

聽 (在) around by soundpocket |

《寫、講、讀，與聲音雜碎》

文：楊陽

「聽在」聲音藝術節策展人，聲音狗腰包創辦成員。

在這裡要寫的跟我正怎樣把它寫下來有密切的關係——手指敲打鍵盤，遊標或早或遲地跟著字或空白走。

自九零年代，研究電腦書寫的理論家就開始提出，我現正在「寫」的不是字，而是在閃爍和顫動的符號。它顫動，因為它由電腦顯示器的光組成；它是符號，因為它像讀寫的文字一樣有示意的作用。

這個有關顫動的符號是否文字的問題可以說是從另外一個問題引申出來的：讀寫文字作為學習的模式跟口述文字作為學習的模式有甚麼分別。由六十年代開始，這問題成為不少西方書籍的討論焦點。其中兩本有 Eric A. Havelock 的《The Muse Learns to Write》(1986) 和 Walter Ong 的《Orality and Literacy, the Technologizing of the Word》(1982)。他們探討人的認知從口述到讀寫在西方歷史怎樣發生，以及這議題對瞭解今天科技化的生活模式的作用。友人最近憶述一位圖書館管理員說，這陣子讀書的人不是在讀，而是像牛一樣在吃草，這邊吃一點，那邊吃一點。讀書這行為因我們瀏覽網站的行為完全改變。

Ong 解釋讀寫作為視覺系統跟口述作為聲音系統的分別。聲音讓我們認知物件的內部或內在性質，比方搖動盒子，我們能知裡面是空是滿。敲響一枚錢幣，我們可以知道它是銀還是鉛造的，用水泥填滿小提琴就會改變它的聲音，我們發聲和聽自己發聲也是因為身體內部的共振。Ong 指出，視覺是分割的，聽覺則是融合的。視覺清晰有賴距離和分隔，聽覺就有賴同一時間從不同方向收集聲音。

我不認為我們需要急於為聲音爭一口氣或慨嘆人類感官退化等等。只是想起自己的寫作經驗中，想像文字朗讀出來的聲音一直對寫（主要是英文）很有幫助——從選甚麼字到怎樣開始、甚麼時候停頓，以至那裡完結。我也特別欣賞一些帶著令人感受身體共振的字眼的書寫。不妨試試吧——想個你喜歡的字，跟自己輕輕地，堅定地說。

「聽在」聲音藝術節公開講座

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Some Notes on Writing, Speaking, Reading, as Sound

Text: Yeung Yang

Curator of AROUND Sound Art Festival, and Founding Member of soundpocket

What I am writing about now is closely related to how I am writing it: on a computer by tapping my fingers on the keyboard, the cursor always half a beat early, half a beat late, in terms of the space or letter I type.

Since the 1990s, theorists of what comes to be known as hypertext, text that presents itself in virtual space (computer-mediated, internet), have been proposing that what I am tapping (or typing) into the word file now is no longer words as we have known them. They are flickering signifiers - flickering, because light on the screen defines what these are, and signifiers, because they retain the signifying function of the written word - representations that give and produce meanings of reality.

This question of whether the flickerer is still a written word was preceded by the question of whether the written word itself is a word as it displaced the oral way of transmitting knowledge. The difference between orality and literacy is a topic that many books in the English-speaking West have taken up since the 1960s.

Two of the authors who studied the subject are Eric A. Havelock's *The Muse Learns to Write* (1986) and Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy, the Technologizing of the Word* (1982). They were both interested in one core question: how did the change from orality to literacy in Western societies take place, and how did it affect human consciousness? For them it was both a historical and cultural question that originated from specific events that took place in Greek cultures of education, and also a question that offered insight to our technological condition today - a friend recently told me about a librarian who noticed that people nowadays don't read books, but graze them the way cattle graze, flipping through the pages, picking up bits and pieces here and there. Reading is changed forever by the way we browse the internet.

Ong gave a convincing account of the difference between the visual system of writing and the oral system of sound as models of learning.

Sound allows us to register the interiority of things. We can imagine how we rap a box to find whether it is hollow or solid inside, or we can ring a coin to learn whether it is silver or lead. We cannot imagine a violin filled with concrete because it won't sound like one, and we experience our voice as coming from inside our bodies that provide its resonances. While sound incorporates, sight separates, said Ong. In addition, sight clarity is achieved at a distance, requiring a taking apart. Sound is a unifying sense, for hearing is an act of gathering sound from all directions at the same time.

I don't think one should rush to argue for the priority of sound or lament the degeneration of the human senses. My own writing experience has benefited from my imagining how the written words sound like - it guides me to how to start, when to pause, where to stop. I find that a piece of writing is good when one or several words manage to resonate in the reader's mind, that they become physical, consummating the reader's body. Try it. Say a word you really like aloud, softly, firmly.

AROUND Sound Art Festival Public Talk

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Website: www.soundpocket.org.hk

The Bookshop

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