

窗外 无界

——一个华裔美国少年的学与思

(英汉对照插图本)



[美] 宣亦然◎著

姜寿涵 王梦然◎译

Beyond the Window

*Learning and Thoughts of
a Chinese American Teenager*



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foreign student who questioned everything. Eventually, I realized that you cared for all 39 of us.

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And my past self, thanks for not calling it quits, and seriously considering doing so only once. Thanks for not giving into temptation and transcribing my older journal entries, which would be pretty heavy betrayal. In the window, next to my desk, you have been with me for every essay.

Yiran Xuan

June 25, 2014

致 谢

因人成事，正是应了这本书的完成。

从一些模糊的想法到手上一本印刷精美的集子，每一步都倾注了大家的帮助。

我要感谢我的第一个支持者朱振武教授，感谢他一开始对我的写作的指导和鼓励，正是他给我能写书的最初的信心，支撑着我整本书的写作过程。

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我的妹妹，在我写这些文章时没能让你度假，谢谢你也忍受了。我希望爸爸妈妈不要让我们的小弟弟也逐字读这书了吧。也许将来你也会写一本自己的书。

还有我的父母，我要感谢……怎么说都不夸大。我承认，我常常为难你们。现在书终于完成了，我想说，我写的散文和书，就是献给你们的。

最后谢谢过去的自己，没有半途而废，认真考虑这样做一次。谢谢自己没有拿原来的日记来凑数，否则这将是相当沉重的背叛啊。在临窗的书桌上，我写下这书中的每一篇文章。

宣亦然

2014年6月25日

What Is a Window at Night?

This book was most effectively written at two places: at my desks in my old and current houses, both in my bedroom, beside a window with the shutters drawn up. It was usually at night that I wrote these essays, no, always at night when I wrote these essays, so it would seem odd that I would leave the blinds drawn up on windows that don't let any light or scenery in. This window, at both my houses, is always to my left.

As soon as there is any hesitation in my writing, I instinctively look to my left to see a stark reflection illuminated by the yellow desk lamp against the darkness of the outside and the room.

The window becomes a mirror at night.

I usually open the window as well if it wasn't too cold, so I can hear the ambient sound of night air and distant cars speeding over the roads. There was nothing really out there, but it used to produce a sort of excitement that is comparable to what is felt from a dark skyscraper window above New York City. It no longer has that effect on me, but I still like hearing the night.

My parents always complained about leaving the window open. "Do you want the whole neighborhood to see you?" my mom would ask as she dropped the blinds down, "You're the only lit window on the entire street".

I looked into the mirror a lot these past 3 years.

This whole collection still feels like a collection of hesitations.

True, there were moments where the ideas flooded my mind, where I felt compelled to a series of ideas because they seemed so profound that I must write or express them somehow, regardless if they really deserved to be read or not. I didn't really care about the reader; I assumed what I found interesting to write would be interesting to read.

I was writing through the window not to see anything or show anyone

anything, but really, just to see myself.

Unfortunately, in between fits of passionate inspiration only last so long; in between, the prime motivation is duty. For my past, for my future, and for my present, I had to write this book.

I tried to make my duty as fun as possible, for myself and readers. These essays should make good toilet reads. Some opinions may seem rather...uh... questionable, but the reader can take that as an honest representation of a teenage mind. There were plenty of times where I weighed honesty against better writing; honesty usually won, for better or for worse. Hopefully, this book can make it into the backpack of at least one kid, on either side of Pacific. My duty as the high school author of published book is largely done; the job is finished and bound in this nice cover (I don't know what it looks like at the time of writing this). It is a package of insights, rants, stories, snapshots, musings, biases, a product of countless sleepless nights and guilty-ridden days, and a still picture of one life.

Dreams of a perfect, pristine book with my best opinions and anecdotes that I had in the fits of passion were never realized, or even close to being realized, but after finishing this book, I learned to accept imperfection. A mirror hides and obscures very little. And what you cannot see from the mirror you can still infer.

So, for my sake, enjoy these essays, though if you refuse. There is little I can do to. If you like them, please do not elevate this book to lofty heights with undeserved praise; doing so would either instill me with false confidence in my writing or guilt me over the shortcomings in the book. If you dislike these essays, please recycle the book; it is unnecessary to destroy our dear planet in your hatred for my writing. Please don't stalk me on the Internet.

From the desk beside the darkened window,

Yiran Xuan
May 25, 2014

窗，在晚上，是什么？

事实上，这本书是在两个相似的地方完成的：我在旧居和新房的写字台，在我房间，在没有遮拦的窗户边。写作一般都是晚上才开始的，所以拉上窗帘可能显得很怪；夜晚的窗户外既没有风景也没有阳光。这样的窗户，在我的旧居和新房，都忠实地在我的左边。

当我写作思维僵住的时候，我习惯往左看，我的苍黄的影子浮在墨黑的房间中。

窗户，在夜里，是镜子。

如果外面不冷，我一般也会把窗打开，为了听到夜空的声响和远处汽车飞驰的声音。外面其实没有什么，但这曾经让我感觉一种兴奋，一种站在纽约摩天高楼里的一个灯光昏暗的房间看下面城市的兴奋。现在我没有这种感觉了，但我还是喜欢听夜晚。“你是要所有的邻居看到你吗？”我妈妈说，“整条街上只由你的窗是亮的。”

这三年来我往镜子里看得很多。

这个文集仍然感觉像一系列的疑惑。

当然有时候，新主意，感想和思考像洪水冲注我的脑海，我有冲动要吐泻在计算机的键盘上，这些文字必须写出来，无论它们到底值得不值得读。

我在窗边写不是为了看到什么或给别人看什么，其实只是为了更清楚地看自己。

可惜，疯狂的灵感常常稍瞬即逝；其间多是责任逼我继续。为了我的昨天，我的明天和我的今天，我必须完成这本书。

写作时，我想把我的责任写得有趣一点，为了读者也为了自己。这些散文可能适合在马桶上读。有些观点有可能会显得比较……有争议的，但

读者们能理解这些是少年想法的诚实表达。有好几次诚实与好的写作发生僵持，诚实一般是胜的。我的任务现在完成了，装订在这漂亮的封面里。这是一堆洞察，乱言，故事，快照和偏见，是无数个无眠的深夜与充满内疚的白天的成果，是我生活的几页写照。

一本干净、完善的书，包含着我最佳的看法和逸事，每篇短文都是纯美的杰作……这曾是我的梦想，但早就不可能实现了。写这本书，我从中学到怎么接受缺陷……还有，遗憾留了也很多。

一片镜子遮不住或模糊不了很多东西；看不见的也能推断。

欣赏这些文章吧。你坚决不愿意，我也没办法。如果你喜欢，请不要把这本书称赞到天上去，为了避免使我过于自信。如果你真的不喜欢，请回收这本书；为了表达你对书的鄙视，不必伤害自然界。

宣亦然
写于窗边的写字台
2014年5月25日

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Chapter 1 As a High Schooler

第 1 章 高中生的我们



Course Selection

The transition from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school is like water flowing from the drops of melting ice into the streams and rivers and eventually into the oceans.

In elementary school, us kids were isolated into a class, classroom, and basically one teacher (with the exception of specials). We played only with the same grade, because everyone in a higher grade was huge and more mature than we can imagine, and everyone in a lower grade were small and childish. We barely got to interact with the kids in other classes except during recess and lunch; even then, we stuck with classmates.

In middle school, identification with class dissipated as we all had different schedules and we had to move to a different classroom with a different teacher and different students after every period. There were still the teams, but friends met each other often in the halls and during lunch, where tables were established more on cliques than familiarity. There were cross-team classes like P.E., music classes, technology, and art. However, we were still divided by grade. Our middle school had 3 separate wings for the three grades, as well as separate lunches. You would never have class with people out of your grade, unless you tested out of 2 math levels.

Then in high school, it felt like all the water was dumped together, no matter how salty, how fresh, clean, acidic, or whatever. One big pool, that's what Jerome is. Like Karrer, it has 3 wings of core classrooms, A, B, C, with the performing arts and athletic departments on the other side. Unlike Karrer, Jerome has two floors, and has a ceiling to reflect that. To make the inside of something look big, one should always raise the roof before pushing the walls. A higher ceiling, with more open "air" despite being indoors, will feel much less repressive than a wide room with a ceiling you'd be afraid to

jump under. And so Jerome was enormous freshman year, and it still is.

A day's general schedule was the same for all 4 grades. Every day was divided into 8 periods (cut down to 7 periods in 10th grade due to bad economy in our school district), each period lasting about 42 minutes (extended to 48 minutes to compensate), with about 3 minute breaks in between, almost enough time to get to the next class, go to your locker, or relieve yourself (there's only enough time for two of the three). In the morning, before lunch, there were 4 complete periods. Attendance was taken in the first period. Fifth period is divided into three 25-minute segments A, B, and C. Each student has lunch in one of the 3 segments, and has his/her fifth period class in the other 2 segments. Kids in A lunch would go directly from 4th period to the cafeteria, kids in B lunch would have their class split down the middle, and kids in C lunch have to starve for 25 minutes more than the B lunch. 3 more periods follow, then we are home free (or not, if we have clubs or sports).

002
003

For freshman year, first semester, my classes were: Argumentation and Debate, (Concert) Orchestra, Honors Algebra II, Freshman Advisory, Honors English I (B lunch), Modern World History, Biology, and French I. My second semester classes were: Freshman Advisory, (Concert) Orchestra, Honors Algebra II, Physical Education I, Honors English I (B lunch), Modern World History, Biology, and French I.

The two semesters are essentially the same, with the exception of the two single-semester classes and freshman advisories.

Freshman advisory was a required class for 9th grade, supposedly to help freshman get used to high school life. It was basically a study center, but with two upperclassmen in the room. These upperclassmen were specially selected C(eltic) A(dvisory) P(rogram) Mentors, and were supposed to help us do our homework as well and play games every now and then.

My freshman dreams began in the end of 8th grade. I wanted to be some sort of leader when I grew up and in my high school; Public Speaking and Argumentation&Debate looked attractive. I considered myself a writer,