



<https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.01>

Editorial introduction

Future Writing: Editorial Introduction

Dajuin Yao¹  and Nikita Lin² ( )

¹School of Intermedia Art, China Academy of Arts, 16 Bld., 352 Xiangshan Road, Zhejiang, Hangzhou, 310000, Hangzhou, China

dajuin@qq.com

²Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlstraße 11, 76133 Karlsruhe, Germany

nikitachinoise@gmail.com

Abstract

This collection of eight contributions on the theme of “Future Writing” is inspired by an intermedia investigative project at the School of Intermedia Art, China Academy of Art. Starting from a Derridean grammatological review of the act of writing today, authors were invited to consider writing-the-future along with the future-of-writing. This includes the ways in which science fiction and utopian texts, but also visionary programs for emerging technologies develop strategies of questioning the present by positing an ontologically discontinuous future. But future writing also has a past when romantic poets imagine a new language which allows us today to explore data-mining through the lens of copper-mining. The question is framed by our contemporary experience: Writing and the memory of the hand are becoming obsolete by way of typing and other technical proxies. These boundaries are challenged by Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality as providing new spaces for human articulation. At the same time, written characters are threatened by technical modernization, reminding us of issues of enactment and embodiment in the digital world.

Keywords: Grammatology; Media Art; Typography and Lettering; Science Fiction; Technological Visions; Virtual Reality

Citation: Yao, D. & Lin, N. (2023). Future Writing: Editorial Introduction. *Technology and Language* 4(3), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.01>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



УДК 003: 001.18

<https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.01>

Редакторская заметка

Письмо будущего: Введение от редакторов

Даджуин Яо  и Никита Лин  

¹Китайская академия искусств, Сяншань, 352, район Сиху, Ханчжоу, Чжэцзян, 310000, Китай

²Технологический институт Карлсруэ, Карлштрассе 11, 76133 Карлсруэ, Германия

nikitachinoise@gmail.com

Аннотация

Данный выпуск из восьми статей на тему “Письмо будущего” вдохновлен исследовательским проектом Школы интермедиа-искусства Китайской академии искусств. Начиная с грамматологического обзора современного письма, сделанного Дерридой, авторам было предложено рассмотреть письма о будущем наряду с будущим письма. Сюда входят способы, с помощью которых научная фантастика и утопические тексты, а также дальновидные программы для новых технологий развивают стратегии, ставящие под сомнение настоящее, постулируя онтологически прерывистое будущее. Но у письма о будущем также есть прошлое, когда поэты-романтики воображали новый язык, который позволяет нам сегодня исследовать добычу данных через призму добычи меди. Вопрос сформирован нашим современным опытом: письмо и память руки уходят в прошлое, уступая место набору текста и другим техническим средствам. Искусственный интеллект и виртуальная реальность бросают вызов этим границам, предоставляя новые пространства для артикуляции человека. В то же время письменные знаки оказываются под угрозой технической модернизации, напоминая нам о проблемах реализации и воплощения в цифровом мире.

Ключевые слова: Типографика и леттеринг; Научная фантастика; Технологические представления; Виртуальная реальность

Для цитирования: Yao, D., Lin, N. Future Writing: Editorial Introduction // Technology and Language. 2023. № 4(3). P. 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.01>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



Old habits die hard.

A language and writing system is deeply rooted in its cultural traditions and values. Accordingly, its reform, modernization, or technical standardization regularly provokes intense discussions. When the linguist I. J. Gelb (1952) published his seminal work *The Study of Writing*, the Chinese Committee on Script Reform was created and so began the Chinese Character Simplification Scheme. Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik (2019) viewed it as an act of brutality so severe as to take, quite literally, the heart out of love. Pattanaik sees the Chinese today „paying the price for this brutal decision taken half a century ago“ as an important lesson for India. He suggests that the Indian caste system is a counterpart to the Chinese writing system and claims that „[t]hose who reject the caste-based past completely [...] are, in effect, trying to make a clean break from the culture of the past“ (Pattanaik, 2019).

This provocation serves at least to remind us that many influential writers and thinkers, including Villem Flusser and I. J. Gelb, formulated their theories concerning the evolution of writing systems from a Eurocentric perspective (Flusser, 2011; Gelb, 1952). Both “interpret the transition from pictography and logographic writing to alphabetic writing as the transition from a logically ‚lower‘ to a ‚higher‘ stage of cultural evolution” (Nöth, 2022, p. 4). This „logical necessity of the evolution of culture“ finds its precursor in Marshall McLuhan and the Toronto School’s theory of writing. For McLuhan, writing the alphabet is like practicing a semiotic virtue of dissociating or abstracting – essentially “writing meaningless sounds in the form of meaningless letters” (Nöth, 2022, p. 4). This, according to McLuhan (1962), has fostered „an intense visual life,“ and enabled the „detrribalizing of the individual“ (p. 43). A like-minded Chinese, Indian or Egyptian media theorist would have argued similarly: Logographic writing embodies higher virtues.

This special issue brings together a cohort of authors from different fields: artistic practice, media theory, science and technology studies, philosophy of science and technology, and technology assessment. The topics are diversified and shed light on different aspects of Future Writing, Futures of Writing, and Writing Futures in a changing cultural dynamic and technical milieu. It begins with a conversation that opens a „space of resonance“ that spans past and future, art and science, data-mining and copper-mining (Henrich & Zielinski, 2023).

Several authors enter this space with a sense of enthusiasm for new connections between writing and artistic practice, leading to an expanded grammatology of future writing. This includes both digital and analog media. Aesthetic strategies serve to design and realize embodied experiences within the Metaverse, establishing a new kind of sociality – the Metaverse social (Xu & Wang, 2023). If this extends the way of addressing social and emotional needs in the physical lifeworld, it also provides multi-sensory experiences in virtual space (Zhang et al., 2023). A decidedly analog and profoundly embodied way of writing treats the rope as a line for drawing ciphers in space, engaging and confronting the other through strategies of fixation and objectivation. This is the art and language of bondage in which the Shibari artist’s fluidity of movement is at the same time a kind of fluency of speech, presenting to us a reverse system of encoding and decoding the body with the rope that ties it (Soulrope, 2023).



Alexander Doroshev and Anna Polyakova recount a fascinating story concerning the survival in the Russian Alphabet of the letter ‘ë’ as a result of varying technical difficulties to implement the letter in different registering devices from early typewriters to the most current autocorrection designs (Doroshev & Polyakova, 2023). Readers may find some of this hilarious and at the same time be gently reminded of how a script system is sophisticatedly intertwined with a modern bureaucratic system, and how it can complicate the everyday life.

Wenzel Mehnert and Stefan Gammel contribute a meticulous analysis of literary devices, techniques, and hermeneutic mechanisms involved in writing and engaging technovisionary narratives. They consider a spectrum of textual and visual compositions covering science fiction, government brochures, and corporate logos. Mehnert takes a hermeneutic approach of engaging technofutures, pointing towards a constructive framework for technology assessment that allows for an open-ended extrapolating activity to re-imagine imaginary worlds of entangled items and relations. He presents a mechanism for cognitive recalibration that mediates between the actual world we think we know and the futures of which we are unsure (Mehnert, 2023). Gammel identifies a form of writing which he calls ‘ontolytic writing’ that characterizes science fictions as well as other technovisionary narratives. This writing produces an ontolytic effect in that it shocks and disrupts our ontologically given world (Gammel, 2023).

In a concluding conversation, media theorist Geert Lovink reflects the tactics, aesthetic and political, in response to the breakdowns brought about by digital platforms. He is concerned with the possibility of creating new beginnings and the question of how to record fast-changing real-time phenomena, not only documenting them but leaving room for anticipation (Lovink & Lin, 2023).

This is the concern also of Intermedia Art which seeks to create new media and platforms “between” existing media (Higgins, 1965/2001). It was in this spirit that the future-oriented Open Media Lab was founded in 2010 (Yao, 2020, 2022a, 2022b). It uses Sci-Fi as its methodology and devotes itself to the alchemy of culture, art and technology. Open Media Lab believes in liberating oneself from a media-dominated ideology of art. It aims toward “forgetting the wares and keeping the Way (the content),” and to nurture a new generation of “New Renaissance Human.” For the 2023 International Intermedia Art Festival, Open Media Lab proposed an exhibition title and concept called “A Coder and Violin” – an anagram of “Leonardo da Vinci” – where the coder is himself the violin player, a concept differentiating itself from the commonly seen practice of a hit-and-run collaboration between a scientist and an artist. Open Media Lab takes special interest in scrutinizing emerging technologies and platforms that are changing not only the art world but the concept of creativity itself. With the advent of AI technologies and tools, in particular ChatGPT, writing, and perhaps creativity in general, is now facing a tremendous crisis that is shaking it at its foundation. It is not dissimilar to the crisis faced by the Chinese writing system as people stopped actually “writing” characters, producing them only by proxy as we enter the computer age (compare Ingold, 2020; Liu, 2020). Writing in the post-AI era ushers us into a creative realm of the collective unconscious and opens up possibilities in artificial consciousness, artificial spirituality, artificial



creativity, and so on. It will be a turning point from which human writing will never be the same. This collection of papers takes pause and takes stock at this turning point.

REFERENCES

- Doroshev, A., & Polyakova, A. (2023). The Rise and Fall and Rise again of the Seventh Letter: A Technological Story of the Russian Alphabet *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 59-84. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.06>
- Flusser, V. (2011). *Does Writing Have a Future?* University of Minnesota Press.
- Gammel, S. (2023). Ontolytic Writing of the Future. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 105-117. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.08>
- Gelb, I. J. (1956). *The Study of Writing*. Chicago University Press.
- Henrich, J., & Zielinski, S. (2023). Crystallographic Resonances: Rewriting Novalis. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.02>
- Higgins, D. (2001). Intermedia. *Leonardo*, 34, 49-54. (Original work published 1965)
- Ingold, T. (2020). Back to the Future with Writing and Speech. *Technology and Language*, 1(1), 37-39. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2020.01.08>
- Liu, Y. (2020). Rebellion of the Chinese Language in a Technological Age. *Technology and Language*, 1(1), 57-60. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2020.01.13>
- Lovink, G., & Lin, N. (2023). Optimist by Nature, Pessimist by Design: Writing Network Cultures. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 118-128. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.09>
- McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto University Press.
- Mehnert, W. (2023). Wording Worlds – From writing Futures to building Imaginary Worlds. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 85-104. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.07>
- Nöth, W. (2022). Flusser on Writing: The Toronto Heritage and the Paradoxes of Writing after the End of Writing. *Flusser Studies*, 33, 1-16. <http://www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/noth-flusser-on-writing.pdf>
- Pattanaik, D. (2019). Love in simplified Chinese is without a heart. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-commentary/love-in-simplified-chinese-is-without-a-heart/>
- Soulrope, K. (2023). On the Art of Shibari as a Form of Writing. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 49-58. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.05>
- Xu, W., & Wang, Y. (2023). Emotional Visualization: The Metaverse Social in Embodied Cognitive Contexts. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 24-39. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.03>
- Yao, D. (2020). Future Writing: Dajuin Yao + Open Media Lab. *FutureLab*. <http://www.ade-futurelab.com/index.php/index/school/id/149>
- Yao, D. (2022a). Future Writing. Pavilion in The Wrong Biennale. <http://futur.center/futurewriting/>



- Yao, D. (2022b). Non Fiction Today. Pavilion in The Wrong Biennale, <http://futur.center/nonfictiontoday/>
- Zhang, L., Wang, Y., & Liu, J. (2023). Artistic Creation in Virtual Space. *Technology and Language*, 4(3), 40-48. <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2023.03.04>

СВЕДЕНИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ / THE AUTHORS

Даджуин Яо, dajuin@qq.com
ORCID 0009-0002-9914-6466

Dajuin Yao, dajuin@qq.com
ORCID 0009-0002-9914-6466

Никита Лин, nikitachinoise@gmail.com
ORCID 0000-0002-4023-2901

Nikita Lin, nikitachinoise@gmail.com
ORCID 0000-0002-4023-2901

Статья поступила 4 сентября 2023
одобрена после рецензирования 18 сентября 2023
принята к публикации 24 сентября 2023

Received: 4 September 2023
Revised: 18 September 2023
Accepted: 24 September 2023