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卷 首 语

传记（life writing）是人类的纪念碑。文化的起源中就包含着传记的因素，孔子的《论语》、柏拉图的苏格拉底回忆录和四福音书为传记树立了不朽的经典。其他文学和文化的文本形式，大都随着时代的变迁而消亡，成为历史的陈迹，只有传记以顽强的生命力绵延不绝；到了21世纪更是超过曾经盛极一时的小说，成为文化文本中的最大类别。传统的他传、自传、回忆录、书信、日记、游记等继续繁荣，新兴的口述历史、群体传记又异军突起。传记还超越了文字的媒介，同电影、电视以及互联网和自媒体结缘，开拓出广阔的新空间，拥有难以计量的读者。越来越多的人为自己、为亲爱者写作传记，以保留一份纪念。21世纪是属于传记的时代。

传记的发展，提出了许许多多的问题，需要研究和讨论；本刊是中国境内第一个专门研究传记的刊物，创办本刊的目的就是提供一个发表和交流的园地，为中国传记的发展聊尽绵薄之力。

在一个全球化的时代，《现代传记研究》是一个开放性的刊物。它向中外传记界开放，它发表对各种传记类型的问题，包括历史的、现实的和理论的问题，所进行的不同角度的研究和探讨；它鼓励和欢迎专家、作者和读者之间的交流和互动；它提倡视角和方法与时俱进、不断创新，同时也倡导严谨、求实的文风。它的目的只有一个，促进传记学术的繁荣，推动传记的发展。

办好一份刊物是一件艰苦的事，我们会不断学习、不断反思、不断改善以求进步。我们也吁求国内外传记界的朋友们、传记爱好者的支持，你们的关注和参与，你们的能力和智慧，是办好这份刊物最有力的保证，期待着你们！

《现代传记研究》编辑部

Editor's Note

As a monument to honor human beings, life writing has permeated culture since its origin. *Analects of Confucius* by Confucius, Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, and *The Four Gospels* are immortal classics in the history of life writing. Despite the fact that many genres of literature and culture perish over time, life writing has persisted in a tenacious manner, and the twenty-first century is witnessing a golden age of life writing, which even surpasses the novel, the once-dominating genre. Life writing now is among the most esteemed of cultural texts. Such traditional forms as biography, autobiography, memoirs, letters, diary and travel writing still maintain prominence and the emerging oral history and collective lives demonstrate great momentum. Simultaneously, life writing, having crossed the border of textual medium into the domain of movies, TV, Internet and We Media, claims an ever new and extensive space with the potential for innumerable readers. An increasing number of people have taken to life writing for themselves or for their loved ones, aspiring to erect an everlasting monument. In brief, the twenty-first century is an era of life writing.

Life writing as a genre of discourse has posed a great number of questions, requiring energies devoted to deeper studies and thorough scholarly discussions. The *Journal of Modern Life Writing Studies* takes the initiative in China as the first journal exclusively devoted to life writing studies. It aims to make a distinctive contribution to the development of Chinese life writing by providing a forum for publication and exchange of views in scholarship.

In the context of globalization, the *Journal of Modern Life Writing Studies* is an open journal, accessible to the life writing community home and abroad, publishing research and explorations on all kinds of life writing issues (historical, practical and theoretical) from various perspectives, encouraging and welcoming communication and interaction among scholars, authors and readers, and highlighting innovative perspectives and methodologies as well as rigorous and realistic style. Our over-arching commitment is to facilitate the development of life writing and to bring it to a new level of excellence.

A full-fledged journal requires arduous and painstaking efforts. We pledge to consistently aim for progress through consistent learning, reflection, and improvement. We also appeal to dear friends in the life writing community at home and abroad and devotees of life writing for your support, attention and participation. Your talents and wisdom are the most powerful assurance of our success. We are looking forward to your help!

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“Writing for a Much Wider Audience”：

An Interview with Leo Damrosch

Our Editor

Interviewee: Leo Damrosch (1941—) was educated at Yale (BA summa cum laude, 1963), Trinity College, Cambridge (Marshall Scholar, first class honors, 1966), and Princeton (PhD, 1968), he taught in the English Departments at the University of Virginia (1966–1983), University of Maryland at College Park (1983–1989), and since 1989 at Harvard University where he is now Ernest Bernbaum Professor Emeritus of Literature. In addition to numerous academic publications, his most recent books are *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005), a finalist for the National Book Award in nonfiction and winner of the PEN New England award for nonfiction; *Tocqueville's Discovery of America* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (Yale University Press, 2013), winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award in biography, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in biography, and also for the Kirkus Prize in nonfiction; and *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake* (Yale University Press, 2015) a finalist in criticism for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and also for the Christian Gauss Book Award. He has four sons, and lives in Newton, Massachusetts with his wife, Joyce Van Dyke, and their youngest son, Nicholas.

标题：“为更广泛的读者写作”——利奥·达姆罗什访谈

受访者：利奥·达姆罗什（1941—），先后毕业于耶鲁大学（以优等生毕业并获学士学位，1963年）、剑桥大学三一学院（马歇尔奖学金，一等荣誉学位，1966年）、普林斯顿大学（博士学位，1968年）。他先后任教于弗吉尼亚大学英语系（1966—1983年）、马里兰大学公园校区（1983—1989年）、哈佛大学（1989年至今）。他目前为厄内斯特·伯恩鲍姆教席文学荣誉教授。已出版多部学术专著，最近著有《让-雅克·卢梭——躁动的天才》（米夫林集团，2005年），曾进入国家图书奖（纪实类作品）最终角逐并荣获新英格兰神笔奖（纪实类作品）；《托克维尔发现美国》（法劳、施特劳斯和吉罗

出版社, 2010 年);《乔纳森·斯威夫特——他的一生与他的世界》(耶鲁大学出版社, 2013 年), 曾荣获国家图书评论奖(传记类), 并进入普利策传记奖的最终角逐, 还获得柯克斯奖(非传记类);《永恒的日出——威廉·布莱克的幻想世界》(耶鲁大学出版社, 2015 年), 曾进入国家图书评论奖(批评类)最终角逐, 并荣获克里斯蒂安·高斯奖。他有 4 个儿子, 目前与妻子乔伊斯·凡·戴克和小儿子尼古拉斯居于马萨诸塞州牛顿市。

采访者: 本刊编辑部

In China, Leo Damrosch is known as a prominent Professor of Literature at Harvard University and a distinguished biographer whose *Johnathan Swift: His Life and His World* is a 2014 Pulitzer finalist. As a highly-acclaimed biographer, he has explored lives of Jonathan Swift and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his own truth-seeking way. His very two subjects are classic authors, too, widely studied in the Chinese academia. This brings Leo Damrosch to the attention of the Chinese scholars. What made a professor of literature into a literary life writer? Why did he think that his art of biography is unique for his subjects amidst many of his counterparts? With quite a few such questions, in August 2016, our editor email-interviewed Prof. Leo Damrosch. He shared with us his experiences and insights in life writing. In the following interview, Q represents the questions asked by our editor whereas LD is short for Leo Damrosch.

Q: *Prof. Leo Damrosch, you're the scholar who has published biographies. Would you please brief your own experience working in this field? What are your lessons from it?*

LD: I don't know that I could offer any generalized lessons, but I can certainly describe my own experience. For much of my academic career, I wrote monographs that were well received in my own field (eighteenth-century British and French literature) but, naturally, had no audience beyond that. I felt eager to write for a much wider audience than my fellow specialists. In addition, I was teaching the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in one of my courses, and I realized that there was really no adequate biography in English. A three-volume one by Maurice Cranston, a British political scientist, was left unfinished at the time of his death, and I thought also that it made inadequate use of the rich modern scholarship on Rousseau available in French. From that realization came my first biography, *Jean-Jacques*

Rousseau: Restless Genius.

At that point it was clear to me that I loved researching and writing biographies, and that I was indeed able to reach the kind of audience I hoped for. So I followed that with a shorter book on Alexis de Tocqueville's crucially formative journey in America in 1831–1832, and then went on to write the biography of Jonathan Swift that you mention. I had not had first thought of writing about Swift, although I knew some of his works well; it was my wonderful editor at Yale University Press, Jennifer Banks, who wrote to me out of the blue to inquire if I knew anybody who might be interested in writing a life of Swift. I felt immediately inspired to do so.

My most recent book is not exactly a biography, but an artistic and intellectual appreciation; still, it has a biographical framework throughout: *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake*.

I think the one piece of advice I would give is that a biographer should always choose a subject in whom he or she is deeply interested—and a subject who will repay the labor of close companionship for a considerable period of time.

Q: *Would you please give us an overview of the life writing development in the USA, or in the Anglosphere in recent years? What are the success and problems? Could you recommend one or two life writings published in recent years? What do you think are the merits in them?*

LD: I think the main developments—which I entirely approve of—are first, to get past the “leave no detail out” massiveness of the old heavyweight biographies. Instead, one should deploy the significant facts in order to tell a compelling story. And second, one should be explicit about the author's own involvement and perspective, rather than affect a kind of Olympian omniscience as biographers used to do.

My vote for the best biography of modern times would be the still-unfinished masterwork on President Lyndon Johnson, by Robert Caro. His volumes are brilliantly researched, but also brilliantly narrated, so that every detail seems essential for understanding. Caro also had the inspiration of going to live for two years, when he was beginning his project, in Austin, Texas, so that he could become intimately familiar with the landscape and culture that produced Johnson, and could win the confidence of the many people who had known him during his lifetime. Caro's work is truly extraordinary in its breadth and depth.

Q: *Do you think a biographer should be guided by theories? Would you please give us an overview of life writing theories popular in recent years? What issues concern the life writing theorists most in the USA? What do you think are the leading works in life writing theories in recent years?*

LD: I'm afraid I am rather prejudiced against "theory," since a not always helpful fascination with French cultural theory has dominated American literary studies for the past several decades. I think a biographer needs to have—and to be open about—a personal point of view. But I think that an imaginative biographer should also allow his or her subjects to speak for themselves, rather than processing them through a theoretical lens. Examples would be the routine assumption by some writers that race, class, and gender are always the most significant aspects of experience, and that we are privileged today to understand such matters far better than the people we read and write about.

The most egregious examples of doing this kind of thing actually preceded fashionable French theories. In the 1950s and 60s, American biographers applied Freudian psychoanalysis to people who lived long ago, often on very slender evidence, and often with a most reductive understanding of psychoanalysis itself.

Q: *Are you satisfied with the life writing theories people are mostly interested in recent years? Are they helpful to life writing? What issues do you think life writing theories should explore?*

LD: As above, I will not attempt to say more about theories.

Q: *Your Pulitzer Prize biography Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World is regarded as writing "with hallucinatory vividness." How did you manage to achieve this effect?*

LD: Well, I have to say that the biography of Swift did not in fact win the Pulitzer Prize, though I was very gratified that it was named one of two finalists. It did however win the prize for biography from the National Book Critics Circle Award.

I believe the "vividness," which I was flattered to see praised, came from very wide reading in contemporary sources and in modern scholarship to build up a picture of what daily life felt like in the early eighteenth century—the routine use of wet nurses for newborn infants, who often lived with the nurse's family for the first years of their lives; the jolting of hackney coaches on London cobblestone streets; horseback riding as the normal mode of transportation in the countryside; appalling medical treatments that were painful and did no good at all; what it was like to fight in the bloody battles of the War of the Spanish Succession, which are hardly remembered today; and so on. I used direct quotes whenever I could, for instance from the vivid diaries of Samuel Pepys, and also from the Victorian historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, whose political bias is now well known, but who was unrivaled in re-creating the experience of living long ago.

Q: *Nowadays fictitious elements are added into life writing in a great many works. In some cases, even important characters or events are invented. Certain biographer even made believe the stories that he befriended with the late biographical subject. Do you approve of this method? Is this the trend? How do you define auto/biographical truth?*

LD: I think that both autobiographers and biographers have a duty to distinguish clearly between known facts and speculative guesses. It's fine to include the guesses—I did a good deal of that in the *Swift*—but it's also crucial to tell the reader that that is what they are. As for inventing fictitious elements in a biography, I am absolutely opposed to it. Someone who wishes to do that should write a novel, and say so.

With autobiographers, the question is more difficult. It is impossible for anyone, even if they kept a lot of documents, to really reconstruct what they felt like—and sometimes, even what they did—many years before. Rousseau tried his very best to tell the truth throughout the *Confessions*, but he admitted later on that what he had really presented was his feelings about the past at the time when he was writing, in middle age, rather than the past as it literally occurred.

Still, I agree entirely with the French theorist Philippe Lejeune in *Le Pacte autobiographique*, that the autobiographer engages in an implicit contract with the reader, never to make things up without saying so.

Q: *The genre of life writing has long been controversial. The dispute centers on whether it is a branch of history or a branch of literature. Some also claim that it should be an independent genre. What is your opinion on this debate? How do you define your identity in writing a life?*

LD: I think definitions of genre are always reductive, except for highly specialized literary genres such as epic poetry or pastoral elegy. “The novel” is notoriously not a genre—the term is applied to an incredible variety of narrative works—and besides that, each generation reinvents the novel for itself.

I would answer your other question by saying that biography is certainly a branch of history, and most good historical works contain mini-biographies—for example, the life of the Emperor Julian that occupies three whole chapters of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Whether a particular biography is “literature” or not simply depends on how readers feel about it. If they get the kind of imaginative pleasure from a biography that they also get from novels, then I see no reason not to say that it is functioning as literature as well as history. That is abundantly true of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, which we still read because he tells the great story so well—but also, because he did such extraordinary research that his