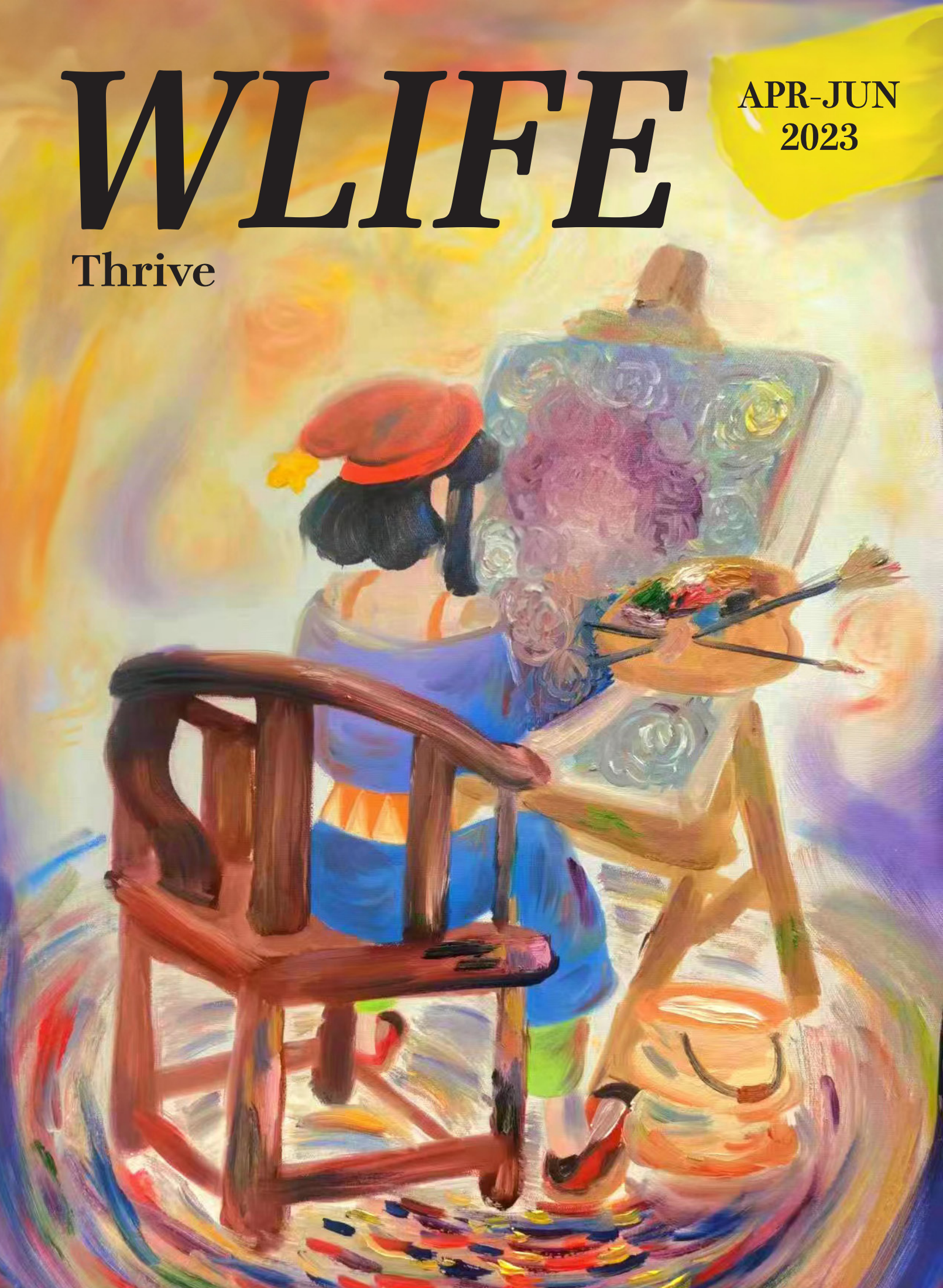


WLIFE

APR-JUN
2023

Thrive



WLIFE

Contributors

Design

Carina Z
Carol F
Serena C
Finnie C
Leif L
Rose W
Victoria X
Reyna F
Cecily S
Lisa L
Sophia X
Ella Y
Annie L
Iris B

Artwork

Rose W

Content Creator

Bryan W
Sharon X
Alina Z
Berry Z
Thea Z
James C
Jason A
Mike C
Elma L
Jessica W
Reina F
Martin Z
Yiqi L
Patrick Y

CoverArtwork

Beitze X

Cover Design

Eddie F

Editor in Chief

Mike C
Thea Z

Managing Editor

Lisa L
Victoria W
Michael C

Director of Digital Media

Eddie F

Dear Readers,

In a fury of APs, projects, and finals, the school year ends at the dawn of summer. The shadows of the pandemic kept us down for three years, and the past spring raised us up only to become part of that fury. But now, with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, we share that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again.

Themed "Thrive", this summer edition of WLJFE includes sections on Art, Literature, Journals, and Science. In each, our artists of words and color strive to see themselves and the world around them in a different light. With a fantastic combination of colors and themes, Rose brings us her journey of self; with lines of strenuous self-examination, the G10 students offered their different interpretations of the word "thrive." Education and pop culture are examined in the student journals, and in their research papers, students studied themselves and the city they live in.

The word "thrive" can be traced back to the Old Norse word "þrifask," which means "to grasp." So ultimately, thriving is about that reaching motion in which we stretch out our arms farther to reach that one fine morning... With this issue, we wish to give our fellow students some of the power they need in that process.

Happy summer vacation!

Mike Chen

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JOURNAL

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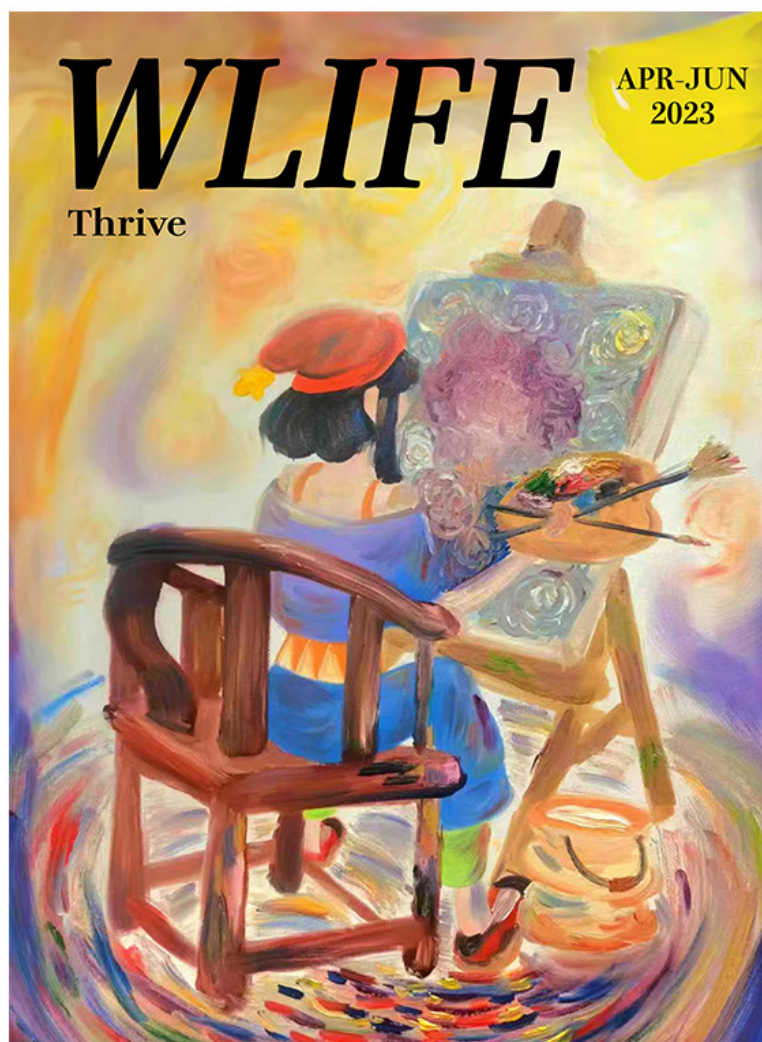
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Art Gallery

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

--- Pablo Picasso

Art Pieces-Rose Wang G11 Omega



1| Inside the round cabin window

Through the cabin's windows, I caught a glimpse of the magnificent interior. The strong contrast of warmth and cold establishes a clear sense of foreground, middle ground, and back ground in the image. Many hands were serving the women, helping her to groom and attire. I incorporated elements of pop art and vintage posters to express the extravagant state of consumerism.

2| Entertainment Paradise

The entertainment world is vast, like an endless ocean, yet it is also narrow, like trapping me in a fishbowl, trapping me inside with beautiful, paralyzing illusions. The gashapon machine is a common item in the game center, now it trap me inside. Although the world of entertainment is colorful, it is illusory, noisy, and fragile, smothering me gradually.



iyuu.yiyu



3| Dream within a dream

This painting pays tribute to a scene from the film "Paprika" by director Satoshi Kon, which depicts a dream within a dream. The image shows the office in the early morning with a dominant blue color, where I dreamed of transforming into a butterfly and escaping from the busy work environment. The composition is designed as a character well trying to rush out of a post on the internet, implying that I will eventually return to the real world. However, which is the true reality? Is it the office scene depicted in the painting, or the world outside the frame?



9分钟前





4| Aquarium and melting flowers

This painting incorporates elements of surrealism. In the dim aquarium, the girl's body turns into ice, and flowers grow from inside her. The ice-cold body and the flowers that need sunshine and warmth to germinate make a juxtaposition, and the enclosed space with the surrounding crowd create a claustrophobic sense. It conveys my personal sense of loss and confusion in life.

5| Upside down

Humans have become the objects of entertainment on television. The butterflies trapped in a spider web here is like the people trapped by the internet. We not only obtain information from the internet but also provide it, becoming the target of others' attacks and criticisms, becoming addicted, trapped, and beaten down by the internet world.





6| Early morning fish stall

A fish is being gutted by wrinkled hands, revealing a girl sitting among the flowers inside. Following our true selves is the most important thing. This "be yourself" process is bloody and painful, like gutting a fish, and is reflected in the girl's blood-red dress and visceral-like flowers in this painting.




7| Vicious circle

If one is targeted because of their uniqueness, even the blossoms of their soul can be stained. Verbal attacks can have a great impact on a person. Slander, denigration, prejudice, discrimination, many conflicts and tragedies in life come from our words.

Literature Workshop

"There is no friend as loyal as a book."

--- Ernest Hemingway



Once a toddler, learning go,
Crawling on the floor, first to talk,
Mimi mini, mini mo
Slowly steadily practicing walk

Once a child, school to home,
Daddy told me to do some sports,
Mama asked me to stay at home,
Enjoying candy bars with my new pair of
shorts.

Once a teenager, living in a crowded
dormitory.
Paper on my desk, like snow-white world
when winter blows.
I swear this is not a fictional story,
Sleep shortens like Einstein energy low.

Once an adult, home to work,
Living in a cage of worn out old.
Tell the kids how to use the fork
Tiredness submerged when superior scold.

I feel so old, imprisoned in this hopeless
cage.

Is it common with life at this stage?
Why are there so many changes that come
with age?

No, No, I will not succumb
To this world of delight.
Please shed a light,
Some birds the caage can't conserve,
Their feathers are too bright.



Thrive

Bryan Wu G10 Delta

Thrive

Sharon Xiong G10 Kappa

Cold laughter
Ringing in the ear
Makes me think
Would it be better
If I am deaf

Cold words
Piercing my eyes
Black and white
Should I just cry
And close my eyes
Or with a sigh
Look up to the sky

Cold winter nights
Demobilized
Curled up in the
Cozy bed of mine
Don't wanna move
Just wanna lie

But somehow I
Came to realize
That the coldness outside
Is nothing compared to
The coldness in my mind

How can I lit
A fire in my eyes
And let it blaze
Against the dark
Splinters of ice



Thrive Like A Jelly

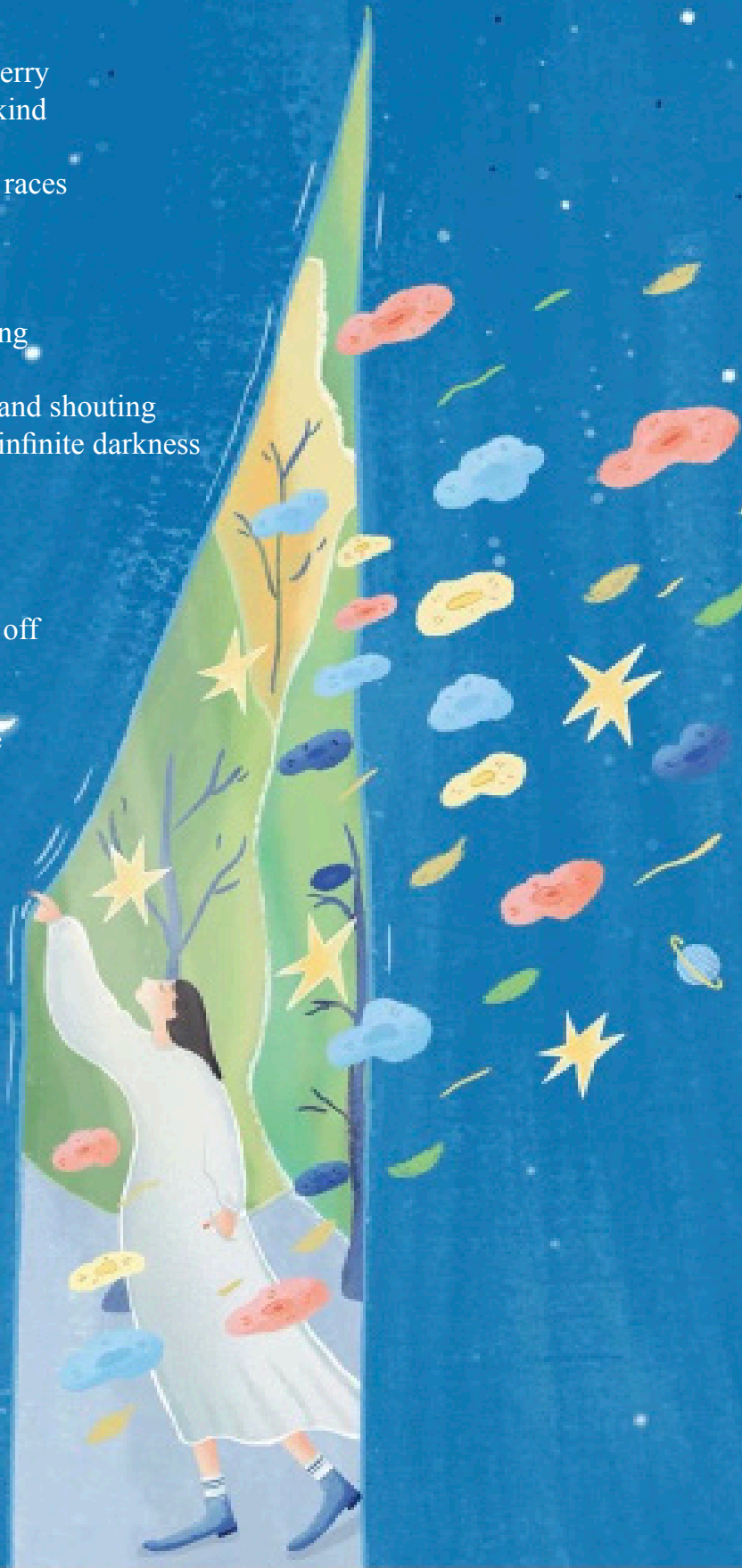
Alina Zeng G10 Delta

Life is like a bottle of jelly
With different tastes, blueberry, cherry, strawberry
Like people's personalities, brave, persistent, kind
With different sources, jam, sugar, honey
Like people's identities, background, religion, races
From different places, America, Africa, China
Like people's color, white, black, yellow

While filled in a bottle, squeezing and squashing
Break into pieces or reform its shape
Like we struggle with the restrictions, yelling and shouting
Defeated by the backwards or thrive from the infinite darkness

Though fragile to face failure
Though unstable to resist goals
Though transparent to be colored
Though waving in the bottle that seems to fell off

Still thrive from tears and rise from dust
Turn into a real man who is willing to struggle
Regardless bias and hold the strength
Growing to a piece of jelly
Glittering under the sunshine



Thrive In This World

Berry Zhu G10 Eta

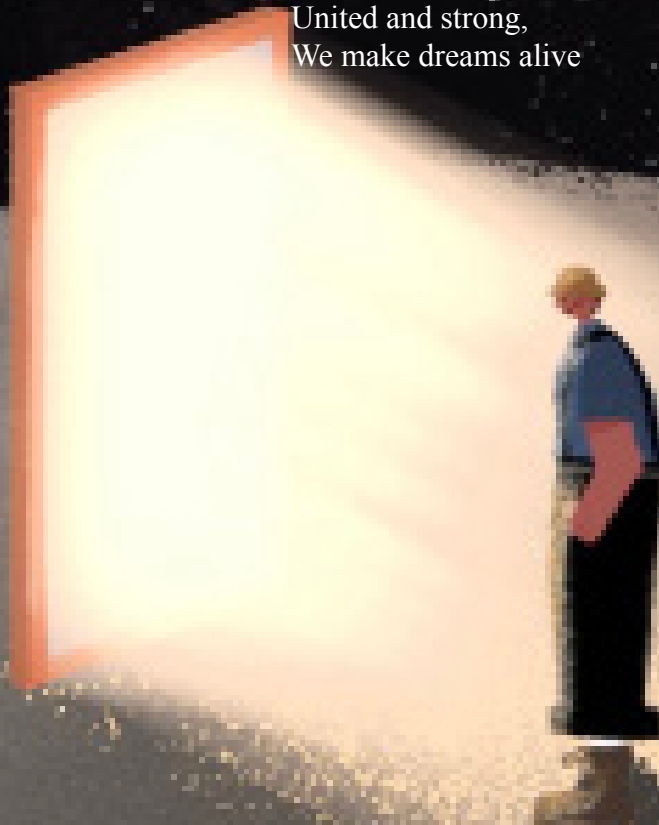
In this world where chaos reigns
And struggles fill our days
It's easy to lose our focus
And let our dreams fade away

So tough like Chromium
We forge ahead
In the face of hardship
We do not dread

Luminous like Neon
We light the way
Like beacons in the night
Offer guidance to ships in the bay

Energetic like Potassium
We ignite
Creating colorful firework
Up in the sky

In this world,
together we strive,
United and strong,
We make dreams alive



Bubbles

Thea Zhang G10 Eta

Talking on the phone,
receiving orders with no tone,
Complying demands with ease,
His kindness and grace never cease.

But where does his resentment go?
Does it depart like bubbles, does it flow?
Floating up into the sky,
Disappearing as they fly?—

The end of the call brings change,
His smile fades, his mood rearranged.
Turning to face his family,
He sheds his façade finally.

Behind closed doors, emotions surge,
Unchecked and ready to merge.
Berating and lashing out,
Words venomous, full of clout.

His voice may vanish in time,
But pain echoes, leaving a chime.
Shattering trust, corroding bonds,
Lost in anger's deadly ponds.

The bubbles of resentment don't just disappear,
They're pricked by twigs and become clear.
Exploding with a forceful might,
Behind the sun, out of sight.



The rain smelled of reminiscence. It also smelled of fresh mud, wet grass and decayed flowers. It made a consistent tapping on the wooden window frames, a rhythm all over the rooftop, along the giant wooden beam of the wood trader's house. It reminded Xuan of her younger days, when the world was quieter and more distant. She didn't wish to think of those days on this occasion. On this occasion; it was the rainy season. They should have known better.

Xuan listened to the rain intently. The sound rippled through the silence in the room, the way pebbles thrown into the creek did; she remembered the pebbles, reminded of the way cool waves of water used to encroach upon her feet in her childhood days. She missed the feeling of water over the back of her feet; her feet didn't feel anything now.

She waited, listened, inhaled. There was a faint scent of gardenias in the room. She flinched at the unfamiliar aroma. She recollected the room's original smell, a mixture of sawdust, ink and faded paper. It now smelled of silken fabric and gardenias: they had removed almost everything from the room. The only whiff that remained was of the wood.

The rain kept pouring. They might cancel everything if fortune favored her, Xuan thought.

Or they could just move everything indoors.

Either way she wouldn't know. The room was completely empty, she was all alone, and would rather not think of her future for this brief moment.

Her gaze shifted again onto the wood. Wooden tables, wooden chairs. The wooden beam.

The smells of different types were distinct; some sealed in a thin layer of varnish, some fresh with newly-made, open wounds.

The wood. It was an element so deeply ingrained within the family, a symbol imprinted on and entwined with its history, the source of all wealth generations had acquired and the social principle to which members of the family clung throughout their lives. It blessing and a curse.

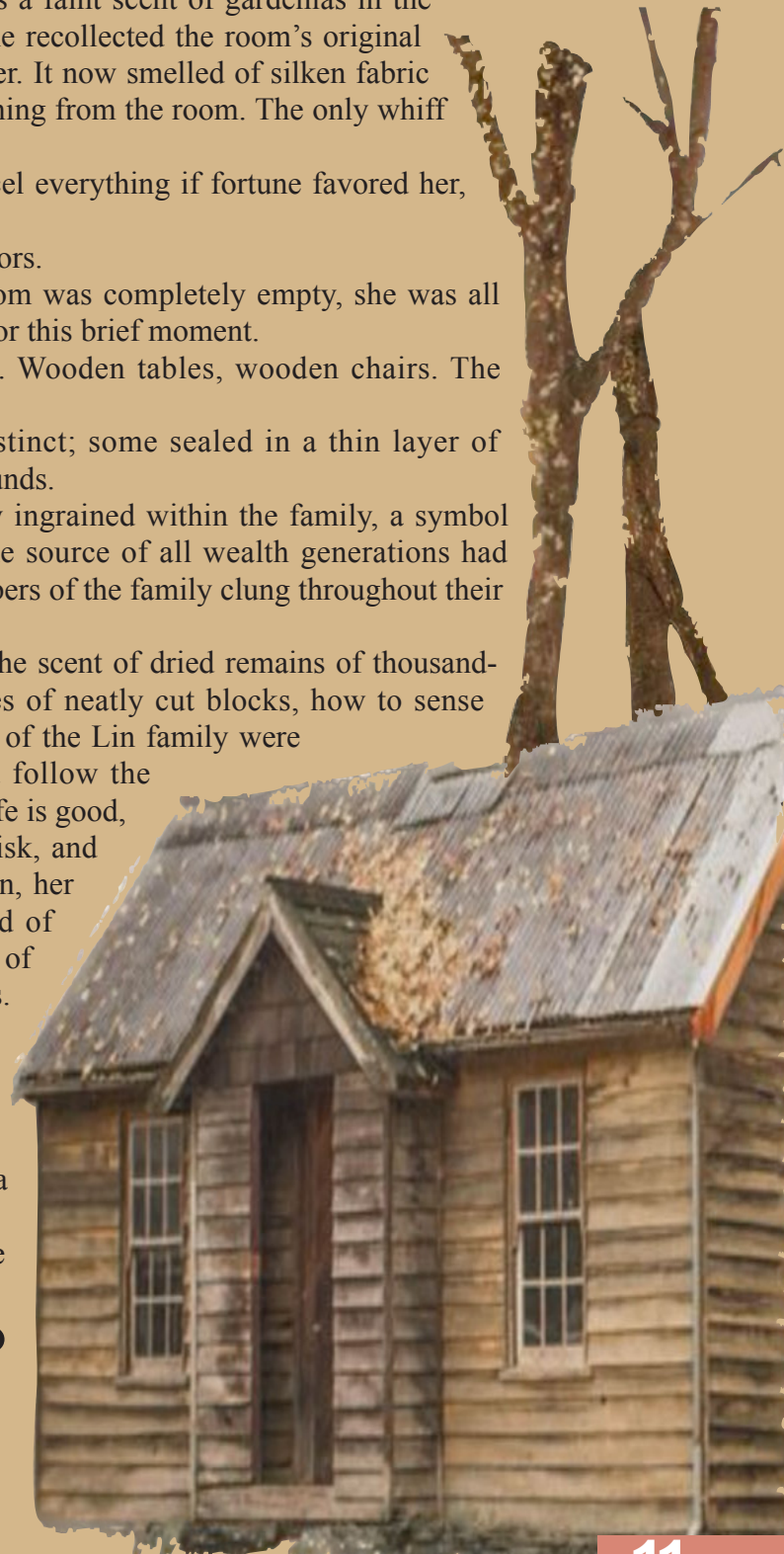
She grew up knowing wood, knowing the scent of dried remains of thousand-year-old trees, knowing how to caress surfaces of neatly cut blocks, how to sense each vine of life under her fingertips. Children of the Lin family were always brought up this way. And they would follow the same path as their past generations had. Fixed life is good, Xuan's mother would say. Possibilities bring risk, and risk destruction. Whenever Xuan would frown, her mother would pull out old books that smelled of mothballs and faded ink, and read her excerpts of Lao Tzu's writings. Confucius, too, sometimes. All you need is obedience, she would say in her soft voice dripping with tenderness, let life flow like water. Naturally.

Every so often, on such occasions, Xuan would picture life to be flowing like a river.

Every so often, she imagined picturesque

A Prologue, 1928

-Mike Chen G11 Eta



scenes of the river: the orangey-golden setting sun on a wide range of pacific water, the slight turbulences and hidden whirlpools in between clumps of reed, the numerous waterfalls, twists and turns. But there was never a singularity to these pictures; she saw neither a beginning nor an end. She didn't know where natural fit.

She was halfway through a distant memory of one of those scenes she had pictured when the doorknob turned. She heard footsteps, but would rather not turn to look.

"Miss."

"Yes?" She found her voice slightly shaky, "Fei'ran?"

"Your parents are ready, miss. Everything is prepared." Fei'ran's tone was plain, emotionless. Xuan wondered if there were anything else suppressed deep in that toneless tone.

She sighed, and finally turned around. The young housekeeper was standing by the door, with tightly pressed lips and sincere, boyish eyes. He, too, was dressed in fine silk on this day.

"I probably shouldn't be asking, but—"

"Just don't speak." His palms were facing her, as if pleading for something, or turning down some tempting offer.

some tempting offer.

"Hush. Just let me finish, Fei'ran. Where are you going after you leave?"

Fei'ran shrugged and said nothing. Xuan sighed again. When she spoke again, it was barely more than a broken whisper.

"Listen, you were not here when my brother left. But he is doing some trading business between Wuhan and Nanjing. If you—if you don't, if you really can't find another place to be, try finding him. My parents probably won't care, but I think he will. Take a train to Nanjing, look for Han Lin. He lives somewhere near the Qin'huai River. And write to me. Please."

"I believe that may not be very appropriate, Miss Lin."

Xuan froze.

"I'm trying to help you." Tears welled up.

"Thank you."

"But?" Xuan raised an eyebrow.

"But I can find a way to support myself, Miss Lin."

"Just the fact that they replaced you indicates that you may by a huge possibility not find the chance to support yourself!" Her whisper was almost furious right now, "Fei'ran, I've never known much about the outside world, I know, but I know when it's hard to survive or not!"

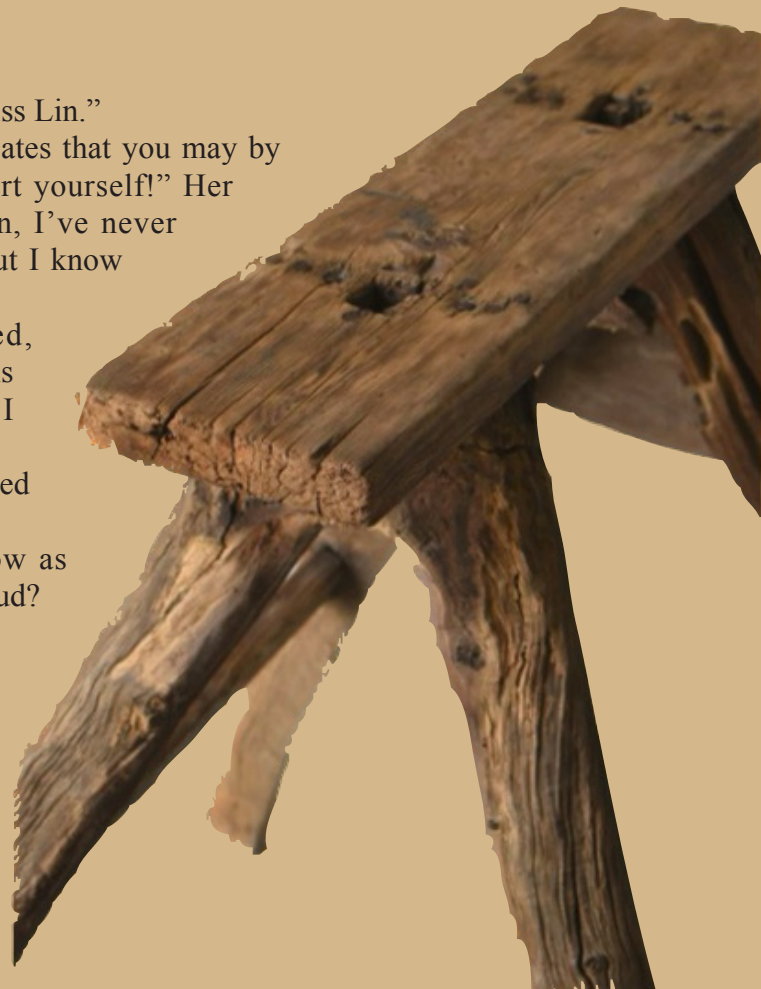
"Thank you," the young man repeated, looking up with something close to a sadness in his eyes, "but sometimes the situation doesn't permit, I hope you understand."

Xuan looked at him. "I'm sorry." She closed her eyes and swallowed hard.

"No, I'm sorry." He was whispering now as well—what is wrong with people speaking out loud? Xuan thought—"I promise you I'll live."

There was a moment of silence, and Fei'ran chuckled quietly.

"I guess I'm taking away your precious time. Come, it's time to walk out of this room now."



"I don't want to."

"You'll never know." Fei'ran smiled again, "You know what? I think you'll like the new life. Think of Wuxi! The city. I would want to live in a city all my life."

"Stop pretending to be so cheerful!"

The room was quiet. Both were surprised by Xuan's sudden increase in volume.

"Did they hear?" Xuan whispered, eyes wide with fear.

Fei'ran's gaze shifted to the door, then to Xuan's face. He shook his head.

"Why would I not feel happy for you, Miss Lin?" One side of his lip twisted up; it almost looked like a smile.

"Because," Xuan breathed, "I am not happy. I will not be happy."

Fei'ran closed his eyes. "Is there a way to make you satisfied now, Miss Lin?"

Xuan pressed her lips together until it hurt, and finally uttered the words, "I am satisfied enough," before she turned around.

"Farewell, Miss Lin. And best of luck."

"Still?" Xuan had already reached the door when she heard Fei'ran's words and turned around. He was looking at her, and she him. More silence. There was a faint smell of gardenias and wood in the room, she thought.

"Xuan." He finally spoke.

And all of a sudden Xuan was rushing to him, the way raindrops hurled themselves to the window. But raindrops fall from the sky, their paths parallel to the window, so she could never reach him.

"Please don't." She heard Fei'ran whisper, inches and worlds away. She reached out a hand as a drowning man would to the shore, but withdrew at the final breath. There was a distant call from outside the room, and the two exchanged glances.

"Will we meet again in life? Just tell me we will." She looked up. When he caught her gaze, Fei'ran thought he saw something only seen before in trapped preys. His gaze softened.

"We will."

"Thank you." Xuan finally turned her back on him and staggered to the door. Fei'ran rushed to the door, opened it, and Xuan vanished from his sight.

The rain did not intend to stop. The journey into the city of Wuxi was made twice as long because of the slimy roads. Every now and then, the fleet of carriages and carts had to halt to check the condition of wheels and horses. Xuan stayed inside and listened to everything. Since her vision was blocked, her only access was to the auditory world. Her information came in pieces of scattered conversations: none of these were complete, for the coachmen walked back and forth continually.

"How long do we have?"

"They are going to pick us up. Don't worry..."

"Screw the weather."

"...No, I don't think they had foreseen that."

"Is the horse carrying the silk all right?"

"I'll go check."

Silk. Xuan captured the word, repeated it silently and chewed on its meaning. Everything was like silk on this day. The perfectly smooth texture was ensnaring her body, calling from a higher state of civilization and wealth. Yet she pictured thousands of cocoons, each containing a silkworm in its dream of having wings, boiled and dismantled until they became thousands of single strings of silk, thousands of tombs without the corpses inside. Then they would be processed, woven, turned into the fine texture people wrap around themselves.

Her mother had never told her about this. She read it in a book.

And nobody had ever asked about the smothered dreams about wings and the future, all entrapped in one piece of fine silk clothing.

Silk was blocking her eyes from the outside view. She didn't know so much about different types of fabrics as she did about wood, but she knew the feeling of peeking out of ordinary cloth, and that felt different: although she could not see the shape of the world through a piece of cloth, she could sense the light seeping from minuscule holes between the woven textile. Silk was different—it was dense, smooth and cool, and it covered everything. She saw no light through this curtain of obstacles.

She wondered how Fei'ran had felt, entrapped in this same fabric.

Through her veil of darkness, Xuan heard muffled voices of moving, dragging and men muttering. She decided that the carriage would be setting off soon.

As much as she didn't wish to reach the end of this journey, she also disliked the boredom of waiting. The only reason she wasn't often regarded as impatient was that she always had so much to do in life. She had a feeling that this carriage ride wouldn't be the only one of its kind in her life to come.

True, she persuaded herself, her family was moving almost everything with this gigantic fleet, and the security was worth the delay. Besides, after all, it was the destination rather than the journey itself that added to her anxiety.

She still couldn't imagine that her entire family was moving to Wuxi, that they relied on her to move. She had never considered herself the vital factor and detested the thought of it: Han should be the one to do so. He would like to do so. However, Han's commuting and uncertain nature of his job rejected this hope from the very beginning. Her family needed more certainty. They needed something like her marriage to the unmet Mr. Ji'gu Qian, the youngest son of a remote but nevertheless socially prestigious branch of the most prominent scholarly family in

Wuxi.

One description would suffice to portray how eminent the Qians were: they were a family of scholars. It was not uncommon to find someone wealthy in the city, a new industrial center of the area. There would be dozens of factory owners, traders and beyond. A family of scholarlyrank, however, symbolized a glory of the older days, not to mention that Qian had been the family name of an emperor born in this area hundreds of years ago. For small town traders like Xuan's family, a marriage into even the remotest branch of such an old and esteemed name would be the honor most ardently yearned for.

And such a marriage was not supposed to take its precipitants' personal emotions into account.

Xuan heard her mother's words echo through her mind as the carriage dragged on through the incessant cadence of raindrops, each step dragging her closer to her inevitable future:

All you need is obedience... Let life flow like water.

And for the first time in her life, still entrapped in the darkness of her silk bridal veil, Xuan found herself muttering those words under her breath. She realized that she had been frowning as they formed on her lips, and her voice would never drip with tenderness the way her mother's had.



When the fleet of carriages finally halted in front of the grand house, Xuan could hear rain pouring from the rooftop down the eaves like water roaring its way down a cliff. She heard failed attempts to light firecrackers; nothing ceremonial was suitable for this weather. So instead of being greeted by overwhelming rituals she was ushered inside hurriedly by servants and maids, her veil blocking everything except for the tiny piece of ground under her feet, and she saw her shoes—bright red and trimmed with gold, perfectly curved so that they fitted her feet. Her tiny, curved feet, feeling, as usual, nothing. She wondered if they really did feel nothing or if she had just gotten used to the consistent pain. But her feet were beautiful, people around her would say, and that was a pride. Without those feet she wouldn't have had the chance to marry into such a family.

"This way, Ma'am." A voice—one of a young servant girl. The crowd pushed Xuan until she reached her destination; she saw the red cushion under her feet and knew this moment had come after all.

Music started playing. The rain didn't diminish the spirit of the players, or so it seemed. Xuan could hear the crowd stirring behind her, murmuring to each other, voices low with excitement. Everything was like a blur. Then the crowd fell silent.

"THE FIRST KOWTOW, TO THE HEAVEN AND EARTH!" She heard a man's voice resonating in the room.

All you need is obedience... Let life flow like water.

She felt her knees on the cushion. They pressed deeper in when she did the kowtow and hurt a little bit: the cushion was firmer than it looked.

"THE SECOND KOWTOW, TO YOUR PARENTS!"

Naturally. There has to be a singularity, you just haven't seen that yet.

"AND THE THIRD KOWTOW—TO EACH OTHER!"

Xuan turned to her left side and, even under the silken veil, felt the weight of an entire room's gaze on her. She had imagined this happening as a girl, many times—but this one was different from every single imagination. Different people. Different setting. Different feelings. She tried to feel the blood rushing through her veins, thumping against her ear, but instead found a heart beating in its regular rhythm, amidst all the silence. Everything in her life up to this point seemed like a distant memory; the Wood Trader's House, the room filled with the scent of gardenias and her conversation with Fei'ran all seemed lifetimes away.

Will they meet again in life? She hoped not.

She bowed her head.

Then she heard the immediate burst of cheers from the crowd, and she knew that she had been the latter one to bow. Tradition had it that whoever bowed to the other one first would take charge in the marriage. But this didn't even make any sense to her—she couldn't even see the other person while he could see her. This was not meant to be her game from the very start.

Xuan was pushed again by the crowd into a different room: the ceremony had come to its final step. Someone thrust something into her tightly clenched palm: a preserved date. It felt sticky under her touch. She was guided through, seated on a bed. Something knocked on the back of her head, and then she saw the bamboo pole.

The pole poked her bridal veil from underneath, and she was greeted by light, now blinding after long hours of darkness. Everything around was red and silky, and the cheering crowd was a swarm of drifting faces she couldn't recognize. Then she saw the person holding the pole, the one who had just taken her veil off from her, who was currently smiling at her in a rather coy manner. Ji'gu Qian, whom she had met for the first time. Her husband.

He looked like a boy. That was Xuan's only thought.



Exschwasion

We're the ones at heart born wild
We're the nature's child
Nights when legends come alive
Look out
We're the stars that shine to thrive
Endless nights with you and me
So much there to see
Come and see but don't believe
Just please
It was never meant to be

Summary: A short fantasy story about a Kitsune (mythological fox), Aqua, who fights to the end to protect her home (the realm of Feral) from the Demons (a fairy-like race of creatures). Aqua is the last survivor, there is no possibility that she would win, so she decided to treat it as if it was a playful game and leave everything to fate. This piece was completed around the time when the game it was based on, Feral, shut down.

The remaining bottle of "horizon blue" dye lay in my mechanical paw. Because when the horizon is blue, we will emerge victorious, my brother Auburn told me as he handed me the dye before the battle in the marsh when we were preparing to leave, so that's why it's called Horizon Blue.

That battle cost me my right paw. But I was lucky, because it cost everything else, for Auburn, and for every-one other than me.

I remember limping to Auburn, dragging his cloak, nearly identical to mine, laced with golden edges, on three paws as he sank into the swampy waters. "Auburn!" I cried, still hurting from the wound, as he lay there disobeying the orders of retreat, clawing at the sky, trying to break free. "Aqua... we must... end them..." he would've said. I heard him in my mind, before it all went silent, his neck arching for the distant muddy skies.

Taking one of the two dyes, I poured it over him, over his sightless eyes. At least, to Auburn, the horizon was blue.

That was the exact same thing playing itself on repeat as I dragged myself out of bed this morning, just like every other morning, squinting and scanning the horizon with all my might. As I fumbled with affixing my mechanical paw onto the stump, my vision kept on slipping outside the window towards the sky. All I knew was that the horizon only listens to the natural day and night cycle of the world, not the maddening call of the fighting beneath it. A blue

horizon, however, was a miracle, and symbolized victory as Auburn said, whether or not that's true there's no Auburn to prove it anymore. And there I sat, craning my neck towards the horizon, until I realized that I wasted an entire hour, and the implant was still loose in my other paw.

In my life I'd never seen a blue horizon. The horizons of the Blood Tundra were a bleak white, a broken pink, or both, in conflict, depending on the time of day. The horizons of the marsh, from the battle, were brown. The horizons of City Fera, from my memories, were deep violet. And Sunken Thicket, from the recounting of the elders, dark teal. I knew no more.

The realms. We lost each one to the enemy. We didn't realize we had to fight when they took Shattered Bay and Lakeroot Valley. We started fighting for City Fera. Then Sunken Thicket, then the marsh. These battles, we never won. We never saw a blue horizon. We couldn't win. At least we kept our strength thanks to our leader. Another name for that was Auburn.

But after the last stand we couldn't continue; I couldn't continue.

Because the Blood Tundra is the remaining realm, and I am the final Feralian.

The cold wind tugged and dragged my cape, wormed its way into my fur, spun playfully around my antlers. Cold. But warm. Warmer than those sunny hills taken away, reduced to cinders.

I watched. The horizon was a pale violet. I waited for it to turn blue. I waited day after day. I waited for the day I couldn't see it anymore. One day, the last warm land would drift into cold and dark. The only Feralian in it could do nothing but delay its fall. I couldn't dye the horizon blue.

The whirling of a portal mixed with the whooshing wind. Are the reinforcements coming? I laughed at myself, as the reinforcements are with Auburn now.

One skinny foot. Then another. Suddenly there were six. I saw slender bodies, tufted heads, and thin wings, the unmistakable characteristics that once signaled our attacks. I laughed again at my misconception that they were my allies. These were the enemies, the Demons that took my realms, my brother, away from me, and they were coming for me now.

I bared my teeth. These creatures, haven't they seen how we fought before? Yes, we lost, but we lost with dignity, with the hopes of blue horizons; yes, they won, but they won by brute force, by mass murders and killings and genocide, by eradicating every one of us, just to claim that land in a peaceful alternate universe would be divvied up equally. In the worst-case scenario, where all our fighting was deemed ineffective, they could've just ruled over us, instead of killing us to rule over us. And yet they never learn.

When they leapt at me, I swiped my claws, tearing through delicate wings like fallen leaves, kicking onto limbs and heads like tinder. Normally, when Auburn was around, I would fall back; when I attacked, I would just give them a kick or slash to stun them or render them immobile. But this time, it was different. There was no one left for me to love anymore.

Still, they did not learn. Demon after Demon advanced. I kicked and slashed, they kept on surrounding me. More of them appeared through the portal, dreamy and blueberry and autumn, these colors of other lands I missed. But no horizon blue, that was what we and only we would eventually have. They had reinforcements, while I had only a head full of hopes of a blue horizon.

Striking a particularly vibrant purple and lime Demon in the head, I broke out and trotted through the snow, kicking up white particles behind me. It would be better to lead them into this unfamiliar tundra. Our tundra. My tundra. I corrected my thoughts, reminding myself that us was gone now. I would not tolerate being cornered in this tiny village. I wanted a dignified death.

They chased after me. Through mountains and valleys white and pink, through black ridges and crimson lakes, all those colors melted together into a violet hue in front of me. That was the stage. Me and the Demons were the actors. And I held my breath to bow to the audience.

I ran, the Demons followed. My cape dragged on behind me, purple vines flailing in the cold wind like hissing snakes waiting to strike. But I won't. The tundra would do that for me. We were allies. I was alone, yet not totally alone.

A shriek, a splash, the first Demon lost their footing and drifted off, plummeting towards the blood lake, to their destiny together with the bones of its predecessors. Then another joined them. With every succeeding splash, a part of me lit up, but darkened again as I knew more would take their places.

See, this is the wasteland you trapped me into. And now

you've fallen here yourself.

The horizon was turning pink as the sun rose, another hue I had seen so many times and longed to wait for it to change. Maybe it was because of the blood rain that dripped and dyed my blue fur with a red tint. There, pink, then purple, then dark as the sun sets out and night sets in. My fur would be washed clean in the snow, but the blue horizon never would.

This jagged rock edge where the slightest maneuver would surrender your footing and ship you down to the crimson abyss below was supposedly called the Mouse Wall. We would train our climbing skills here, me and the rest of us, and Auburn. Once, in City Fera, beneath the deep violet horizon, there was a Rat Wall, a magnificent stone lattice, a tiara fit for our island the Queen. Now, it was seized, broken, shattered... it couldn't be worse than Auburn, couldn't be worse than what I've been through. The Rat Wall, though receiving all that love and happiness we gave, was cold, stone, lifeless. It could be shattered, yet it couldn't experience the struggles of a heart shattered by war and grief, torn apart by betrayal. Even if there was a blue horizon, it couldn't see it.

I was stopped by a sneering snowdrift. I turned around. No more running. The Demons circled me. My cape billowed in the howling wind; the snow sank into my paws. I flicked my tail, snapped my teeth, and prepared to pounce.

I was bigger, as a fox. But the Demons had strength in numbers. They wouldn't dare approach me, just cornered me on top of the snowdrift, as if just by looking terrifying and victorious they could chip away my strength. Focusing the power of my hind legs, I leapt, embracing the air, kissing the horizon I knew I would never reach, before splashing into the snow as if it were water. But I merely landed within the borders of their surroundings.

They advanced, suddenly they had swords and spears and magic. The clashing metal screamed a silent song. The white snow turned red. The horizon watched behind a lilac veil. I felt no pain, only waves and waves of memories. Of the battle in the marsh, of my teeth sliding against the hardened texture of Auburn's cape, of the sheer emptiness where my right paw had been, of his faint words and his eyes soaked in dye.

The vibrant purple and lime Demon holding a sword in front of me disappeared. I saw a Kitsune, his sleek tawny fur, his fluffy ears, his tail flicking, his cape gently fluttering. He was free of injury, smiling, as if we were preparing to leave for the marsh that day. The bottle of horizon blue dye slid into my paw, and its cap drifted off.

"Auburn." I charged towards him, the steel blade he held nipping my neck, the bottle in my paw exploding into a million fireworks.

And in that split second, the horizon was blue.



何为梦蝶

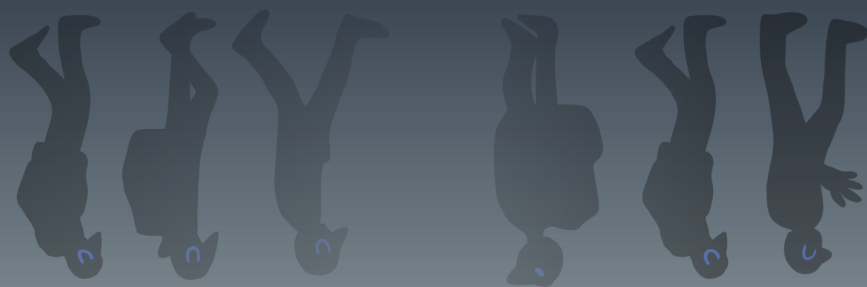
James Cai G11 Sigma

只顾埋头赶路的人脚踏过历史，他们在必然有尽头，但永远看不见尽头的道路上日复一日地重复着枯燥的行进。在这之中，历史变成了模糊的善对恶的一边倒的征服，它服务于现在，只有这唯一的尺度，所以它必然是正能量的。为什么有人被抛在了队伍后面？因为他们是有罪的，因为他们钻了牛角尖，因为他们思想不正常。这是人们对失败者的判决，也是对历史的判决。

而落在后面的人，他们面对着看不见尽头的道路，感受到了“畏惧与战栗”，他们汗毛直竖，后背发凉，脖颈似被什么东西压住，再也抬不起来。甚至不用考虑理想追求，仅仅生存就已经让他们辗转反侧，夜不能寐了。于是，“惊奇”——哲学的起源——于此处出现了。

当面对铁的必然性，落在后面的人永远无法解脱，而只能“调整心态”时，他们会对跟踪前面的人说：“不必怜悯我，那在我们之上的，原是同一个权威啊！（《神曲》）”心理问题难道真的就是靠心理医生来解决的吗？落后者拒绝这种自视甚高的同情与劝勉。

而当旧的建筑摇摇欲坠，落后者的痛苦反而加剧，虽然在前者此时也朝不保夕。因为他们发现自己做不了什么。被缚的普罗米修斯预言了诸神的黄昏，但他不可能自己打碎自己的锁链。他必须要等到带着半分神性的、手持火种的凡人赫拉克勒斯来解救他。赫拉克勒斯不也是失败者吗？他本应继承王位，却被命运捉弄而成为了英雄。





我想，只有当恐惧和忧虑在夜晚像冷水一样地，一滴一滴地滴在一个人的心上时，他才会梦中栩栩然成为一只蝴蝶，在翩飞中忘掉自己。而不是醒来之后问：“这个梦是吉还是凶？”

庄子可能也会有如此想法吧：“为什么我知道神存在？因为神都恨我。为什么我知道世界是真？因为我逃不掉。”《庄子》的内篇把天道托于人间世，遣词用具温柔而恬静，突出的似乎是“无奈”；而外篇则用大量篇幅把天道论述了出来，但话语却充满激昂与愤慨，突出的似乎是“不满”。

庄子并不逍遥，并不自由，相反，他无比痛苦。他的处境在寓言之中已经道出了——“丘，天之戮民也。”他明白天道，但却被上天惩罚，只能在人间世之中为形所累。在《庄子》中，寓言中的孔子实际上就是他自己，他既不是与天地并生的老子，也不是务于仁义的尧舜，而是“知其无可奈何而安之若命”的孔子。孔子游于匡而弦歌不辍，想来不是由于乐观自信，而是由于与命运斗争的疲劳吧。

战国诸子与孔子和老子相比，明显地多了一分躁动，多了一种“孤愤”。因为那个时代“匹夫失其家，天子失天下”，没有人能找到无人的地方独自逍遥。越来越剧烈的动荡与战火把《诗经》中苟且于繁琐公务、谨小慎微、听天由命的“士”变成了游说诸侯、口若悬河、激昂慷慨的“士”。用马克思在《黑格尔法哲学批判》中的话便是，普遍解放在这时成了个人解放的必须条件。必须统一天下，才能够顾全家室。没有什么多管闲事的人——“我献上的就是我自己。（《人是机器》）”

在柔风中站立，很快便会感到无聊；但如果在风雪与大雨中站立，一种斗争的意志会让站立变得兴味盎然。为什么士人仿佛有用不完的热情呢？因为一方面他们别无选择，而另一方面拼搏与斗争本身不断地在强化着他们的斗志。

我用什么论证我的观点？大概是《孟子》中的：“孔子惧，作《春秋》”吧。我们也走到这里了。当一个社会平稳运转，人们只要按部就班就可以度过一生时，没人会认识到历史的作用。但现在不同了，仅仅把过去几十年的历史真实呈现出来，就能够起到比任何冗长乏味的论文都要大的作用。





苏幕遮

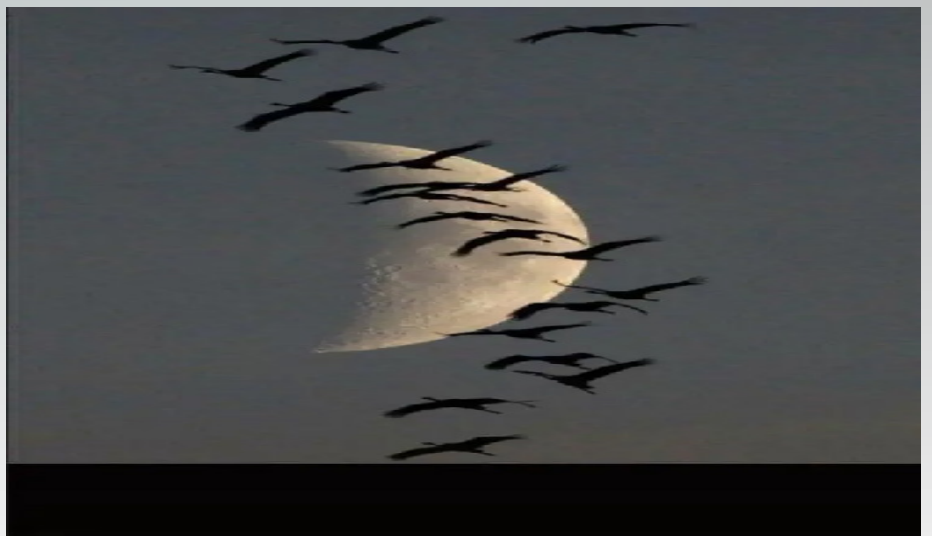
素郊匾，青烟围，秋风低颌，压枝嗅霜桂。适霞秋水凝作泪，桂叶不堪，随泪落成灰。
化新绪，扣无声，句句皆道，天寒早时归。轻室对简读无味，顷首对月，烛云解我眉。
本以陈情淡久日，冬月霖至，桂香如旧识。楼高久巷金和赤，月喜枝裸近寒世。

采桑子 腊月廿三记山中初雪

山高朦胧没峽路，抬首无穹，曦辉隐隐，东起曜曜染重雾。
棉绒飘香腊月暮，絮乱如春。举目素裹，惟有梅娇先红树。

缘尽秋

初见小塘芙蓉立，
山河翠染夏未秋。
待解莲垂我塘意，
已是霞落漫重楼。



Journal

*"Journalism can never be silent: that is
its greatest virtue and its greatest fault.*

--- Henry Anatole Grunwald

“Double Reduction Policy”:

Bring Education Back to Schools

Jessica Wang G12 Theta

“Price must take a pinch.” These five words have become one of the most common teachings Chinese children receive from their parents. Since the resumption of “Gaokao” in the 1970s, education has been a priority for Chinese parents. They are willing to go to all lengths to give their kids the finest education. Meanwhile, obedient students rarely fail to meet their parents’ high expectations. Tons of them are selected by top schools even overseas for academic excellence. These achievements strongly rely on their “extreme” hard work. Most Chinese students give up their time off to participate in after-school tutoring classes for impressive grade cards

that satisfy their own and parents’ ambitions (Li et al., 2022). However, all their efforts in cram schools seem to be halted by the “Double Reduction” policy introduced by the Ministry of Education on 24 July 2021. This bill prohibits “subject-based” off-campus tutoring for pupils and middle school students to relieve their pressure and resist the capitalization of education (Wu, 2021). It has been criticized as arbitrary and overly idealistic for disorienting many parenting families’ usual way of educating kids. The cultural context leads to parents’ concern about spending more money on education and students’ worry about disappointing their parents by receiving lower grades. These two stressful feelings lead to the policy conflict that can be

solved by strengthening the teaching quantity at school as a mitigating resolution.

Understanding all perspectives of the “Double Reduction” policy is necessary for discussing why this Act conflicts with the Chinese culture and parents’ common expectations for their children. The so-called “Double Reduction” policy is a general abbreviation of “Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education” (Xuan, 2021). This policy set up its aim on doing two things. Firstly, all cram schools should crackdown to reduce the financial burden on parents (Xuan, 2021). Secondly, the community should pay more attention to the overall development of students to release their academic pressure (Xuan, 2021). This concept has long term benefits on an ideological level as it returns education to its essence of “developing moral characters and imparting knowledge and skills” rather than leaving a vicious competition only about grades.

Most Chinese parents do not realize the good intentions of issuing the “Double Reduction” policy due to their culturally entrenched mindset. They

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generally believe that a child's academic performance is the only criterion for assessing how possible they will win for a bright future. The formation of this concept dates back to the Sui dynasty. From that time, China, and subsequently many Asian countries, including South Korea, had the imperial enrollment system, which served to select political executives through rigorous written examinations. Centuries later, taking grades as the most direct indicator for screening talent is still in use, so it becomes reasonable for “education fever” to happen with parents seeing education as the best way to enhance their children's social status (Zhang & Carrasquillo). But not everyone is a natural at studying, which means kids who receive low grades have to attend after-school tutoring classes to make up for their inadequacies with more effort. Then, the severity of closing cram schools to the parents of these students can compare to the blocking of their children's path to success. Withholding the value of tying

grades to social class and life quality, it seems unacceptable for Chinese families to agree with the “Double Reduction” policy that risks the next generation's future.

More than a value shock, the actual cause of the “Double Reduction” policy conflict is that parents and students do not believe the two goals of the policy can be achieved. Namely, parents do not think this policy will lead to a more even distribution of educational resources. Also, some students feel like it denies them the right to progress and causes anxiety. Firstly, parents worry that the ban on cram schools may lead to a new boom in private tutoring that is spending more money on inviting a one-on-one home teacher. Many Chinese parents refer to this potential future due to the “7.30 Educational Reform” introduced in Korea in 1980 (Choi & Cho, 2015). The Korean government released the same rule as the “Double Reduction”

policy and arrested teachers who illegally offered public tuition (Choi & Cho, 2015). However, unexpected countermeasures come after the formulation of a policy. Many wealthy families started hiring tutors and having them pretend to be relatives to avoid being caught (Choi & Cho, 2015). Instead of making education more equitable, this educational reformation has further widened the learning opportunities between children from wealthy families and those from ordinary households. This has already happened in Chinese society. According to the survey,



before having the “Double Reduction” policy, around 23.1% of Chinese parents spent more than ¥10,000 on children’s off-campus classes. It is worth noticing that this number has increased to 26.7% after the policy’s implementation (Jin & Sun, 2022). The increasing trend reflects a crucial issue that those parents with economic strength are affordable for the rising expense of kids’ education. If there is only private tutoring in the future, it will depend too much on the families’ socioeconomic condition (Zhang & Xie, 2015). And in the long run, only children in upper-class families will continuously benefit from being supported in the academic field. Instead, those cram schools required to close due to the “Double Reduction” policy are preferred by more for charging a relatively lower fee.

Other than parents’

realistic concerns about financial costs, students are more nervous about whether their grades will get down and cannot meet their parents’ expectations due to the suspension of tutoring classes. The vast student base in China leads to extreme competitive pressures. It is not enough to be above average if a student wants to get into the best high schools or universities. They have to be perfect in all subjects. For the top ones, tuition reinforces their academic strengths, but for the average students, it is their means to stay in the rankings, as taking classes is proven effective in improving scores. Like many other Asian students, Chinese students are relentless in pursuing to be the best to satisfy their parents’ wish of having them get top grades (Guo, 2022). A hierarchy of parent-child relationships has been emphasized in this society (Zhang & Carrasquillo). To show filial respect more often, children choose to listen to their parents (Chang et al., 2018). This culture of obedience is more likely to lead to lower self-esteem in children, causing them to suffer negative psychological triggers such as depression after a shock (Chang et al., 2018). In

a comment about this policy, a middle school student said she usually scored around ninety, but a third of those points were attributed to her tutor. Once the tutoring classes were gone, she did not know how to face her parents with grades around sixty (Li et al., 2022). Whenever she imagined this scenario, she felt stressed and self-doubt (Li et al., 2022). Chinese parents surely do not want to abuse their children, but they take actual considerations first, namely children’s grades and future development (Zou et al., 2013). The “Double Reduction” policy has broken the “positive cycle” of parents sending children to tutoring classes for higher grades and students being happy to meet parents’ high expectations. This result makes the student body



results makes the student body more stressed and questions the meaning of this policy.

The Ministry of Education must find an appropriate way to solve this policy conflict, for instance, by improving the quality of teaching on campus. As “education” has been a fundamental part of China, all stakeholders need to compromise for a win-win outcome (Obi & Obineli, 2015). Parents and students oppose the “Double Reduction” policy since they fear having no cram schools can lead to a significant drop in grades, which means the policymakers should prove schools will help students perform at their best if they work hard on campus. Many students go to off-campus tutorials because they cannot keep up in class. However, most of them do not seek academic help from school teachers since they believe that not understanding the topic discussed a minute ago is shameful (Ting & Hwang, 2009). Schools can organize on-campus “tutorials” to encourage

students to ask questions and increase their studying motivation on problem-solving. However, taking the downside of this idea into consideration, those tutorials may leave more pressure on school teachers. According to a survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Educational Sciences, in 2020, teachers worked an average of 52.5 hours a week (Hu, 2021). Once schools require teachers to provide “office hours” after school, their working length will increase rapidly. To alleviate the burden of those teachers, schools may choose to recruit university graduates who are seeking internships and cram school teachers who have lost their jobs as teaching assistants. This action can ensure a break for teachers in the system while providing more job opportunities for the other groups mentioned to relieve their employment anxiety (Zhan et al., 2021).

Improving the quality of teaching in schools will help parents and students to trust compulsory school-based education and recognize the two objectives of the “Double Reduction” policy.

The resolution provided is practical also because of its mitigating effect. Although the ultimate goal of the “Double Reduction” policy is to make Chinese parents focus less on grades and more on students’ skills developed while learning, it is about a change in mindset that cannot happen overnight. The most direct way to reach the final aim is to change the mark-based grading scale by abolishing entrance exams altogether. However, this approach is too absolute and risky, as it avoids the conflict point of “how to evaluate



students” and likely leads to a lose-lose outcome (Obi & Obineli, 2015). Take the “equalization of education” policy initiated by the Korean government in 1968 as a warning. At that time, their Education Department stopped all application tests, meaning that the school a student could attend was entirely dependent on the outcome of their lottery (Seth). This policy immediately caused resentment among students who achieved excellent marks but were assigned to poor schools (Seth). Those the wealthy ones then chose to study abroad. This case led to a brain drain crisis in Korea, while both students and the government suffered heavy losses. It is courageous to go straight to the root of the problem, but it assumes that the audience group is receptive to the solution. Many policy conflicts involve complicated value biases and need to be solved step by step. Significantly, when the public no longer understands the purpose of unveiling this new policy, policymakers are required to mitigate their emotions and establish

“compensation measures”. Increasing the teaching quantity in the classroom can be taken as a “buffer” for the “Double Reduction” policy that ensures students’ learning efficiency while preventing excessive private tuition.

While grades are a powerful indicator of students’ academic abilities, education is not just about teaching them how to achieve high marks. It is also about developing them into social and all-round individuals. The “double reduction” policy is intended to be values-based education reform. It calls for the closure of all tuition institutions so that education is no longer a way for capitalists to make money. Also, it reduces the pressure on children to study, ensuring that they have more time to experience life and develop their hobbies. On the path to innovation, the directives of the policy are inevitably questioned by the various groups affected. Parents reasonably worry

that more expensive private tuition will rise as cram schools are gone, and students fear their grades will decrease. Although the ultimate goal is to make learning more “quality-oriented” rather than “grade-oriented”, such a change in mindset is unlikely to be accepted by everyone immediately (Lin, 2022). To ensure a harmonious relationship between the government and the public, the former need to find a way to meet the needs of the opposing groups by improving the quality of teaching in schools to prove that students can learn just as well without off-campus tutors. Over time parents’ and students’ perceptions may turn naturally. Both sides in the conflict need to find a mutually acceptable balance, with solutions that are more moderate than excessive.

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High Education Desire among Chinese Rural Students

—Case Study of Gansu Province

Reina Feng G11 Kappa

Introduction

In China, the educational competition among urban students is getting increasingly fierce. There are articles proposing that urban education should follow and learn from rural education. Mothers are anxious, and children are tired—this is the middle-class situation nowadays. Instead, merits like peer learning among rural students should be advocated, which can help build their courage and companionship. Their low educational desire could create more spare time for them to communicate with all kinds of people, and in turn lead to better integration into the society (徐鲁青, 2022). Is this really the case?

The university admission rate of rural areas has always been lower than that of urban areas, but the gap has been gradually narrowing these years. Take Jingning County as an example: according to the data given by the test center, its rate of reaching university admission cutoff—not those who were actually admitted but had the ability to attend college—in 2021 was 76%, which rose 3.5% compared to 2020. This uprising tendency means that the government is paying more and more attention to rural education, but it is still hard for rural students to make a decision for their future education.

Rural students really lack resources, including school quality, economic support, information access, and social network, which provides them with little chance to achieve class mobility. In rural schools, only basic knowledge is taught. School life is dull due to lack of heterogeneity, leading to students' school weariness (黄超, 2017). Since most rural families cannot afford cram schools, and rural parents are poorly educated, rural students can get little help when they are stuck in academic

problems (李忠路 & 邱泽奇, 2016). Also, they are not able to fill in college application forms in the most suitable or beneficial way, since they rarely have access to outside information and thus know little about different universities (王小红, 2013). After graduation from college—if able to—it would also be difficult for them to find jobs because they do not own enough social network (Wang, 2007). They are confined to marginal ones such as construction and manufacture, difficult, demanding, and dangerous (王小红, 2013).

Schools are the products of middle class, where the intellectual reproduction takes place (Bourdieu, 2002). Therefore, rural students are unfamiliar with this education system which is actually really selfish. Although policies are made placating and encouraging rural children to receive education and light up their destinies, the country is still promoting the only few “talented people”, and the opportunity for rural students is even slimmer (刘云杉, 2021). As a result, rural students are both inspired and confused, feeling lost and confused.

After migration, it is still challenging for those rural people



to form psychological social identity. They have to suffer from institutional exclusion, social exclusion, sense of relative deprivation, and lack of interaction. Today's household registration system creates great barriers for migrants to get city hukou, which means that they cannot enjoy the same security as other urban dwellers and thus feel adrift. Plus, the mainstream group in urban areas often stigmatize rural people, thinking that their entry destroys the cultural environment and increases the competition in employment. This explanation triggers and enhances people's discrimination and dissatisfaction towards those migrants. The social gap between city people and rural people is also being augmented (崔岩, 2012). All these factors bring about the inadaptability of the floating population.

By interviewing 7 grade-eight students in poverty-stricken areas of Gansu Province, I will gain a deeper understanding of rural students' expectations and goals for their future. Hope my findings can bring the general public an up-to-date comprehensive rural perspective towards education, and thus inspire more suitable and effective measurements on poverty alleviation.

Research Design

From January 19th to January 22nd (2022), I conducted seven interviews successively with grade-eight students from Jingning County of Gansu Province, a key county of national poverty alleviation. The local fiscal strength of Jingning is weak, and its economic size is relatively small. In 2015, for example, its per capita GDP was 10,625 yuan, only about one-fifth of the national per capita level. There are mainly two reasons for the backward economies. First, its economic structure is really unreasonable. Agriculture, especially the fruit industry, is still in the transition stage from scale expansion to quality and efficiency improvement, and the industrial development chain is short. The heavy industry is mostly labor-intensive, and its overall level of development is low, which makes it difficult to obtain support from large enterprises. Second, the poor environment creates great difficulties for people's daily lives as well as the economic development. The local infrastructure

construction is insufficient and of low-standard, so the roads' quality is very poor, dirty and dangerous. The local industries are also releasing toxic emissions, which seriously threatens the fruit production (孙鹏飞, 2016; 张娜, 2020).

Due to the spreading COVID 19, the interviews were finished online using an app called Tencent Conference, each of which lasted about forty minutes, divided into two sections—the first half talking with the student, while the rest of the time talking with his or her parent. I also interviewed Ms. Yang, the English teacher of the rural students, who was quite familiar with the students' conditions and rural education situation as a volunteer from a poverty alleviation organization. She reminded me of some unsuitable expressions which might be sensitive to rural parents (such as terms to address rural parents and words used to ask questions, which would be clarified in the findings section), exchanged some ideas with me, and depicted a greater picture of Gansu education for me (about newly-implemented policies, about their expectations for students...).

Data Collection

During each interview, I mainly asked the student and the parent—respectively—about the family condition, efforts and desire for study, and educational and vocational goals. In this way, the student would not be interfered with his or her parents' thoughts. Therefore, I was able to learn about the factors contributing to students' own expectations towards their future, and make a good summary of general cases. Their parents then joined to seek confirmation about the information given by students. Through the comparison and combination, a bigger picture of a family could be formed—the closeness of kids and parents, the child's cognition about his or her family condition... All the answers to the questions could finally come to light, in a realistic way.

Some extra questions were launched when the interviewees talked about something interesting or distinct, so that I could get further information for my research.

Findings

Interview Results

In my research, I found that the educational desire of rural students was much higher than expected. They all set their goals at attending universities—which was once a luxury for rural students—regardless of their genders, their current academic performances, their attitudes towards studying, or their family conditions. Two students even wanted to attend one of the 985 universities, a group of first-class Chinese universities of advanced level. When asked about the studying environment at school, it was said that their classmates were all very hard-working, and many of them secretly studied at home in order to improve their grades. Students were all attracted by urban areas because of the great variety of jobs and the high level of wages, so all of them would like to leave their homelands and travel to big cities after graduation from college. A boy with an average academic performance even told me, with a fevered tone, that he was eager to become an IT (information technology) staff, due to its high salaries. However, other students have not yet thought about their specific career plans or educational degrees, saying that they just wanted to do their best. Their parents were mostly unsatisfied with their kids' performances at school, and willing to devote all their resources to their children's education. What on earth led to the increasing education desire of rural students?

Poverty Alleviation through Education and Homogeneous Culture of Educational Competition.

The policy of poverty alleviation through education was newly implemented in 2016. Up to now, 54 universities have participated in the Poverty Alleviation Initiative of Colleges and Universities, encouraging more social forces to get deeper involvements into poverty alleviation, which aimed at the development of rural education and the improvement of the basic quality of poor laborers. As a result, the educational standards of rural teachers

were heightened, which contributed to better education quality and stricter school regulations, and in turn led to homogeneous culture of educational competition.

When I asked those students about the classmates they admired, all of them talked about those who studied well. “She spends less time learning English than me but gets higher grades.” “He is good at playing basketball and gets the first place in exams all the time.” ... Rural students' goals and expectations are, in a word, all of a piece.

A few students reported that they feared their teachers' criticisms a lot when not doing well in exams, especially their mathematics teacher who even used physical punishments sometimes. The phenomenon might not be accepted by urban parents, but it could be a different story in countryside. Teachers beat their students not because of their cruelty or heartlessness. Instead, they strongly wished they could turn iron into steel (“hen tie bu cheng gang”, a Chinese term referring to a feeling of regret that one's offspring does not live up to one's expectations). According to my interviews, students did not resent those physical punishments, but explained the reasons for being punished in a mild tone. “That's because we fell asleep in class, or did simple questions wrong in exams... It's our own faults after all.” “When I get a low grade, I just cannot accept it myself. Criticisms from teachers do not really matter.” “It could be frightening, but I don't care about it. Most of the times I blamed myself even more than my teachers blamed me.” ... Parents also hoped that the teachers could be strict over their children. “Of course, teachers should be strict. It's better to be strict!” a girl's father did not hesitate to answer. Therefore, rural teachers actually treated their students as their own children, with all the loves and hopes. Students, in return, gained the feeling that they should study well to pay back their teachers' efforts and contributions.

The Change in Family Educational Concept

In former paragraphs, I have discussed about the school educational concepts, which

directly affected the family educational concepts due to parents' low levels of education resulting in their great respect towards high-educated teachers.

Besides the impact of school indoctrination, social opinions and gender issue also contributed to the change in educational notions in rural families. Hence, I would like to divide this section into the following two parts.

The Impact of Social Opinions

Starting from middle class, the ideology of studying for students' future lives has already made its way through the entire Chinese society. The middle-class education has always been competitive. It seems like that all those middle-class involution culture sneaked into working class without any barriers. A reason was that rural people were willing to believe in the power of education, as it was the only effective way for them to achieve social class migration. Another reason, however, was the sense of inferiority for rural parents. During the interviews, most of the parents looked really nervous and overcautious. When I asked them questions, they generally responded directly and carefully but not in a way of normal chatting. A question I previously designed was "do you want your child to continue your job in the future?", which seemed nice and realistic. Actually, according to Ms. Yang, it could be too sensitive for those parents. Indeed, I saw embarrassment and hesitation from their facial expressions after hearing the question. So, I

revised my
wording
in the
following
interviews,
directly
asking
those
parents

children instead of mentioning their jobs as peasants. These details could reveal rural people's self-abasement.

There were still some differences between middle-class and working-class beliefs, though. In middle class, the purpose of studying showed great varieties. For example, middle-class students might enter universities for different life experiences, self-satisfaction, or pursuit of dreams. In working class, however, the purpose was limited to "social class migration", which was quite simple and lacking in diversity.

Besides influences from middle class, there were also many voices within working class that caused the family educational concept to change. In the past thirty years, it was true that large numbers of rural students had achieved social class migration through studying—from working class to middle class. The experience of success was spread widely and quickly among the general public and gossiped about in every rural family. Plus, with the influence from the society, parents gradually viewed "attending universities" as the highest glory which could always be proud of. This could also explain the reason why most of the students interviewed have set the goal of attending universities but yet to specify their expected degrees or further pursuit.

With high expectations and involvements coming from both schools and families, rural students had to—and spontaneously became eager to—reach high educational desires.

Perishing Gender Inequality

Gender inequality issue in rural education is not as previously imagined. According to previous research in Gansu, a dominant patrilineal family structure linked sons to their families of origin and served as the social foundation for cultural norms, which, under economic constraints, made it less rational for families to invest in the education of daughters as compared with the education of sons. Some mothers even held the idea that educating daughters was a waste, since girls would sooner or later get married out of their families (Yuping, 2007). Among the seven students I interviewed, however, there were two female students



whose parents showed no relaxation of their educational requirements or expectations. Both the girls had parents who were always anxious about their grades, nervous before and after exams, and repeatedly told them to try to fight to college. During the interview, one of the girls showed relaxed expressions and manners—she was the only student in the interviews who really chatted with me instead of answering my questions directly—which made me feel that she might be the one who received more love in her family (compared to her elder brother). Her parents were also the only parents who paid for their child's additional math lesson fee, so that she could catch on with school courses. Her father was the one who participated in the interview. When asked about the time spent with his daughter, he said he “chatted with her every evening after working”. When asked about his expectations for her daughter, he explained that the family would support her whatever path she would like to develop along, and it was up to her to make final decisions. “The only requirement for her at present is to study hard.” said her father in a loving tone. Another particularly struggling family paid for the entire college tuition of two elder sisters who now worked as nurses, unwilling to let the girls work their ways through school.

Besides the increasing equality in educational resources, boys and girls were also treated equally when it came to reproduction. In 2000s, Gansu parents would like to have more kids if their earlier children were girls, which reflects obvious son preference (Zhang, 2007). Among the seven families I interviewed, on the other hand, four families had more children after having sons, and two of them got daughters, which means that daughters were placed at roughly the same position as sons in a family.

Conclusion

In this paper, I first made an assumption about rural students' concepts towards education by reading a number of literature resources, then conducted several interviews with rural students, parents, and their English teacher, and finally analyzed the results by figuring out the reasons behind the issue. More factors were explored

and taken into account for the explanation of the results.

The poverty alleviation policy through education and the impact of social opinions both contributed to the increasing educational desire among rural students. Their pursuit of social class migration was the fundamental motivation, while their belief in the power of education offered a solution, a path to success. Their goals were identical, which was further confirmed by the country and the society. Gender inequality was also no longer an issue for rural education. Boys and girls were equally treated, at least in terms of resources and parental involvement in education.

The conclusion could be further generalized through more research into different levels of rural students and different rural regions, especially the southern areas where cultures might differ.

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The Dark Side of Idol Culture: A Close Look at SNH48 and K-POP

Martin Zheng G11 Delta



On August 23, 2023, 22-year-old Fei QinYuan, a member of the Chinese female idol group SNH48, was disheartened to learn that she ranked 22 out of 186 members in the group's ninth major vote. The moment she heard the news, she burst into tears in front of the audience at the event. This eight-rank drop would result in reduced company resources and less exposure on stage for Fei. Once considered a strong contender for the top seven rankings – a position that would secure the majority of the company's publication and advertising resources – Fei's fall in the ranks had a significant impact on her career.

SNH48's voting system relies on fans purchasing votes for their favorite idols at a price of 35 Yuan per vote. According to an announcement made by Fei's fan club shortly after the voting results were revealed, approximately 800,000 RMB had been contributed to support her up to the voting deadline. Funding competition has led 10% of fans to view financial investment as crucial in this system, as revealed by a survey conducted by WangChu.

Many idols perceive their rankings as a manifestation of their fans' approval. After the results, Chen Ke, a GNZ48 member (Guangzhou 48) who officially joined SNH48 on the same date as Fei, expressed dissatisfaction through an open channel with fans, likely because she did not place first

in her team. Normally, idols in 48 groups express gratitude to their fans when the voting results are announced. However, losing the "center" position to her opponent upset Chen. With her contract with GNZ48 expiring in two years, her opportunities to secure top rankings are dwindling. The discrepancy between effort and recognition troubles numerous idols, as lower rankings often lead to diminished attention, resulting in further fan attrition.

Similar concerns affect the K-POP industry, which has garnered global attention in recent years due to the unprecedented success of groups like BTS and BLACKPINK. The *New York Times* reported the recent passing of young actress Jung Chae-yull on April 11, 2023, following the tragic deaths of Sulli and Goo Hara four years prior. These tragedies can be traced back to the rigorous K-POP star training system, which is also known as the "idol factory."

In this system, teenagers as young as 11 or 12 are recruited by entertainment agencies through nationwide auditions. Once signed, these aspiring performers undergo strict selections and intense training regimens, sometimes for up to a decade, before they are given an opportunity to debut. This highly competitive environment often leads to physical and mental health issues due to sleep deprivation, unhealthy diets resulting

from peer and social pressure, and the constant scrutiny of their appearance and performances

Furthermore, K-POP idols are held to exceptionally high standards, both professionally and personally. They are expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct. This level of control, coupled with the relentless scrutiny from fans and the public, takes a significant toll on idols' mental well-being.

Even idols who excel in this system and achieve widespread fame often face career declines in their 20s. The industry's focus on youth and appearance leads to the rapid rise and fall of many K-POP stars, with some experiencing a phenomenon known as the "seven-year curse," where groups disband or lose members around their seventh anniversary.

Similarly, SNH48 member contracts reveal that all idols must stop performing on stage once they reach the age of 30, with no exceptions. The parallel between the K-POP industry and China's SNH48 demonstrates the urgent need to address the physical and mental health concerns faced by young performers worldwide.

After calming down, Fei sang a classic AKB48 song during her speech: "Dreams are like flowers; they will blossom after hard work." Fei first learned this song at 14 when she entered idol training. Early exposure to this money-dominated culture has long-lasting effects, making her more susceptible to negative comments compared to idols who joined as adults.

Pushing young idols into the industry may yield short-term benefits, but it can also bring irreversible consequences. Fei's speech on voting day revealed that she tried to deliver uplifting messages and maintain a positive image for fans, regardless of the voting results. The expectation for idols to maintain a positive image, regardless of their emotional state, exacerbates their mental health issues. Change is necessary to protect the well-being of these young performers.



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Science Lab

*"The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Curiosity has its own reason for existing."*

--- Albert Einstein

City Street Scent Landscape Drawing

-Digital Media Representation Art for
Olfactory Perception



Written by: Yiqi Li G12 Eta
Photos from: Bing

1. INTRODUCTION

According to a British insurance company's 2008 recommendations for claims related to sensory loss, compensation for total loss of smell is £14,500- 19,100, for total loss of hearing is £52,950-£63,625, and for total loss of vision is £155,250. This valuation seems interesting, as the mainstream Western science ranks the sense of smell on the periphery of the five human senses, and Kant considers the olfactory organ as "the most costly and redundant sense" (Immanuel Kant, 2005). However, it is a fact that the olfactory organ is the first sense to appear during fetal development, while the other sensory systems develop later. It is reasonable to assume that the first experiences of the child's sensual life begin in the field of smell, and that our life begins with the smell of a "life scent" emanating from the fluid in the womb. This primitive and ancient process of sensory formation predestines this sense of smell to be a very uncomplicated one (Hepper.P.G, 1987).

The profound relationship between memory and smell should come as no surprise to anyone. The ability of an odor to evoke nostalgic memories is unlike any other sensory memory. The unique nature of this phenomenon is informally known as the "Proust Effect". Christina Zelano from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (Guangyu Zhou, Jonas K, Olofsson, Mohamad, Z.Koubeissi. Christina Zelano, 2021) said that at some point in our ancient history, as our brains evolved, all other neurosensory pathways were reorganized through different areas of the brain. But for some reason, our olfactory system retained a direct connection to the hippocampus.

The fresh smell of a park is comforting and relaxing, while the smell wafting out of a public restroom is always a source of tension. For the memory of a city, many people will retain the smell of scenes unique to their childhood. Smell connects our deepest memories of the city, and smell makes our impression of the city deep and full. This study hopes to explore the visual image method of odor recording expression from the review of domestic and foreign research, so Ancient artists in China have rich and profound discussions on aesthetic senses such as sight, hearing, taste

taste and smell. China's that more researchers can pay attention to the odor characteristics of cities, the connection between urban memory and odor, and thus to break the pure visual city image and build a multi-sensory three-dimensional city impression.

2. REVIEW OF RESEARCH

2.1 Status of Foreign research on smell landscape

Foreign scholars have realized the importance of urban odor earlier. They have conducted a large amount of basic data collection and adopted various experimental methods, including the use of odor analyzers to directly extract air samples for odor analysis, identification and measurement; there are also volunteers organized to conduct odor walking experiments to transform the sensory experience of odor into visual color experience and mark it on the map; there are also experts related to the psychological study of odor experiments. Victoria Henshaw, a British scholar, has been conducting research on the psychology of odor experiments. In her book *Urban Smellscapes* (Victoria Henshaw, 2021), Victoria Henshaw explores the relationship between odors and urban smellscapes and describes the importance of odors in creating a sense of place and how to design urban smellscapes. Another iconic olfactory artist, Sissel Tolaas, established the ReSearch Lab in Berlin, a laboratory dedicated to the study of smells, and has used over 6,500 smells to build a smell map of 52 cities (Sissel Tolaas, 2016). Kate Mclean, a New York-based artist, defined different smells in color and led volunteers to conduct scent walking experiments in different cities such as New York, Barcelona, and Singapore to create an olfactory sensory map. (Kate Mclean, 2017)

2.2 Status of domestic research on smell landscape

Traditional incense science, which has been dense for thousands of years, is precisely the ultimate embodiment of the literati's pursuit of olfactory aesthetics. Qian Qianyi, a literary

scholar in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, proposed the sense of smell as the main sense of aesthetic appreciation.

Feng Rong from Tsinghua University described and mapped the scent landscape of Beijing's Houhai as a whole and in key areas, and explored the ideas and methods of scent-led urban design based on this (Feng Rong, Liu lu, Ma Dixiang, Cheng Qingyi, Long Ying, 2017). The research scale of Feng Rong's team takes the urban area as the basic research scale with a larger scope. The scale of this study is mainly focused on the small scale of streets, and we try to explore the odor characteristics of different streets in a more detailed way.

3. STEPS OF GIS-BASED ODOR LANDSCAPE MAPPING

3.1 Feasibility based on GIS

This study attempts to integrate the data of interest points and subjective emotional and psychological feelings based on the basic database of GIS, to integrate and express the information on the spatial map, and to extend the dimension of map information. The spatial data and attribute data in GIS database are closely related to each other, and the consistency of the data is required to be high. With the understanding of spatial information science and GIS application, the definition of spatial objects and their data structure have become more consistent, so that the spatial data model of different GIS software does not differ much in the concept and logic model level, which provides the possibility of sharing GIS data from different sources. At present, all large and medium-sized cities in China have detailed GIS data resources, and it is feasible to use this as the foundation platform for research.

3.2 Data sources

The study of street odor in Shanghai incorporates odor into the street space system at the human perception scale. The research data mainly includes the basic roads, the public review data, and the map POI data.

(1) The selection of basic roads is based on the streets represented by historical districts, as well as living streets, and there are nine representative streets and neighborhoods in this study. They are Qibao Ancient Town, Yuyuan Road, Hengshan Road, Huaihai Middle Road, University Road, Duolun Road, Wukang Road, Yunnan South Road, and Julu Road. (2) Public review data: Considering that odors are related to people's subjective perceptions, the correlation between the types of urban odors and people's preferences was determined by semantic analysis (4843 items of public review data) (Figure. 1), and the general population's odor preferences for streets were determined by analyzing the odor pointers in language and the odor preferences. (3) Map POI data, based on typical streets, selected data points related to urban odors on both sides of the street, totaling 5981.

3.3 Odor classification

The odor classification (Table. 1) in this study was borrowed from the odor classification method used by the Tsinghua University team during the experiment in Beijing. There are 9 major categories of odor classification, including: food, natural odor, domestic emission odor, urban construction, animal, medicine, artificial odor, and others.

3.4 Methodology of odor landscape map production

For the odor study of typical streets, odor field tracking research was conducted in two groups to gain an in-depth understanding of the odor characteristics and the basic composition of typical streets in Shanghai from a microscopic scale, so as to form a prospect for application in subsequent urban characterization studies. According to the researchers' perceptions, the street odors were stratified and categorized as follows: (1) Overall odor impressions, which are basic odors. It is a background type of odor that exists relatively stable for a longer period of the research team used an online method to recruit olfactory experimenters, distributed research charts on site,

and conducted a 15-minute training session on site. The research was conducted from 1.22 to 1.26. The field research was completed in two groups, and three types of odors were recorded, as well as the intensity, persistence, preference, and subjective sensory association of each odor. Then the experimenter made color association matching according to the subjective feelings and matched the colors for the corresponding odors.

Various emotional colors and emotional time within a certain spatial area. For example, the smell of the river, the smell of the asphalt road, the smell of wet air after rain, etc. (2) Fixed odor. It is a representative odor emitting point on the street. These odors can reflect the distinctive characteristics of the street. For example, the smell of western food and butter, the smell of wood from bookstores, the smell of moxa smoke from moxa stores etc. (3) Random odors. This type of odor refers to those odors that are generated by chance in the place and exist for a short time. For example, the smell of coffee on the hands of a passerby, the smell of body wash on a passing golden retriever, the smell of cigarettes, etc.

Tendencies in the public reviews, such as joy, anger, sadness, happiness, criticism, and praise, are also used to analyze the emotional tendencies of the evaluators through natural semantic analysis. Then the qualitative data is quantified by sentiment score to visualize and analyze the human sentiment value linkage space. Finally, it is overlaid with the odor distribution map to analyze the relationship between odor and pedestrian emotion. In order to make the positive and negative emotion analysis accurate, the data extracted from the public reviews were first organized, and then the high-frequency words of the reviews as well as the web semantics were analyzed with the help of NLPPIR big data emotion processing system. The emotional polarity of the text was judged to be negative at -6-0, positive between 0 and 6. 0 was neutral, and finally the evaluation emotional values were divided into three categories to further analyze the typical street subjective feelings of people's emotions.

4. STREETS ODOR LANDSCAPE DRAWING

4.1 Street odor landscape drawing

Wukang Road was built in 1907, according to "Shanghai Xuhu District Geographical Names", "The road was originally named Fu Kaisen Road, named after the American Fu Kaisen's surname. 1943 changed the current name to Wukang Road, named after the old county name of Zhejiang Province." Wukang Road is 1183M long and 12M-16M wide. The whole road runs roughly north-south, starting from Huashan Road in the north, where the lilac garden of Li Hongzhang, an important minister of the late Qing Dynasty, is visible, to Huaihai Middle Road in the south, where it connects Tianping Road and Yuqing Road, and looks at the former residence of Song Qingling. Wukang Road, with its lush wutong trees, has a high "density" of celebrity residences, with about 30 of them. Along the Spanish, French Renaissance and other styles of architecture is rich in features, is one of the most European-style neighborhoods in central Shanghai.

Firstly, a field odor research approach was launched on Wukang Road. A total of 8 odor experimenters identified different odors and recorded the odor characteristics, intensity, duration, and preference, etc., and dropped them on the odor map. Referring to Mclean's odor tracking approach, Wukang Road odor mapping paid more attention to the interaction between human emotions and odor perception.

Through field research on Wukang Road, the odor experimenter found that the odor types of Wukang Road showed diverse characteristics and most of them were comfortable and pleasant odors. According to the feelings of field research, the persistence, intensity, preference, and description of feelings of odors were recorded (Fig.1.2.3). The base odor of Wukang Road street is a relatively moist post-rainy odor. Because it is a famous historical district, there are also many old trees with a long history on the street, which are wrapped with dark green moss and have a natural fresh odor. There are also Japanese coffee shops, Petts coffee shops, and Starbucks,

and Starbucks, and the aroma of coffee and bread is one of the more relaxing and characteristic smells of the street. There are also some small and delicate fashion stores, jewelry stores, and flower stores, which also have a fresh and elegant aroma. Of course, there are also pedestrians rushing through the streets, and the scent of pet shampoo from the large golden retriever is mixed in the background scent of the streets. There were a few places on the road where there was the artificial smell of detergent cleaning the street. At the end of the street, there is a small pocket park with the smell of pine trees, next to a Starbucks coffee shop, and the strong coffee scent mixed with the grass and trees of the park gives the scent of pet shampoo from the large golden retriever is mixed in the background scent of the streets. There were a few places on the road where there was the artificial smell of detergent cleaning the street. At the end of the street, there is a small pocket park with the smell of pine trees, next to a Starbucks coffee shop, and the strong coffee scent mixed with the grass and trees of the park gives a very relaxing feeling. There is also a bicycle repair store on the side of the street, which still smells a little like motor oil, giving a slightly uncomfortable feeling.

Then we use the street POI data to sort out the scent classification, classify the scent in categories, and filter out the favorite scents such as food, nature, etc. These odors constitute the main odor impression of the street, and are also the reflection of the vitality and characteristics of the street. In addition, we sorted the odor categories and filtered out the objectionable odors such as sewer odor

and garbage removal point odor. These odors are factors that affect the quality of the street space, because the bad experience feeling often reduces the possibility of pedestrians staying here and reduces the activity interaction in the space. The spatial overlay of these two types of odors is the overall odor distribution map of Wukang Road street (Fig. 4).

A comprehensive analysis of the odor characteristics of Wukang Road reveals an important reason for its popularity: Wukang Road has a lot of historical and cultural heritage, so the whole street is not commercially developed on

a large scale, the whole street is less noisy than a big city, temporarily free from the bad odor of the city, and the overall street odor gives people the impression of clean and happy.

4.2 Sentiment analysis validation

The data from VWAP was analyzed for semantic sentiment, and it was found that the areas with higher ratings for the whole street were mainly concentrated in stores such as Starbucks, Xiaozhi, and petts. There are few stores with lower ratings, and the overall network ratings are relatively good experiences and impressions for the rating value of Wukang Road. Overlaying the bubble map of odor network ratings are relatively good experiences and impressions for the rating value of Wukang Road. Overlaying the bubble map of odor distribution with the map emotion distribution (Figure. 5), we can see that place-s with higher positive emotion mainly emit fragrant and mild food scent, and the live intensity of these locations is also higher. Whereas places with more vehicles at intersections, etc., there are some negative evaluations with low emotions. The superimposition of the odor concentration map with the mood map can be analyzed to see that the comfortable and pleasant, the space where pedestrians are willing to stay and stop, is usually a quieter, fresher and more comfortable smelling lot.

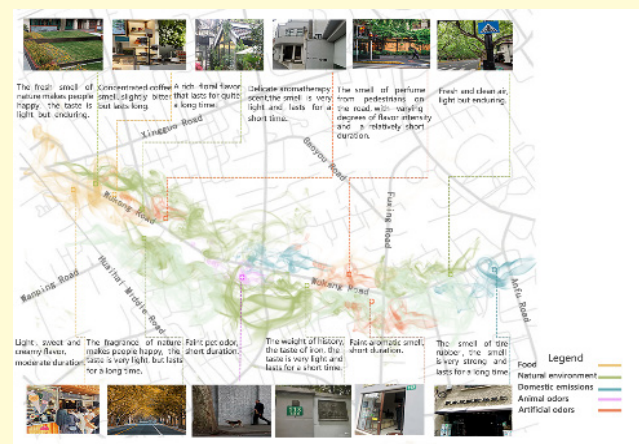


Figure 4 : Wukang Road odor distribution



Figure1 : Preferred odor distribution



Figure2: Disliked odor distribution

5 CONCLUSION

The study of Shanghai typical street odor mapping is an exploratory study that synthesizes domestic and international research cases and combines the characteristics of Shanghai characteristic streets themselves. Using the data of public reviews, POI data, etc. To identify the odors of typical streets in Shanghai, a comprehensive judgment of emotional value is made, and the bubble map of odor feature distribution is drawn to analyze the spatial distribution of preferred odors and repulsive odors. And combined with the on-site empirical research, the typical street with characteristics of Wukang Road was selected for on-site research, detailed odor record analysis was conducted, and the odor map was drawn to make a comprehensive judgment with the emotional value distribution of the location, verifying the odor characteristics and preference characteristics of the location, and outlining the odor map of Wukang Road with its own characteristics. It also provides a new conservation idea for Wukang Road to further enhance the vitality of the street and continue the street culture.

By sensing and understanding the odor classification of the city, constructing an odor map of the characteristic streets, proposing solutions for negative odors, and constructing guidance solutions for positive odors, it has new and far-reaching significance for the creation of

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By sensing and understanding the odor classification of the city, constructing an odor map of the characteristic streets, proposing solutions for negative odors, and constructing guidance solutions for positive odors, it has new and far-reaching significance for the creation of characteristic street environment design.

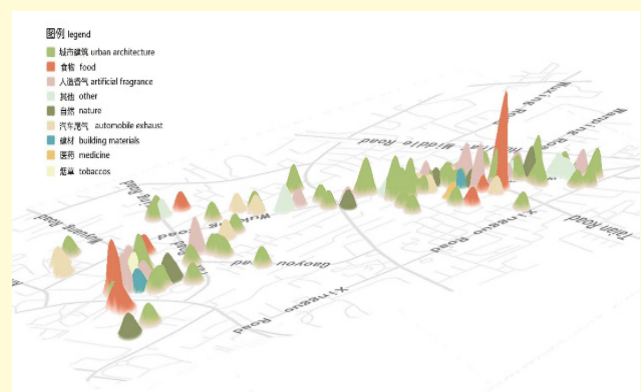


Figure 3: Distribution of odor concentration in Wukang Road

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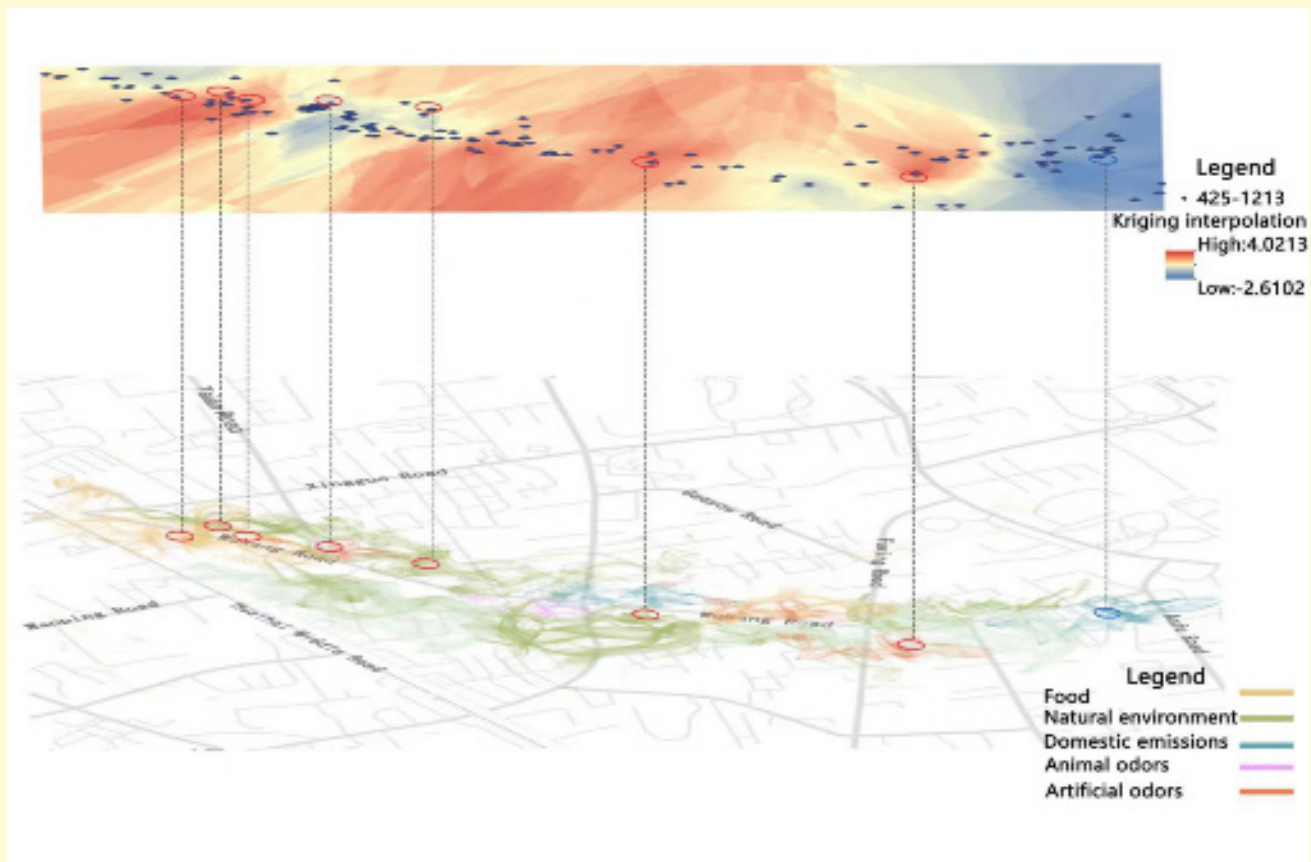


Figure 5: Superposition analysis of smell distribution map and emotion distribution map

Are All Mental Illnesses Physical?

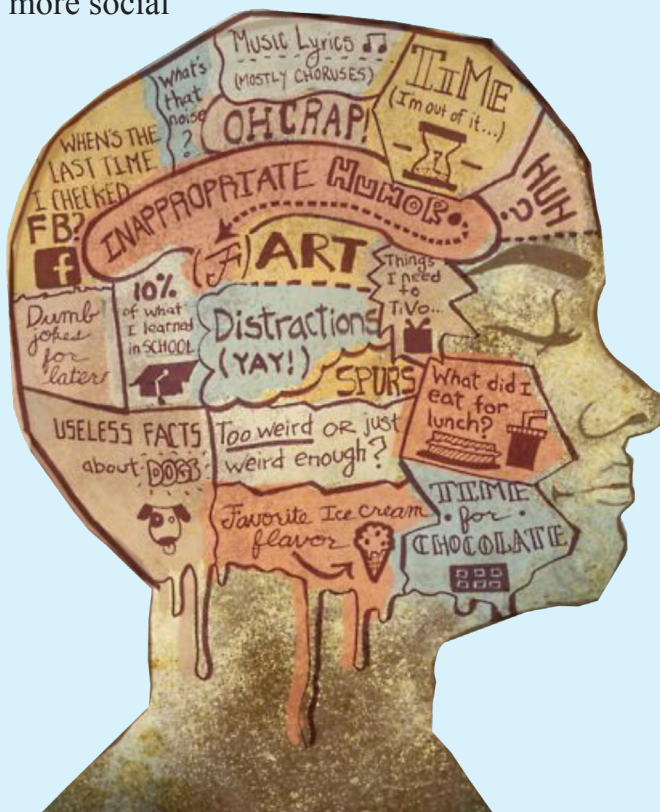
A Psychological Approach to the Increased Prevalence of Mental Illness

Patrick Yang G11 Gamma

All mental illness has its biological roots. After all, all emotion, thinking and behavior originate in the mind and brain is the organ of the mind. Scientists, with the help of technological breakthroughs, are pushing forward with groundbreaking discoveries that link specific mental disorders directly with certain genes and brain regions. For instance, schizophrenia is found to be caused by a certain configuration of multiple genes including neuregulin, D-amino acid oxidase, dysbindin, etc (Salleh, 2004). And autism is newly found caused by the dysfunction of particular brain region called Cingulate Gyrus (Rowland, 2020). It is not surprising that due to these exciting scientific advances, the belief of all mental disorders being brain disorders has emerged and become increasingly accepted. There is another trend in the past decade that draws more social

attention, which is the stark rise of mental illness, especially among adolescents and young adults. According to CAS, the rate of major and minor depression among adolescents are 7.4% and 17.2% respectively (2021). The situation is even worse in US, with a major depression rate of 13.2% among adolescents and young adults (APA, 2019). I genuinely believe the way we perceive mental illness is profoundly important because it directly affects how patients are treated, and has a far-reaching effect on whether the alarming trend of rising mental disorders among societies can be reversed. In this essay, I will argue that not all mental illnesses are ultimately physical, and demonstrate how fully understanding the non-physical factors laying at the roots of mental illness is critical to the well-being of the society.

In nowadays world, with all basic needs being satisfied, people no longer have to worry that much about food, shelter, water, etc. They begin turning their focus to mental problems. However, the findings are astonishing and shocked. According to a study conducted by Zhang, more than 160 million people in China are suffering from mental disorders, which is a number that has been increasing rapidly for the past 30 years. The same situation applies to United States as well, with a gradual increase of rate of mental illness for the past years (Mental Health America). These numbers both lead to one fact, our human being, as a species, is having an increasing rate of mental illness among individuals unprecedentedly. Our human being, as a species, is having an



increasing rate of mental illness among individuals unprecedentedly. With the attention being paid on this issue and the will of solving this issue, people begin to question the reasons behind it.

From a biological perspective, the only two possible causes of the increasing rate of mental illness are gene mutation and environment pollution. However, gene mutation is probably not the case, since it must require a great amount of time to happen, which means it cannot explain the rapid increase of the rate of mental illness in the past few decades. Therefore, the only biological cause is environment pollution. Right now, due to the fast pace of industrialization, the Earth's environment has been tremendously affected, including the air that we are breathing in every minute. According to Chen and Newbury, the contaminated air that we are breathing, is actually damaging our brain, which later on leads to a higher risk of getting mental illness (2021). However, there is a really low chance that this issue is caused by a biological factor only, which means that there are definitely other hidden non-biological factors that are also contributing to the increasing rate of mental illness. According to WHO, the possibility of getting mental illness can be actually break down into two different dimensions, which are stressors and individual vulnerability. Imagine it as a x-y plane, in which when stressor and vulnerability are both high, there will be a higher chance for one to get mental illness. Vice versa, if a person is low both in stressor and vulnerability, it is less likely for him to get mental illness. In contemporary society, due to the fast development of human

civilization and the uncertainty that we are facing, there are more and more new factors that increase both stressors and individual vulnerability, which causes the increasing rate of mental illness.

Stress, as a thing that everyone needs to face in their life, is a double-edged sword. While an adequate amount of stress can lead to higher productivity and better performance, excess amount of stress can lead to serious mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. When people get too much stress, their body will excrete an excessive amount of stress hormones, such as cortisol and CRH, which may cause the “happy hormone” serotonin to stop functioning properly (Qin et al, 2016). Therefore, excessive stress can really lead to depression.

Connecting this to reality, in nowadays world, the new stressors are mainly originated from two aspects, the Covid-19 epidemic and the “involution” around the world, especially in China. The epidemic, can be seen as an uncertainty that we are facing, while involution is a certain step that we human being have to face during our stages of development.

Covid-19, as a globally widespread virus, has affected our daily life tremendously, from both physical and mental perspectives. Physically, the symptoms that occur after infection can be vital and awful. It even may lead to sequela after recover from it. However, comparing with the mental harm that it has done to us, the physically pain is insignificant. Basically, the harm that it brings to us is stress, which mainly comes from two specific aspects: social restrictions and economy setback.



Due to the high infectiousness of Covid-19, most of the countries have strictly applied social-distancing rules to lower the possibility of the widespread of Covid. In fact, it is useful, since it not only lowering down the number of infections, but also preventing the mass infection, so that the healthcare system will not be overwhelmed (Heck et al, 2021). However, we should not ignore the by-products of social distancing. Before the epidemic, going out and socializing was a normal thing that people often do, since it is a basic need for human being.

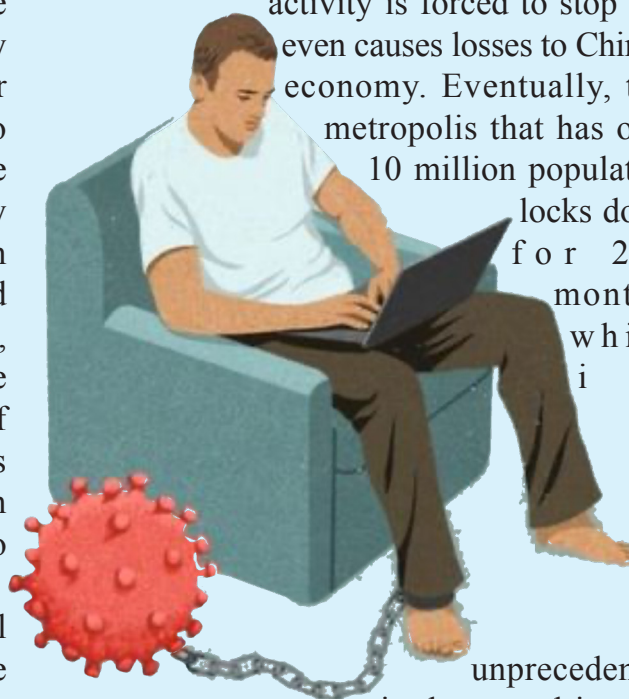
However, during the epidemic, all of these are taken away. People are forced to stay at home for a long time, without ever going out and meet those who are familiar with, which really causes serious mental problems. This is because people will generate an isolated and stressful feeling that are proven positively related with the chance of getting depression and anxiety. Also, with social distancing, people are realizing the seriousness of this virus, which will cause stress, because people are afraid that him/herself or his/her family members will get infected. Basically, under the epidemic, people get stress due to the uncertainty and worries that they are facing. According to a study conducted by Wang, during the outbreak of Covid-19 in China, 28.8% of the participants reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms, while 16.5% reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms, and a higher level of stress (Wang, 2020). A similar study was also conducted in the United States, which reveals that social distancing does lead to

a higher level of stress and psychological symptoms (Marroquin, 2020). On the other hand, the economy setbacks, as an inevitable consequence of Covid-19, has also gives people excessive stress. With the shutting down of business and trading, every

These economy downturns, will then eventually affect people. According to U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics, the rate of unemployment in leisure and hospitality industry during April 2020 was 39.3%. Apart from this, the food industry, which is an industry that occupies most workers in US, also experienced a crisis during Covid, with a down of 65 billion dollars sales comparing to 2019 and a 1 million down on the employee number comparing to pre-epidemic period (National Restaurant Association). It is hard to imagine how difficult life can be for a person who has just lost his/her job, facing financial stresses. According to Laker, during the epidemic, 94% of the workers in US are stressed, while 78% of them even believe that their mental health have been negatively affected due to Covid. Basically, people are facing bigger challenges in surviving, since earning money is really hard during Covid.

2020 in Wuhan, China, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the government of Wuhan shuts down all firms and demand all schools switch online. Most of the economic

activity is forced to stop and even causes losses to China's economy. Eventually, this metropolis that has over 10 million population locks down for 2.5 months, which is



unprecedented in human history.

After the lockdown, research finds out that the rate of suicide has increased for 66% during the

lockdown, which is very likely caused by the excess stress imposed on people by the social distancing and economy downturn (Liu et al, 2021).

Apart from Covid, the involution around the world, especially in China, is also making people stressful and face mental diseases. Involution, is a new concept, which basically means the act or an instance of enfolding or entangling (Merriam-Webster dictionary). Connecting with our daily life, involution basically means an over-competition that doesn't generate anything new from the excess amount of resource being put in. In nowadays China, due to the lack of good education resources and an Exam-Oriented education system, students begin to compete against each other viciously and meaninglessly in order to obtain better scores and successfully accept by the "985 and 211" universities, which are the best universities in China (Li, 2021). In recent years, due to the gradual increase in the number of students who registered for the Gaokao (Chinese University Entrance Examination), the "985 and 211" Universities are no longer capable of accepting and holding that much students. Therefore, the Department of Education increases the difficulty of the Gaokao, so that a proper number of students will get into the top universities.

According the number of enrollment released by each 985 university and summed up by Wupin, in 2021, the total number of



students who registered for the Gaokao is 10780000, but only 208,760 of them are lucky enough to be accepted by 985 universities, which indicates that the acceptance rate of 985 universities is as low as 1.94 percent (2021). Under the circumstance of a gradually harder examination, students must study harder and try to outrun others in order to get into top universities, which is simply a form of "involution". With all students studying harder, the overall grade boundary is also increased, which means that there will still be a limited and fixed number of students being accepted by the top universities. This also leads to the fact that there isn't anything new being produced or created with all these vicious competitions, except a great number of tired and depressed students. According to a study conducted by Li, the rate of depression among Chinese university student is 28.4%, which almost one third (2020). This shows how cruel the Chinese Education System is. However, this is not only limited to China, but also to the world, since human being is stepping into a certain developmental stage when people have to compete badly for the finite resources. During the process of involution, people are stressed and anxious, simply because they fear that others will exceed them. Most importantly, involution is sometimes involuntary. If a person does not want to fall behind, the only option he has is to keep competing. Decades ago, since the human population was not as big as now, people did not need to compete that much against each other. Therefore, there was not that much stress at that time. Due to these changes, people's mental states are deteriorating.

To put it in a nutshell, the gradual increasing number of stressors, have causes a

higher rate of mental illness among the world.

However, apart from the increase in personal vulnerability, also contributed to the gradual increase of the mental illness prevalence. Mainly, the increase in individual vulnerability, is caused by the wide use of social media in nowadays world. As a technology that isn't existed 25 years ago, social media has impacted and changed our life deeply and profoundly. It does make it easy for people to communicate remotely and share their life with others, especially under the epidemic. However, that's only the positive side of it, the by-products and the disadvantages of social media also should be not ignored. In fact, social media is causing loneliness and self-inferiority among people, which is simply making people more vulnerable. Once people become more vulnerable, the risk of getting mental illness will increase correspondingly.

Loneliness, as a feeling that people often get when experiencing isolation or lack of social connection, is somehow becoming more and more prevalent in nowadays world. According to Hawkey and Cacioppo, the rate of loneliness is actually really common, about 80% of those who are under 18 years old reported feeling lonely sometimes, interestingly, the rate of loneliness

demonstrates a decreasing trend along with the increase of age until 65-70 (2010). This can actually be explained by the use of social media, since teenagers are

more reliant on social media as daily way of communication and connection with fellows. From my research, social media mainly causes loneliness by reducing the face-to-face connection between people, which is against the instinct of human being as a social animal. Social media, as a tool that is originally invented to shorten the distance

between people, is actually doing the reverse. It increases the distance between people by giving people the chance to communicate remotely easily, which will end up making face to face communication more unfavorable. Many people rely on social medias to connect with other people by frequently sending message and checking the pictures that others are posting. However, human being is a social animal, which means that we need regular "real communication" on a daily basis. Missing out these crucial communications will make people feel lonely and isolated, because they don't get the chance to practice social skills such as the ability of understanding body languages, which will result in the incapability of socializing in reality and depression (Yabarra et al, 2020).

Self-inferiority, similar to low self-esteem, refers to the feeling of inadequacy and insecurity, which is basically the feeling of "others are better than me" (American Psychology Association). This feeling, can be generated by the use of social media. When we use social media applications like Facebook or Instagram, the content that are shown to us are mainly about the positive and shining sides of others' life, which easily elicits a feeling of envy or jealousy from us that other people are living a better life than themselves, especially when seeing others obtaining a lot of likes and good comments under their posts (Liu, 328). However, this is essentially untrue, because people never show the negative sides of their life on the social medias. When people get this envy feeling, it is very likely they will get a sense of self-inferiority, since they have a false belief about the real situation of others' life. If a person believes that him/herself is inferior comparing with others, every time they see others' post, a sad or depressive feeling will likely occur, which may him/her really vulnerable. Then, it will lead to mental illness like anxiety or depression.

School Events

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

--- Benjamin Franklin

WLSA Tree Hole

Q: 感觉一个人的独处会放大自己的负面情绪，特别是晚上，该怎么办？

A: 树洞来啦。对于你目前这个情况树洞表示非常理解。晚上正是我们能量最低的时候（能量都在白天用掉啦），再加上周围黑夜环境的渲染（和白天的阳光与明亮不同，黑色本身带来的大多是一种孤独，悲伤的感受），我们的负面情绪自然而然在这个时间段就会浮现出来。这仿佛像是白天所有的积极能量都变成了负面的能量一样，我们整个人也变成了负面情绪的载体，最后陷入我们所说的“emo”的状态。针对于独处+放大的负面情绪的问题，我们不妨可以从两个方向进行思考，将这个问题进行一下拆解。树洞尝试用一下自己的主观理解，看看能不能给予这个问题一个“最优解”。

首先第一个可以解决的部分是关于独处状态吧。感觉小伙伴似乎没有很习惯与自己独处的模式呢？当然，独处对于大部分人来说都不是简单的事情。这意味着我们需要脱离周围的社会影响（这其中包括朋友，老师，家长带来的陪伴/支持），从而真正面对“自我”。通常在自己一个人的状态下，我们对于自己的状态把握会更加的不确定，负面情绪也会随之涌现出来。这是因为我们某种程度上缺少了一种社会系统的参考。比如说和朋友在一起的时候，两人之间的那种互动感，又或者说和老师在一起的时候，一种强烈的目标与合作感。反过来，轮到自己与自己相处的时候，就很容易“无措”吧。很多的时候，需要从别人身上得到的感觉我们是没办法自己给自己的（比如安全感等等等等），又或者说自己遇到了情绪问题需要别人来解决自己不能消化。那其实在这种情况下我们需要的或许是尝试去适应独处状态下的自我吧。毕竟世界上所有能真正解决问题的人只有自己。所有你缺少的感受其实本质上来说只能自己给自己，我们产生的感受也是自己产生的（我们在什么状态也是我们自己选择的）。带着这样的意识之后，可以多做一些自我关怀的练习，包括沉浸式（尝试切断社交频道）地自己做自己喜欢的事情（看书，看自己喜欢的作品，睡觉也可以），这样可以对社会影响进行“脱敏”吧，从而养成自己独处时候的稳定状态，也自然而然学会独处。

第二个的话是针对于负面情绪的吧。树洞觉得不管是什么情绪，它对应的其实都有一个浮动与无常。说不定你前一秒是很开心的，下一秒就会变得很紧张，是时时刻刻在变化的。但不管是什么情绪，最重要的是一种包容与接受吧。每种情绪背后代表的意义都是不一样的。比如说悲伤或许代表你需求没有被满足，等等等等。当我们看到情绪背后，通常情绪所带来的困扰也会被解决一大半，所以自己的情绪在说什么吧。可以问自己这个问题去帮更好的自我觉察：如果我此刻的情绪会说话，它到底会和我说什么呢？关于放大这一点的话，自然而然，如果你选择放大，那说明这部分的情绪需要被重视吧。除了一种情况以外：你在PUA自己。怎么理解呢？如果说你放大情绪就是为了让自己的感到悲伤，或者想要博得别人的关注，那其实也大可不必。一旦习惯，这种放大的模式在未来会变得更加明显。因为你明明在允许你的情绪被放大呀，不是吗？

如果真的最后最后，真的什么都不愿意去想，那就早点洗个澡，睡前做个冥想练习，静下心来别看手机，赶紧躺床上睡觉吧！



WLSA Tree Hole

Q: 我们该以什么样的态度看待人生中的不确定性和无常？

A: 说实在的，这是一个可以讨论非常久的一个问题，甚至是可以联系到我们作为一个人在世界上该用哪种态度面对生活的一个问题。树洞不是学哲学专业的，也不了解你作为一个提问者本人独特的视角，所以我不敢保证这个答案是通用的，又或者对你来说是有帮助/有用的。不过我在这里可以分享给你我自己的一个视角

可能对于树洞本人来说，我自己面对人生中的不确定性和无常的态度是一种随和，坦然，与包容吧。在我看来，这些不确定性和无常，都是可以归到一类事实上的：我们对于某件/某些事情的结果好坏是没有办法通过主观意识去彻底掌控的。有些事情的决定权本身就不在我们自身，又或者我们只是做出决策的一个小部分吧。刚刚提到的事情或许有很多，这或许会包括我们的人际，家庭，学业，事业等等等等，又或者说，我们整个的世界除了“自我”之外需要与别人互动的时候，都是属于无常/不确定性的范畴。

当自己清楚了这个事实之后，之后我对于无常/不确定性的态度便会坦然很多吧。一方面对于有些事情来说，我们是完全没有办法掌控的（决定权完全不在你手上）。比如说“自然的灾害”/“被车创/被雷劈”等等（开个玩笑）。我们在这个情况下是没有其他选项的，只能接受“命运”的安排（给命运打双引号是因为有一部分确实不是命运，只是说我们确实是没有办法掌控吧。在树洞看来命运这个概念或许是人类都没有办法掌控的一种运行法则啦）。我们接受的消息自然，有我们所讨厌，不希望得到的，也必然是会有我们期待的，美好的一些事情。能理解说当我们得到一些不好的结果的时候，我们会感到非常失落。但在这样的情况下，我们也改变不了什么。如果说这件事情只是一件发生在当下的不顺利的消息，那或许在一天之后，就是另一个不一样的当下。我想说的是，或许这个无常/不确定性带来的结果已经发生了，我们在此时此刻面对其的态度是可以由我们自己决定的。这完全取决于自己，你自己想要用一个还不错，觉得ok的态度面对这个事实。还是选择抗拒，反抗，甚至是抑郁情绪去看一件改变不了的事情呢？这是可以好好想想的一件事。

那第二个情况就是说，一部分的无常/不确定，我们是有一部分的决定权的。那自然面对这种事情时，自己意识到了之后要想着去加大概率让这件事情尝试变得“确定”。举个简单的例子呗：学校的各种考试，复习与平日的踏实是你可以加大考试成功确定性的手段；人际关系中，你可以主动通过努力去了解别人（极端点的话可以去掌握着关系中的主动权等），以一个舒服的频率与对方确认心意，从而确认/增进你与对方的关系等等等等。你觉得努力够了，那自然是可以减少不确定性的。但我觉得这里有个雷点，就是你的努力是要实质性的，别到时候自己也给自己成功画了一个大饼，欺骗自己。这到最后很容易就发展成自己没有掌控好一部分，却在那里怨天由人。没有任何的反思，并且沉溺于失败与“无常”带来的哀伤中（这里无常打了双引号就是因为，这部分无常或许是你自己可以解决好的）。其实说实在的就算到最后自己努力了，却

没有结果的话，也不要着急。尝试去寻找新的机会，新的平衡，与新的可能即可。这样无常与不确定或许也会显得更加可以接受 / 微不足道吧。

Q: 这个世界上真的还有真诚的人吗？包括但不限于朋友，爱人，感觉人们都是利益交换，没有以真心换真心的。

A: 树洞来啦，小伙伴最近是经历了什么吗？让你有了这样的想法呢？

至少树洞感觉，你在这个当下是需要所谓“真诚”的感受去支撑你自己。同时，包括在你的人际关系中（就像是我和我说的朋友 / 爱人），似乎也非常看重这一点。我非常肯定真诚这点在人际关系中的作用。对于树洞自己来说，它也代表着一些东西：确定性，信任，平等，安全感，等等等等。

那对于你的问题，在树洞看来，答案是肯定的。世界上肯定是不缺乏真诚的人的。已想要用一个还不错，觉得 ok 的态度面对这个事实。还是选择抗拒，反抗，甚至是抑郁情绪去看一件改变不了的事情呢？这是可以好好想想的一件事。

但或许在这个动荡的社会下，有些人其实本质上并不想表现得真诚（那此时，我们或许得尊重他们的选择），或许有些人不需要真诚也可以活着。有些人或许很真诚，也需要真诚，但他们是需要一些伪装。因为真诚某种程度上意味着坦诚，展示，以及“暴露”。这种暴露既然是“真实”的，那它也必然包含着一些自己的脆弱，和生活在社会中带着面具背后真实的自我与想法（这其实很多时候是与大众表现出来的样子是相反 / 不一样的）。做到这点需要勇气和决心。对于树洞自己来说，对一个人真诚，也是需要长期的考量。对对方有足够的信任和拥有最基本的关系的时候，才会慢慢表现出真诚的样子。

所以树洞想与你分享的 / 建议你的，也就是慢慢去身边观察，在现在已有的 / 新建立起来的关系（或许是充满现实利益的），并且去尝试搭建在现实利益之外的一些关系（关系中的互相支持等等超越现实利益的情感品质）。如果你觉得在与某人的现实接触中你发现了一些真诚关系的影子，那可以尝试去进一步发展，尝试打破现实这层的关系。或许我们在关系中会不断搞砸，但只要愿意尝试，我们总有机会建立起新的平衡。

在关系中会不断搞砸，但只要愿意尝试，我们总有机会建立起新的平衡。

当然，这么做并不容易。因为这先需要你自己鼓起勇气向你周围的人际关系中展露出你的真诚。树洞永远相信，人与人之间是有一种氛围感的。对方是不是在撒谎，隐瞒，是都可以被感受到的（有时候这种感觉会被我们 perceive as “怪怪的”）。如果你不真诚 + 对方是个敏感的人的话，感受到你对 ta 的不真诚的态度时，那或许 ta 就不会对你真诚。

最后，找到真诚，或许也需要一些运气。身边是否有人选 / 对方是否选择对你真诚，其实又是一个问题啦。也可以尝试扩大社交圈，认识更多的人。归根结底，不要过于强求（毕竟这是一个双向选择）自己那部分做好就行喽。

On May 23, 2023, WLSA marked a momentous occasion as it hosted its highly anticipated first-ever offline heritage day. This extraordinary day witnessed a jubilant convergence of nations and civilizations from around the world, as students and teachers alike gathered together at WLSA to immerse themselves in a global cultural extravaganza. The atmosphere was electric as classmates and mentors rejoiced in each other's company, embarking on their own captivating workshops to unveil the fascinating tapestry of their cherished cultures.

WLSA Heritage Day

The interactive workshops offered glimpses into the cultural treasures from around the globe. From the vibrant movies of Hong Kong, SAR, to the traditions of Japan, the eclectic diversity of the US and Canada, the rich heritage of Israel, Ghana, and Ireland, and beyond, every workshop organizer went above and beyond to offer an immersive experience.

The enchantment of this event, encapsulated in Robert Allan's profound quote, "Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all humanity," was a testament to the power of unity and appreciation of diverse cultures, forging lasting memories and inspiring lifelong connections among the students and teachers of WLSA.



Chinese Culture Day

Interviewer: Hi Mr. Max, can we interview you?

Max: What would you like to know?

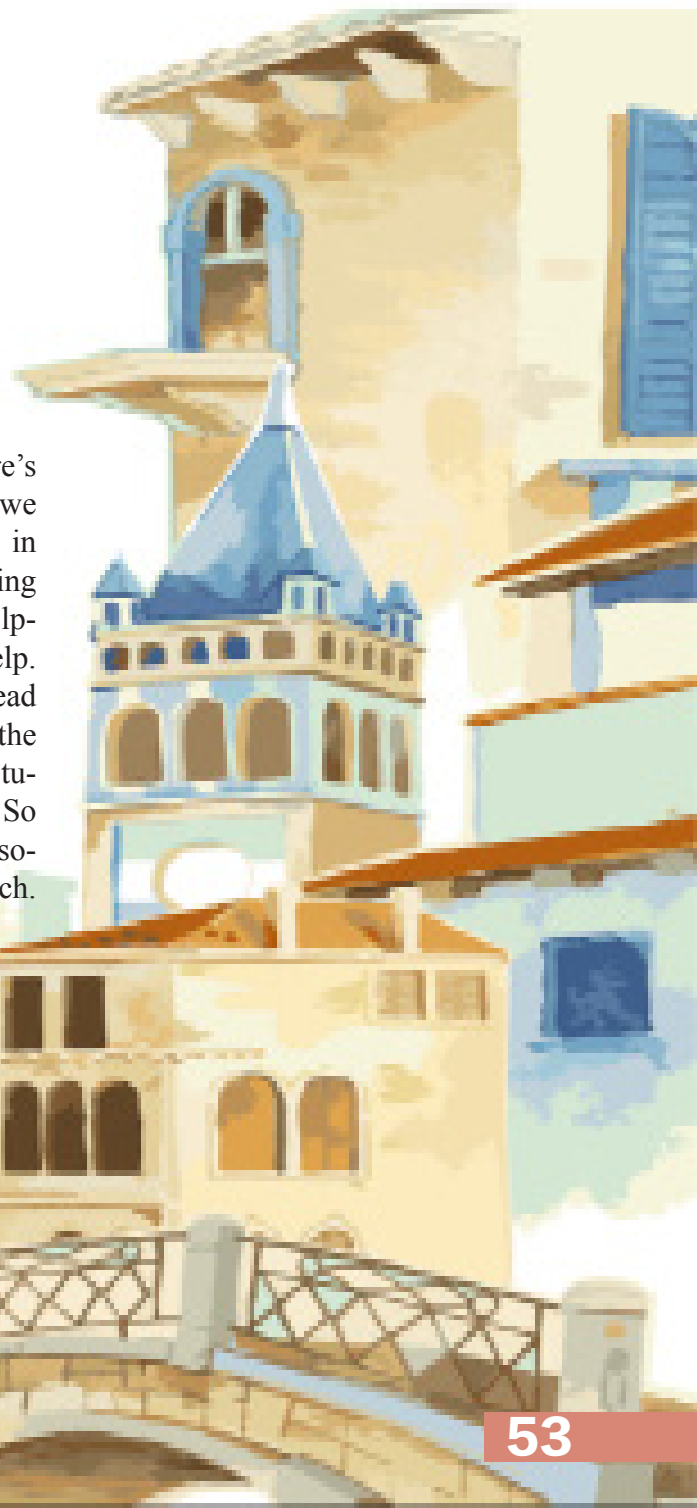
Interviewer: How do you feel during this festival?

Max: I feel really really great. I teach Colloquy, Being able to not only watch you guys doing your presentations, but also see your reactions As you see the culture right in front of you, I think it's really really great. I did an exhibition, on the Dong minority culture. It's been such a great experience watching all the students' reactions, and see the looks on their faces when I see the clothes, when they hear the sounds, and when they look at the photos. and I feel like we've put a lot of hard work into it, but it's totally worth it.



Interviewer: How do you feel during this festival?

Student: I think this activity is so great because there's so many foods in the bazaar and we can buy whatever we want. There's also a doll donation right there for kids in Yunnan So I think this activity went beyond, only playing and having fun, but was raised to a higher level, like helping others and helping people in the society that needs help. Another meaningful thing about this activity is the spread the Chinese culture, For example, like the Chinese knot, the traditional Chinese painting, and Chinese tea culture. Students can learn about all those things during this festival. So during the festival, I can feel that I'm contributing to the society and learning new things. That's why I enjoy it so much.





WLSA SHANGHAI ACADEMY

*(G11-12) 2 Zhengxi Road, Yangpu District,
Shanghai, 200243
(G10 & A Level) 299 Tongji Road, Baoshan District,
Shanghai, 200940*

