

我与童年隔片田<sup>[1]</sup>

## My Childhood Is Simply a Patch Away

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七月的一场新冠疫情，忽然把我封闭在生活的小区里，我在疫情每日的播报中更新着希望，在一天天的希望里<sup>[2]</sup>，竟然熬<sup>[3]</sup>走了一个夏季。

开始的那段时间，说“熬”更加名副其实，生活节奏被打乱，而越是盼望疫情早点结束，就越发焦躁不安。困在小区，却没困在房间，读书半天，总要下楼一趟，也满足身体之所需。

顺着主要的 roadway 走一走，在戴着口罩的人流里保持着免于感染的距离。因以锻炼为目的，所以步速较快，明知沿途没有可赏之景，也就少了份贪恋和止步的道理。读书，锻炼，封闭的小区，被改变的生活就这么适应了新的节奏，日子就这么打发得慢条斯理。

日子久了，已将主要的 roadway 走腻，遂转战于楼房之间，那些人迹罕至<sup>[4]</sup>的空白，也就渐渐地有了人气。转弯渐多，但步速不减。不过，楼房之间苗圃里的一草一木，时不时会荡起童年的想往，每每看到久违的植物，就忍不住驻足端详。

苗圃里较大的树种如松树、香樟，

July witnessed a Covid-19 outbreak and suddenly sealed me off in my living quarters. Hopes of mine get refreshed in each day's news broadcast, through which, a whole tortured summer has been inched away.

In the early days of Covid-19, "torture", an unusual word really, became the best word to describe how the virus affected the rhythm of my life. The more I hoped for the end of Covid-19, the more irritated I grew. I am confined in my living quarters but not the house. After reading books for half a day, going downstairs at least once is necessary, and this is also what health needs.

I take strolls along the main roads following masked-up armies of socially distanced people. I walk a faster pace, as exercising is my only aim. I already know there isn't so much to see, so there are no excuses for me to pause off on the way. With reading, exercising and cramped living quarters, my living style has begrudgingly found a new rhythm. From then on, my days are spent at a slack pace.

The hours start to stretch longer and longer, and I'm bored with walking along the main roads, so I turn to the spaces between buildings and see what I somehow never saw before. These twisting and turning lanes aren't slowing me down. However, every tree, and every blade of grass in these gardens, is arousing longings for my childhood. When I see my childhood plants, I cannot tear myself away from studying them for a while.

The bigger trees in the gardens are shady pines and camphors

[1] “我与童年隔片田”直译为“Between me and my Childhood Is A Piece of Grassland”是正确的，但简练度和灵活度不及“My Childhood Is Simply a Patch Away”，对于一个标题尤其如此。

[2] “在一天天的希望里”与之前的“希望”构成循环，增强了韵味，但翻译成英语，语义重叠，其意义已经包容在其前的“更新着希望”（hopes of mine get refreshed）里了。

[3] “熬”用 live through、go through、get over 等等皆可，但用 inch（英寸；艰难移动）更形象。为了表现出“熬”的深意，又特意增加 tortured（折磨）一词修饰 summer，也与下段专门讨论的“熬”构成一致，留下预设。

[4] “人迹罕至”不一定是别人也罕至，稍显夸张，翻译时还原为“我”的行为。

遮荫蔽日；行道树如国槐、铁树，婀娜多姿。偶尔也能看到棵枣树、柿树、枇杷之类，大概出自居民之手，毕竟能看又能食。此时，半红半绿的枣子已经挂满枝条，柿子青涩，而枇杷已将鹅黄缀<sup>[1]</sup>满春季。偶尔一小片辣椒、薄荷之类，郁郁葱葱，让生活多了一点一串的喜气。有些肯定是野生的，像桑树、榆树、楝树之流，极易成活，从墙缝和水泥地缝里钻出来，自然有余。人工雕饰的树丛，横成行，竖成线，一眼望穿，缺少神秘感；无人打理的苗圃，满目荒芜，反尔让自然复归了自然，让童年薅草时的发现乐趣再现眼前。

探着路，朝里面走一走，真的有不少“旧友”，似乎从故乡一路追着我来到了扬州。有一种小花，牵牛花的模样，田间庭院，不乏相见。白天散步，没人留意，因为花朵合拢，香气锁闭。可一到傍晚，花朵忽然间迎来盛世，成簇怒放。一棵之上，有的纯紫，有的淡黄，有的半紫半黄，香气十分浓郁，即故乡称作“烧汤花”的便是。河南农村把做晚饭叫“烧汤”，“烧汤花”显然是在准备晚饭时才盛开的花，与吴语的“晚饭花”同属一物，奇异的开放时间成就了它的典型特征，朴素由之，乡土气息由之。出于对旧友真容的好奇，我拿出手机，扫出个“紫茉莉”，好雅致的名字。即使花呈淡黄或杂色，也仍然称“紫”，雅致却不精致，倒不如按开放时间相称来得真实。

我喜欢花、草、树等一切植物。当然，也有个偏好。比如对于树，更喜欢能看又能食的树种，倘若在树林里见到一棵结了果子的树，那种惊喜绝不只于发现。能看

while pagoda and sago palms stand alongside the roadsides, charming. An occasional jujube tree, persimmon or loquat tree, must have been planted by the residents. These trees are both attractive and their fruits are edible. At the moment, the jujube tree branches are sagging with red and green dates. The persimmons are still green and unripe, while the loquats will wait for spring before they splash their bright orange. Here and there, are small plots of land thick with lush green hot pepper and peppermint plants. They're beaming with dots and strings of delights. It is certain that the mulberry trees, paper mulberry trees, Chinaberry trees and some others, show themselves with wild and vital power, squeezing out of wall and concrete ground cracks, natural and at ease. The trees planted purposely are horizontal and vertical in lines, transparent without any mysteries that I might discover. The gardens free from care, look perfectly wild. It's nature tending nature, and long ago feelings of my childhood are welling up as I explore the grasses.

Searching my way a little further into the gardens, I find quite a few “old friends”, seemingly following me all the way from my home to Yangzhou. A small flower, in the shape of morning glory flowers, decorates many yards and fields. In the sunshine, their petals are folded and their fragrance is hidden, so they're often ignored by daytime passers-by. But by evening, the flowers are at their prime time to bloom in clusters. On each plant, some flowers are pure purple, some are pure light yellow, and some are half purple and half yellow, and the air is heavy with their rich fragrance. This sort of flower is called “Soup-time flower” by my Henan countrymen. In the Henan countryside, “soup-time” is supper time, so “Supper-time flower” is named in the Wu dialect in East China. This rather ordinary name suggests it's the unusual blooming time of the flower that impresses people most, plain and local. I wanted to get better acquainted with my “old friend”, so I scanned it with my phone to find out more. Souptime flower has a very formal name of *Mirabilis jalapa*, which literally translates as “purple jasmine.” Though the flower can present with a single color or even variegated, the word “purple” is always in any Chinese appellation. But I think calling it Soup-time flower, is true to the nature of the flower, even if that's not scientifically appropriate.

Flowers, grasses, and trees can all bring joy to me but I have to admit to some preferences. As for trees, for instance, I prefer those that are capable of producing edible fruits. If a tree bearing fruits is seen in a forest, one's delight will be beyond discovery. And the non fruit

[1] “缀”呈现的是静态的画面，而 splash（溅）动态感更明显，在能找到动态感用词的情况下以动态感用词为上，以达到类似“红杏枝头春意闹”中“闹”的效果。

又能食的树种一般是果树,但又不限于此,比如能结可食树花的洋槐、柳树和榆树,甚至还有既不结可食之果也不结可食之花之树,如唯叶而食的香椿,故乡称为“香椿菜树”。香椿煎鸡蛋是常规的做法,常用的部分主要是春芽,而将老树叶的筋抽掉食用,香味更浓。我在小区的苗圃里发现几棵高大的香椿树,想必是有意为之,但也发现几片灌木丛,野生的成分居多。香椿木被称为红椿木,是树中之王,据传能避邪,盖房时,户主人总要想办法找一节嵌在窗棂上,以避坟地木材之邪。

荒草田里的发现又何止于此。“老黄狗”(狗尾巴草)满目皆是,串几只蚂蚱,就是一顿野味,惜哉遁迹,令童趣稍减。我的童年是在荒草田里滚大的,几十年的忙碌,早已将童年的生活化作了诗和远方。如今的城市小区,让我与童年隔田相望,不觉返老还童矣。

bearing trees, like the acacia with its edible flowers, the willow with palate pleasing catkins and the tasty elm samaras, all provide delicious morsels fit for any supper. For a tree, there are only leaves to be edible, “the Chinese toon vegetable tree” as my country brothers call. The toon is traditionally fried with eggs but if you pull out the trunk muscle, it will be even tastier. I’ve found a few high Chinese toon trees in my living quarters, which I guess were planted expressly for cooking purposes, and a few toon shrubs, wild to a greater extent. The Chinese toon tree wood is called Red toon wood and is said to be capable of preventing disasters. A knowing house builder will include red toon wood in window lattices, so as to prevent possible disasters that might arise from the wood of the graveyard.

There are so many more discoveries in the grasslands that I’d like to share with you. “The old yellow dog” (Dog-tail grass) is everywhere to be often used to string grasshoppers and grasshoppers can offer gaminess though scarcely seen nowadays, which diminish childish delight somewhat. My childhood days were spent with grass delightfully, but the busy years have made the life distant and poetical. Decades later, my living quarters in the city partly return my childhood pleasures by distancing me from a piece of grassland with a new youth regained eventually.

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