbue the pagan with Christian doctrine, yet to the Middle Ages this step seemed inevitable.) What tradition helps us understand is that the modern way of telling a "personal" story is not the only way. One need not, for example, use the first person singular—a grammatical procedure all but unknown to antiquity—in narrating a formal account of oneself. For the traditionalist to tell a story that incorporates into it earlier stories is a mark not of debility but of prowess. Such complexity, far from preventing one from being personal, is what actually enables one to *be* personal.

In *Second* (one of whose meanings is "someone who follows someone else") I tried to convey a sense of the personal analogous to what we find in Homer and Vergil, who are nowhere literally present in their own epics, certainly not as first-person narrators of their own experience. Why is it, then, that we take their stories so personally? For the same reason that we take *Hamlet* personally. In none of his plays does Shakespeare present *himself*, or his own personal experience, but the curious reader who has looked into the matter recognizes in Hamlet the ghost of Hamnet, projected into the future (Hamnet, the son of Shakespeare by Anne Hathaway, died at the age of eleven). We also—almost universally—recognize Hamlet as *Shakespeare himself*. How does Shakespeare achieve this effect? We are not quite sure and would have to offer many reasons, but certainly one of them is *not* that Shakespeare has used the first person singular. It might in fact be argued that the personal effect occurs precisely because he *hasn't* used the first person singular.

Like Achilles, during the period in which I kept the journals that formed the emotional basis for the very different books that later emerged from them, I suffered injustice (as we all do, from time to time); like Achilles, I withdrew (as we all frequently do); and, like Achilles, I reentered the fray to defeat various enemies. Odysseus' story is equally universal. Like Hamlet and Achilles, he too "withdraws" (he leaves home for the adventure of Troy); he too helps to defeat an enemy (the same enemy in fact that Achilles crucially helps to defeat). We do not have the aftermath of Achilles' Trojan adventure (except in abbreviated versions), but we do have the aftermath of Odysseus', and not only according to Homer but also according to many others, including Dante, who, in keeping



with an old tradition, even recounts Odysseus' death (as Shakespeare shows us Hamlet dying).

One thing that Odysseus does that differentiates him from Achilles is to leave behind the scene of a struggle (as an American man must do when he gets divorced); his subsequent wanderings, in Cedric Whitman's reading, represent a necessary reconstitution of his personality. He returns to his true "home," perhaps, as the Greek scholar interviewed in *Second* has it (see pp. 70-75), in a different part of the cosmos. But after he arrives there, he reenacts a story familiar to him, as well as to us . . . the battle of the Iliad! In other words, Odysseus reverts to the identity of Achilles, whom he then, in Book 24, goes on to meet face to face in the underworld, thereby encountering, so to speak, his very self. We love this complexity, this shifting of identities, this lack of a clearly bounded Self, and somehow we find it more "personal," with reference to ourselves as well as to Homer.

In Vergil, Aeneas is very much *himself*, but he includes many other people. (He is Hector, Paris and Agamemnon; he is Achilles and Odysseus again.) It is also possible, by a stretch of the imagination, to say that Aeneas = Dido, like two parts of an androgyne (possibly Vergil himself). Moreover, as others have observed, Turnus, who represents a kind of Achilles, also = Dido, Aeneas' earlier "adversary," at the end of the Aeneid *redivivus*, so to speak. (Incidentally, this gives us a Dido at *both* ends of Vergil's epic.) Others have argued, with even more imagination, that Turnus = Aeneas, and thus that Aeneas, when he kills Turnus, kills *himself*. (Oh, like Dido, we suddenly realize!) But by killing Turnus, by again causing "Dido"'s death, by "killing himself," Aeneas does something much more complicated than what routinely happens at the end of novels, something that we are still attempting to grasp after two millennia of reading and interpreting the Aeneid.

The greatest stories are not narrated in the first person singular: Apollonius, among the Greeks; Ovid, among the Romans; Vyasa, among the Indians; Ariosto, among the Italians; Milton, among the English, all use the third person to describe "heroes" who nonetheless—or so we suspect—really represent themselves (among the great poets, only Valmiki and Dante literally introduce themselves into their own narratives). As for autobiography and the modern preference for the first person singular, we might consider how Henry Adams proceeds in *his* autobiography, which he calls *The Education of Henry Adams*. Or how Gertrude Stein proceeds in hers, which she calls *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Neither of these autobiographies (the two that have most influenced me) is told in the first person. (*Magic* is *both* a first-person *and* a third-person narrative; it is my story and also the story of Osiris, a figure of the Egyptian soul in the process of rebirth.) The excessively high modern valuation of the first person singular, then, is based upon a false premise: that the use of such a grammatical figure makes one more sincere or genuine.

In fact the opposite is true, for no figure is more torturous to handle in a literary work than the first person singular, which may be why Adams and Stein had the good sense to avoid it. Whatever the case, *their* autobiographies are more genuine than those concocted by the first-person autobiographers: Rousseau and Virginia Woolf and the latest whiner. The liveliest examples of the form, those by Benjamin Franklin, or Harry Crosby, or Kenneth Clark, people of political, social or otherwise public distinction, are concerned, paradoxically, not with *subjective* but rather *objective* matters. What does Goethe call his life's story? Not *Mein Leben*, but *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. *Faust* probably represents Goethe's *true* autobiography, and it is a work at once more mythic and more intimate than *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers* or *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, though they too are clearly autobiographical.

Again we have returned to the question of the novel, which, as the pre-eminent modern form, is *fundamentally personal* (i. e. it is drawn from the author's personal experience, which the modern sensibility wants all literature to be grounded in). Grammatically speaking, it transposes the first person of autobiography into a third person protagonist, treating him or her with apparent "objectivity." But a character who has no *independent* existence apart from the author must ultimately be "subjective." Though I agree with the third person grammatical form of most novels, what I reject is this *fictionalization of personal experience*. By contrast to the characters that the novelist *invents*, Odysseus and Aeneas actually *exist*. Neither Homer nor Vergil invented them (nor in *Second* did I invent them either). Likewise, Alexis Lichine actually *exists* (or *existed*—he was a French wine merchant and connoisseur). In imagining *Each* I did not invent him, though I did contrive to locate within his consciousness the "objective" illustrations that Roussel had commissioned for his *Nouvelles impressions d'Afrique*.

## A Note on Genre

### MM

When friends and sympathetic readers, despite my own demurrals, continue to refer to books in **Sentence of the Gods** as “novels,” it occurs to me that it might be well to say something about the genres of the epic’s individual segments as well as the genre of the work as a whole. Part of the problem here has to do with the casual way in which one refers to one’s activity. I often say, for example, that I went to Egypt and gathered material for a book about Alexandria, the Nile and Cairo. This way of talking people can understand. Were I to say instead that I am planning to write a book called *Renewed*, about a *renouveau de l’esprit*, that its mythic model is Osiris and its historical motifs, the renovation of Alexandria, the Roman appropriation of the Nile (as in the gardens at Hadrian’s villa) and the spiritual dispensation of Islam in the Mother of all Cities, people would wonder what in the world I was talking about.

Likewise, for many years I was happy enough to say that the **Sentence** contains four “novels,” *Revolution*, *Each*, *Second* and *Every*. This way of referring to these four books is again readily comprehensible. But *Revolution* is not really a novel; instead, it is much closer to Menippean satire, and so I took this term for a subtitle, when in 1998 we published a five-chapter bilingual redaction called *MM’s Revolution*. Likewise, *Each*, a reconstruction in prose from illustrations commissioned by Raymond Roussel of his poem *Nouvelles impressions d’Afrique*, is not in any sense a “novel.” The divorce journals that earlier constituted *Second* and *Every*, and which in some extended sense might have been considered “novels,” have now been replaced by two very different pieces of in situ writing interwoven with other texts. They too are emphatically *not* “novels.”

I am rather weak as a theoretician of genre and not enough the classicist to read Aristotle in Greek, but I am aware of several terms that he uses to distinguish forms of classical expression: **mythos**, **plasma** and **istoria**, all which he counterpoises against writing concerned with contemporary actuality (**alithes**). The three principal terms are interesting in relation to what I do in general. But in most cases the relationship is negative. For the fundamental meaning of **mythos**, as I understand the matter, is *plot* (for *character* Aristotle employs the term **ethos**, for *theme*, **dianoia**). If we mean by *plot* a story conceived in advance, then my books have no plot or **mythos**. *U* and *Need*, two 1000-line poems, were written one line a day without any predetermined sense of where the stories were headed. My “travel books” follow only the “plot” of my itineraries. When Dan Boord and I wrote *Revolution*, he and I, with no plot outline, took our turns composing it a chapter at a time. In distinguishing **mythos** from **plasma** and **istoria** Aristotle has in mind a traditional story. None of my books retells a traditional story, though many refer to such myths.

Aristotle's second term, **plasma**, seems the rough equivalent of the modern *fiction*, a story that is shaped by the author's imagination rather than by legend. Very few of my books have anything fictional about them, and those that do avoid such novelistic conventions as the past tense, indirect discourse, an omniscient point of view or the illusion of a self-sufficient world; they do not strive to create an inner consciousness for their characters or shapely dialogues between them. So I find the application of the term "novel" to *Need* or *Each*, to *Realization* or *Engendering*, to *Happening* or *Divine* misleading. Only if the term "novel" is understood as "miscellaneous belletristic modern prose" could it be accurate here.

Aristotle's third term, **istoria**, also seems inaccurate as a way of describing even my most "historical" books: *Revolution*, *Second*, *Happening* and *Divine*, since in each of these the primary narrative is concerned with actuality, which Aristotle clearly differentiates from **istoria**, **plasma** and **mythos**.

Now there *is* in all this a complication (if not a series of contradictions). **Sentence of the Gods** itself is a **mythos**; its seven stages represent mythic figures in a progression that we all know by heart. Like **plasma**, most of its books are in prose, not verse, and they are the product of an individual writer rather than of collective story telling. Finally, if **istoria** is incorrect as a term to describe the larger work, nonetheless the **Sentence**, as an epic, in some fundamental sense *must* be concerned with history. So the three Aristotelian terms are relevant after all.