

My 6 Months in Chemnitz

On September 23th, I arrived at Chemnitz for the first time. It is—as it always be, a quiet and lonely city. I remember that the city was warm and still during September, and breeze kept blowing softly around me. That's the most impressive part about this city in fall.

I was always longing for staying by myself and I got a great chance to live alone in Vetersstrasse. Opening the window, looking down towards the grassland, and those silent trees standing a little far behind. Especially when it snows outside. All stuffs are colored in white, and when there were no one on the street, the view outside is like a magic world of fairy tale. In a snowy evening, I was listening to music, and suddenly I found that it started to snow, then I walked slowly to the door and slowly opened it. I slowly walked out of the room door and stood by the handrail. The sun was on my left side, shining gently but bright. Tens of thousands of tiny snowflakes flowed freely in the evening sun. They danced like young girls, with hopes and dreams, glittering. In the room, My music kept on.

I was born in southeastern China, the only time I saw snow is when I was 18 in Hangzhou, I was waiting for a coming examination there. When I was nervous in preparing for it. In the second day morning, when I woke up and withdrew the curtain, I saw the first snow in my life: the window was so thick that I cannot hear any voice outside. I stood alone in front of the huge window, and the fluffy snowflakes fell down from the sky quietly, slowly. That feeling was really strange: I should have been happy and amazed by this huge gift, however, at the same time I was strained by the

unpredictable examination on the next day, with the learning materials on the desk of my right side.

It was a special exam. If a Chinese student who is longing for a specific college, he or she can apply for the pre-exam. If this student passes it, he or she would be able to obtain 10-30 scores in *Gaokao*. These scores are exclusively useful for the specific university he or she chose. I took the examination of Communication University of China, cause at that time I wanted to be a producer or journalist of TV programs. Of course I failed the exam, or else I would not set out my study in SYSU, and make an exchange here. I didn't feel sorrow or upset at all when I heard that I might not have the chance to go to my dream university, because I've seen the first snow in my life—in 18, a special age, and in a strange place, I traveled alone, all by my self, from application to fly ticket. I felt fulfilling, and the cold, wet weather, the grey sky with pure snows, the tall platans standing on each side of wide street, the rainy West Lake, and the leaves and grass which were especially bright after the cold rain—all of these became an unforgettable memory, and this memory then became a part of my body. I bring this part to keep my journey among the world.

Wandering alone is another entertainment. I roamed into the garden near my building the next day I moved in, also with music, I stepped on the carpet made by pine tree leaves and picked some pine cones on the ground. I seated on the bench and prayed for people who sleep forever in the garden. Maple trees, they danced and said hello to me. When I walked into a core area of the garden, I saw a small grassland, and I step on it and walked slowly. Suddenly I encounter with a tiny tomb, it was so

small that could have been ignored easily. However, I spot it in a peaceful winter morning. The sun light leaked from the tree above, round shapes of lights were shivering on the surface. A small lamp stood on the head of tomb, a small sleeping angel was sitting on the lamp—it was a baby's tomb. She died when she was six months. I stood there watching the sleeping angel and the glittering lights for a long time, prayed all good for her, and then left.

Garden is always a fantastic notion in human's minds, it symbolizes privacy, loneliness and silence. However, it's also filled with lives and colors, with moist solid and milky mist. It's like an untold secret, maybe struggling, in everyone's memory. That's why I have a special preference to this peaceful garden near my building. It is like a secret garden in my mind, I keep my regret, my sorrows there and nobody knows.

Then my steps grew more ambitious. I went to Prague and Vienna with my friends. These two cities impressed me a lot. Prague is romantic and passionate. It is a city of free art. If possible, I'd like to walk into the twisting alleys again, in dusk, orange sunshine and touching guitar. A city is about a desire of a person, what is in your mind, then what is you can see. I saw hesitation and sighs in Prague, instead of love and desire--Since I guess there might be countless broken hearts and stumbling drunk figures in those dark, narrow roads. In a small crowded restaurant, famous for its duck dishes, we hear the performance from a local band. The house was warm. People talked loudly with red faces. Smoke of hot food curled upwards. The songs they played are all from Russia. Even I could follow the tune with local people. I thought it strange at first, thus the songs should be local folks and would never be heard by a girl from

the east. Soon I figured out why: Czech Republic used to be ruled by Soviet after WWII, and during 1949-1968, China was Soviet's biggest communism company. The youth had to learn Russian, and cinemas presented films from Soviet, Yugoslavia etc. Of course, music as an important part of culture exchange, was heard by almost every Chinese.

The songs are taught by my grandfather, he was a kind and positive person. My grandfather, who passed away last October, could speak Russian. He loved Russian music and films. When I was younger, I would often visited him and listen to the stories happened in his teenage times. He told me that during the ten-year Culture Revolution, students had no need to go to school and the train system around the whole country is all free of charge for students, since the government aim at making the youth get more touch with the people who live in the bottom of society, but not just sit in classrooms listen to their teachers' hackneyed truism and stereotypes. Of course it was a extremism. The whole country was in a mass, and students could go anywhere they wanted. My grand father told me many stories and strange or funny thing he came across when he travelling around. It was like I also went through them with those young and ambitious teenagers.

These songs which my grandfather and I love were *Moscow Nights*, *Troika*, etc.

Here are the lyrics:

Moscow Night:

"Not even a whisper is to be heard in the garden/ everything has calmed down until dawn/ If you only knew how dear they are to me/ the evening near Moscow! / the river

is moving and sometimes not/ all made of the moon silver/ a song sounds and is not to be heard/ In those quiet nights.”

Thanks for my grandfather. Even in a foreign country far away from my hometown, I could still find connections between there and my birthplace. In the other way, maybe it was not because my grandfather, but culture and history, that made me feel familiar wherever I reach, since I believe all the types of culture and history are related, no matter they used to interact in some times, or they just appear to be alike coincidentally. Let's not say it a coincidence, let's call it a nature similarity as a human.

Vienna is different. She's a fair lady, well educated. It is filled out with pioneers' honors and royal dignity. The air there was always colored in light yellow, and felt like velvet. I also went to a small concert. It was an excellent experience.

After a long trip in Prague and Vienna, I decided to go back my peaceful daily life. I was occupied by my study. Linguistics is intriguing, especially applied linguistics. I used to have a talk with a German student, who learns programming here. He considered Linguistics as an empty and useless major. Of course I orally debated him; however, actually I also had the same suspect about this major at the beginning of my study: Linguistics seemed not to consist any practical functions. However, this doubt has been eliminated since I set up my Applied Linguistics learning. I was interesting about how people acquire their first and second language, and how this two acquisitions differ from each other. Why it seems to be so easy and nature when we learn our mother tongue, however so slow and we often become oblivious when learn the second. In my opinions, our SLA is heavily influenced by our mother tongue. We

set up a preformed regulation in modes of word and sentences, especially some expressions which are common to hear and use. It's unnecessary to consider why we speak them this way and what's the grammatical rules inside. Once we get use to this mode, it is hard for our brain to change and switch into another. That's why most of us don't obtain the capability to acquire SL so smoothly.

After that I went to königsee and Salzburg and Hallstatt in Austria. It was a world of ice and water, like paradise. Snow mountains behind, and green land in front. We three walked through a deserted country road. A peaceful stream runs through it. The stream was milky blue. We can see the bottom easily. I drank a handful water of it. It was, of course cold, but refreshing. We found a remote lake which is frozen upside. The surface of the lake was a mirror, reflecting the image of vast, light and thick clouds. The lake was surrounded by winter bushes. I found it like a diamond casted deep into the mountain. Cold but warm, silent but vivid—that's my feelings. It was a splendid world. Salzburg is a town made up by fairy tales. I went to Hallstatt—a small village near Salzburg. Every house is painted and decorated in different styles. Also, a crystal river ran with us. There were several swans swam on the water.

Spain and Italy were my dreams. I went there in Christmas Christmas holidays. The most impressive city is Venice. The smell of happiness drifting all over the air. Sunshine is not yellow, but golden. The smell of the city is a little salty—from the see, and mixed up with a little sweet— by the smiling faces of tourists here. Golden dreams, picked up in small bobbles, are flying above this island, and bobbles are all colored in rainbow. Cinque Terre has a totally different style of view. Vast sea and wide sky. My

hometown is a city surrounded by mountains, that makes the children there grow a longing for the sea. Each time I see the sea I can feel that desire from the bottom of my heart. January is the coldest month in Chemnitz, it was like minus 8 or 10. We went through a totally different weather in Cinque Terre. The temperature stayed between 10 to 15. Like fall. The climate was really cool. Especially when the sun shined, creations shivered so sincere. The sea became golden and waves twinkled. My friends and I seated on the beach, talked relaxing, or even stretch out, laid on the sand. Life at that moment was so real and so easy.

Another function of travel is to forget and to forgive. Forgetting complicated study, school life or some useless social. Forgiving someone who mistook you, or hurt you. More importantly, to forgive yourself, your hesitation, your lazy, your negative sides.

I even dreamed several times about Venice. I dreamed that I was with my friend, and we must go through a road which was shallowly sank by water, we walked on that road, water sank our feet. We made our way by struggling through the clear water and we finally get there. We saw people wore masks, dressed in medieval clothes. I saw milky mist filled out the whole city, milky and free. I looked up, and I saw a bright circle of sun, it made a huge rainbow spinning around.

“See! This is the true Venice! An island full of pinky daydreams, and also full of blue out of the cold sea, full of golden bobbles of tiny wishes, also grey sorrows like wings of the pigeons flying above.”

I always think that every city has a special personality, and a special story behind. When I reach one,, I'd like to feel them, talk to them and listen to them carefully. They

also bear your spirits in mind, they reflect your dreams and secrets.

During this six months, I spent most of my spare time in travelling. I didn't attend too many parties. I talk to the nature and cities, and deal with different kinds of people here and there. I changed a lot. I grow my respects to the nature and the culture. I can manage a travel by myself: tickets, hostels and spots. I'm confident that I am able to go back to my study with a good mood in SYSU, Zhuhai.

I'm planning my last trip to Iceland these days. This is the first time I travel alone. All the plans are made by myself. I believe it would be an unforgettable experience for me.

The study part is also impressive. My life here is about travel after study and study after travel. First of all is the two subjects about Linguistics. Linguistics is intriguing, especially applied Linguistics. I used to have a talk with a German student, who learns programming here. He considered Linguistics as an empty and useless major. Of course at that time I said I couldn't agree with him; however, actually I also had the same suspect about this major at the beginning of my study: Linguistics seemed not to consist any practical functions. However, this doubt has been eliminated since I set up my Applied Linguistics learning. I was interesting about how people acquire their first and second language, and how this two acquisitions differ from each other. Why it seems to be so easy and nature when we learn our mother tongues, however so slow and we often become oblivious when learn the second. In my opinions, our SLA is heavily influenced by our mother tongues. We set up a preformed regulation of modes of words and sentences, especially some expressions which are common to hear and use. It's unnecessary to consider why we speak them this way and what's

the grammatical rules inside. Once we get use to this mode, it is hard for our brain to change and switch into another. That's why most of us are not able to acquire SL smoothly.

Introduction to English Linguistics is a comprehensive subject. It heavily related to history, religious and geography. My favorite part is the introduction of Morphology. I never known there could be so many methods to fund a word. We have prefix, suffix, free morpheme, fix morpheme, etc. Several days before the examination, I went to Berlin to visit my friend. We both had an important exam a few days later, so we travel outside during the daytime and go back to her dorm to study together during the night. That's why she got a chance to be exposed to my study of both Introduction of English Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. We had a great argument about morphology at that time. I didn't quite understand the features of a word's morpheme(s) which conditioned mainly by phonology and lexicology. She guessed that it was some rules that makes phonologic element influence the pronunciations of words, so does lexical part influence. I thought it was the regulation of a word's pronunciation that decides the morpheme of a word, so does lexical part. Due to the regulation of the spelling of some words, the morphemes are decided.

Neither of us knew which one is right, maybe both. The significance of this argument, or my subject, or my study here is not about who is right and the other is wrong. It is about exchanges of our ideas and make progress in our learning dy by day.

When we argued about this topic, I felt like going back to the days when we were preparing for our Gaokao. Most of us thought that Gaokao was a torment, and some

foreigners I met who heard of it thought it was a horrible policy. I think that Gaokao is truly a torment, and most of us lost our teenage happiness and chances to go out and see the world. I still have words to say, Gaokao is an terrible but meaningful experience for every young students in China. Even until now, some of the topics and knowledge about history or geography are from my high school text books, my logic to manage things is like the training of Gaoko's way to solve a mathematic problem. The poetry that I still remember and the great people I respect, they used to appear in my text books. Gaokao made us to repeat every episode of them, although horrible, but significant.

The courses of Hitchcock's film are my favorite. I like to watch some movies in my spare time, but I never thought that a film could be analyzed in such sophisticated ways. Every shot, every scenery has its meaning. For example, a shot that shows a cloth-up of a stranger's smile may imply that this person would be a new-coming role and he or she would play an key part of putting forward the plots or revealing some information. Hitchcock, as one of the most successful thriller movie directors, won his reputation not only by running the market, but also the style and numbers of classic scenery he made. He created a new generation of making suspense and twist. For example, a murder is in his hurry to send another innocent man's lighter so that the police would consider the latter as the true murder. There are two lines: on one side, the murder has to run in a hurry so that he could arrive at the place in advance of the police. On the other side, the innocent also has to run there before the murder in order to get the lighter back. What's more, the innocent is a tennis player, he has to play an

important tennis game before he set up to the place. Hitchcock made a perfect suspense which made audience out of breath. The most impressive scenery I could remember is this one: on the way the murder rush to the place where the murdering had been conducted, holding the lighter, he falls it into a street gap! At then I was so nervous, since I was not sure whether he could get it out and head to the garden in time. At the tennis game, the innocent has to win the last round so that he can catch up with the murder. I was also in tense, I hope that he could get over it quickly and finally arrive there before the evil murder. All the things are not sure. This is how he manage to catch audience's eye. Another unforgettable example is that Hitchcock play a giant game to cheat the audience: through the whole movie we thought it was hero's mother who commit the murders. The end turned out to be, it's not his mother, but the hero himself that committed all the murders—by dressing up as his mother. This one is the most amazing part in my mind, when I was watching it, I never thought of that ending. It shocked me a lot.

Hitchcock also said something delighted me. One is when a journalist asked him: "Many people think that the rape scene in *Frenzy* is not appropriate, don't you think it is a little bit dirty and not good for our children?"

Hitchcock answered: "no, It's just in your dirty eyes."

This answer recalls me a Korea movie. The heroine is good at painting, however, at that time females are not allowed to learn painting, not mentioning in royal college; so she pretends to be a boy so that he could learn painting in the royal school. One day she comes across with a group of young ladies who are bathing in a mountain pool,

naked. The heroine thought this scenery really beautiful, so she paints a portrait of these young beautiful ladies. In the feudal age, this is of course strictly forbidden. Although she hide this painting as careful as possible, it was discovered by her teacher. This “ridiculous” news rapidly spreads all over the imperial city. She was sentenced into prison. An officer even point out that the painter is an erotomania, because on the setting of this drawing, there are two mountains, and a waterfall runs between them. He thinks it is an implication of woman’s vagina.

Of course the painter didn’t mean to make this metaphor while painting. The mountains are just mountains she saw far behind that small pool, and so does the waterfall. To claim herself to be innocent, the only thing she could do is to tell everyone that she’s actually a girl. A girl can’t be interested in girl’s bodies and even paint mountains and a waterfall to imply private part of them. She confesses and all the teachers and officers are shocked.

I can’t remember what’s going on after that, maybe although this girl finally keeps her reputation, but still sentenced to die for cheating and painting a portrait in a banned theme, or maybe the emperor hears the news and makes her innocent. The point is that I bear in mind an opinion this movie tries to tell us, which is the same as what Hitchcock’s saying: what is in your mind, what is you see. People with dirty minds would see Hitchcock’s rape scene erotic. The officer who only observes dark sides of things would see the mountains and waterfall a dirty erotic suggest.

Just as what the heroine says: “beautiful, it’s just beautiful, the only thing I thought was, the scenery is really beautiful, that’s why I had the urge to paint it.”

Then I'd like to recall my study of the literature history from Shakespeare to Renaissance. I was attracted by this topic the first time I attend this course. The first class was the introduction of the history of British literature. I was interested in history since my high school, especially European history. Our teacher explained how the politic issues and religious life bended the history of literature; why and how Shakespeare was able to become one of the world's most influential writers. Nowadays human even develop a Shakespeare style of speaking. Shakespeare used his pen as weapon to attack the royal constitution during that time. It was a strong contrast. During those days, the feudal age of Victoria, royal force was unprecedented strong. All the fields of arts were trying there best to make a complement to the noble society. No one would have the urge to express the dark side of upper class. Shakespeare was a traitor, he made thousands of ironic dialogues and characters to imply the present society.

He was brave. What I learn from this course is not all about history and politic. It is about courage, and the mind that could say no to the present government. I'll keep this courage in my mind, for in my country these days, there are too many people who lead dull lives and are afraid of speak out the true feelings, or they've already forgotten what they really felt. They also keep a similar attitude towards everything. This is what I feel disappointed, and I decide to behave a different way. Although it would be difficult in our society, I still determine to do so.

The language courses are always filled with a relaxing atmosphere, our teacher is a humorous young lady. She often makes jokes and talk something funny about

Germany. One week I was sick and lost my attendance to the courses for one week, she was so kind and asked me about my illness. I think the teaching style of language is different from SYSU. In SYSU, the teacher chose to tell us more about grammar and sentence modes, or some forms of expressions, which I think is quite useful for us. Here, teachers are accustomed to tell us more about prevailing expressions and idioms, which is also very practical. Both of the teaching styles are good, I really appreciate it.

I was so lucky to have the chance to travel around Europe in such a young age. When our last generation was young, they held a same dream as us: to see this big world on their own. However, due to some special reasons in our country, such as the political issues, disasters or policies which cut our country out of touch with any other areas, the average economic capability of each family could not afford the expensive cost of going abroad, or the conservative ideas that made their parents ban our fathers and mothers to go outside. Human, to some extent, are shaped by the special times he or she lives, which might be either comedy or tragedy. One of my friend's mother, who is good at English, was once be tasked to go to America when she was in her 20. Travel abroad and improve English had always been her dream, she told this news to her parents excitingly. However, her mother didn't allow her to do so, for the reason that "She is the eldest child in their family, once parents become old or have disease, she must take responsibility for the whole family, especially their youngest naughty brother. " This is a so typical traditional Chinese notion. The eldest kid of the family, especially female, has a nature responsibility to take care of others, and he or she has

need to sacrifice his or her own career and dreams to fulfill youngers’.

Today, although many traditional feudal age problems still linger on, we new generation has got more chances and bear less stereotyped marks than before. We are continuing our parents’ dreams. When I was travel, I often thought, maybe when my mother was in her twenty, she also dreamed about walking on a beautiful street far away from her hometown, and travel freely with her friends. Each time I thought about this, I feel like I was fulfilling her teenage dream, so I have to cherish every place I reach, keep every story I met, and take as many pictures as possible, so that I could tell my mother these unforgettable experience describe every amazing scenery to her, and show her the pictures I took.

Living in a foreign country, another strong feeling is that, I found people have so many misunderstandings about Chinese and China, and know too little about this country.

One of the most phenomenon that foreigners cannot understand is about how could Chinese so addicted to give birth to a boy instead of girl. This is also the point that I feel like to explain. First of all, this phenomenon is not as common as their imaginations, and has an attend to fade out of the main stream generation by generation. One of the reason is because another “ridiculous ” phenomenon—one child policy, which I have nothing to debate, but still amazed by foreigners’ inconceivable replications. The second point is, this phenomenon mostly, or nearly only held by old people, and more likely happen in under-developed area. The students who claim that this phenomenon is common to see in China, part of them have younger brothers and sisters, they felt that they obtained less love then the younger, as I said, eldest child is often asked to

attend the younger ones, so they may likely to feel like their birth is meaningless. These are their true feelings, I've talked to them. Actually their parents never told them or behaved like "we love boys only". The other student in the class who agree with that "most Chinese prefer giving birth to a boy than a girl" is from underdeveloped Provinces, and this student lived in the the countryside of this province, what's more, she had two younger brothers. This is not a bias. What I want to explain is that this is one of the oldest notions which are criticized by numerous of Chinese nowadays. It is completely not the main stream. Although it still exist, it exists either in undeveloped area or people from those areas, or in the eye of our grandmother and grandfather's generation. Most of us are loved by our parents, and some of us have elder brothers who love her like a parent, this is the main stream, I never felt bias from my parents, I'm proud of being their daughter, so do they.

Another prejudice is about one-child policy. I often say one sentence to my foreign friends: can you come up with a better idea?" First, I want to say that I'm not a blind follower who supports and trusts any policies and decisions made by our government, or even say good words to terrible ones. I also feel this policy really "ridiculous", however, our country has been suffering for over population for decades, not only my country, the whole world is also got into trouble by overpopulation, and I think my country should take one of the most important responsibility for it. One-child policy did have numerous of side-effect, such as children's growth and psychological development may not be independent and considerable enough, or since the lack of brothers and sisters, they may grow into an isolated person who loses his or her ability

to Social. However, on the other side, it controls the population efficiently, and a smaller population bring about quantities saving of energy, higher educational quality, more and more children in remote and over developed area are able to receive education etc. We have no choice.

It's good for me to have this chance to exchange opinions with different people from different cultural background. It was also a unforgettable chance to travel so many countries that I've dreamed about since I was younger. I'll keep this beautiful memory deeply in my heart, and I hope I could have an other chance to study in Europe again.

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