

For K'o Ch'ing-ming: Language and Friendship

宇文所安 Stephen Owen

美國哈佛大學東亞語言與文明系退休講座教授

美國人文與科學學院院士

Chinese has, of course, the story of Bo Ya and Zhong Ziqi as a model of wordless friendship and the musical friend's ability to perfectly represent the mind of the other in musical sound. Words are always necessary in order to explain that the understanding was beyond words.

Another model of friendship is the English trope (not American) in which two friends are separated for many years. Without tears on separation or expressions of joy on meeting again, the absent friend returns and continues the conversation broken off a decade earlier.

The "English" model may best describe my relation to K'o Ch'ing-ming. Each time we were together it was as if we were still in the same conversation left off ten years earlier. There was never the least sense of strangeness, and the intervals of absence simply disappeared.

The other peculiar thing about our conversation was my capacity to forget that I was speaking Chinese. I felt certain that he always understood exactly what I was saying, and that I understood exactly what he was saying. Of course I could have been completely wrong; but if this was pure illusion, it was an illusion sustained by responses on both sides and the smooth flow of dialogue. Here we are closest to the Bo Ya–Zhong Ziqi model of friendship.

K'o ch'ing-ming and I exactly are the same age, and we have known each other since our late 30s—half a lifetime.

If souls are indeed reborn, I am sure that in some day to come, in some shape or other, we will resume the conversation.

【中譯版】

寫給老友柯慶明：語言與友誼

田曉菲 譯

美國哈佛大學東亞語言與文明系教授

中國傳統有伯牙和子期的故事：他們的友誼無須語言，在音樂聲中完美地領悟對方的意思。但還是需要語言來解釋彼此之間的默契超越了語言。

英國傳統裡存在著另外一種友誼的模式：兩個朋友，分開很多年，離別時沒有兒女沾巾的表現，重逢時也沒有歡喜雀躍，而是一見面，就立刻繼續他們多年前中斷的交談。

這種英國模式最準確地描述了我與柯慶明的友情。

我們每次相見，就好像我們還在十年前因分別而中斷的談話裡。沒有一絲一毫的陌生感，不在一起的時間就好像根本不存在一樣。

另外一件很特別的事情是，和柯慶明談話時，我從來不會意識到我在講中文。我非常確定他完全理解我的意思，而我也完全明白他的意思。當然了，我這樣想不一定對，但如果這是我的幻覺，那麼這種幻覺是由我們對彼此的反應和順暢無阻的話流造成的。從這種意義上說，我們的友誼很接近伯牙和子期。

柯慶明和我同歲。我們從三十多歲時相識——半生的時間。
如果真的有靈魂和來世，那我相信在未来，無論以什麼形態存在，我們還會繼續我們的
交談。

宇文所安