

Persistent, Aspiring, Noble, Diligent, Achieving

SHSID TIMES

Summer
2025



RACING
AGAINST
TIME

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Letter From the Editor

We're all in our own race against time. It's easy to get lost in the unending urge to outdo, the deadlines, or simply trying to make the most out of high school. Certainly, time isn't something to take for granted. In this issue, our team interviewed a club that has broken records and won awards, chasing the tail of each second with relentless precision and undefeated expertise. I've had the honor to know a few members of the GT Racing club and try out some of their remote-controlled cars too, and I must say, their need for speed is no joke. In this special Summer Edition magazine, our writers have put together various articles exploring the intertwined themes of speed and time. In here, you'll discover footprints of the past, snapshots of the present, and reflections on what lies ahead.

Time really does fly. Before you know it, you'll be done flipping through this magazine. But before you return to the hustle and bustle of this miraculous city, let me leave you with this: sometimes, it pays to slow down, breathe, and savor the present. The sun still shines, and the aftertaste of summer lingers, reminding us of the beauty that this world has to offer. My hope is that within these pages, you find a glimpse of that beauty—and that this magazine serves as a lasting reminder of this moment in time, the unforgettable year of 2025. And as they say, happy reading!

Sincerely,

Aaron Xue '26

*Aaron is Vice Editor-in-Chief of
SHSID|TIMES from Kenosha, WI.*



A large, handwritten signature of the name "Aaron" in black ink, written in a cursive, flowing style.

FORUM

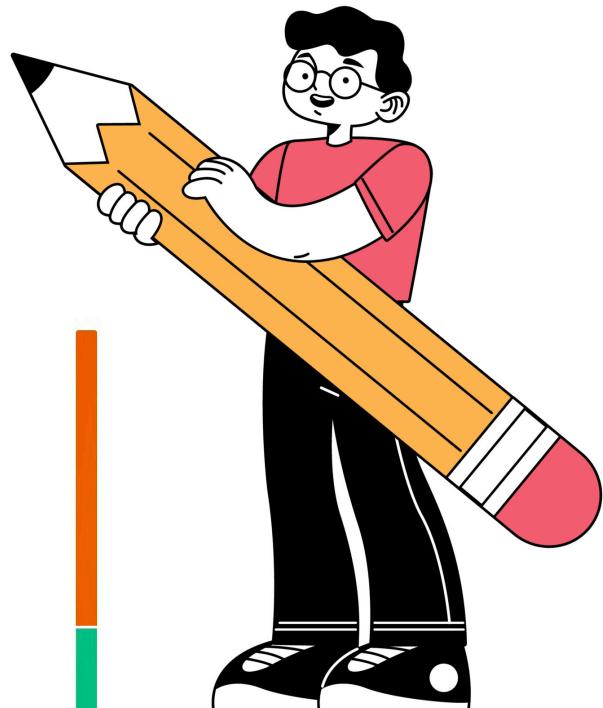
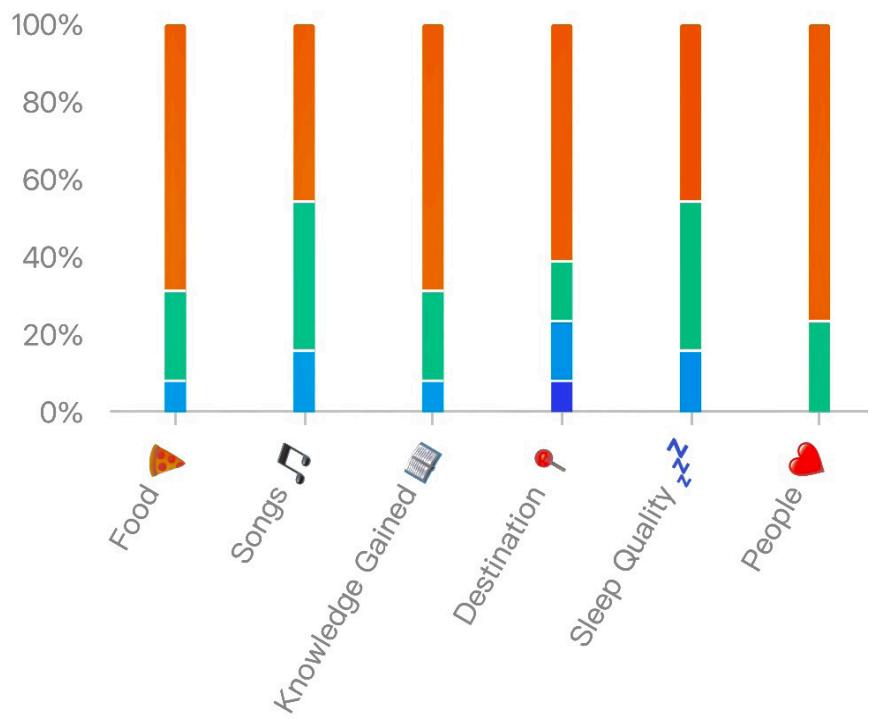
RATE YOUR SUMMER

This summer, FORUM took a lighter approach and asked you to rate your break! From 1 to 5 stars, we wanted to know how your vacation stacked up in six fun categories: food, songs, knowledge gained, destination, sleep quality, and the people you spent it with. Whether your playlists were unforgettable, your meals unbeatable, or your sleep schedule... questionable, your responses painted a colorful picture of what summer meant to our community.

The results are a blend of high scores, surprising takes, and honest reflections that remind us no two summers are ever the same. After all, everyone's break has its own rhythm, flavor, and story to tell.

To join FORUM, readers are welcome to submit either written or visual pieces or participate in the online polls on the *Times* official account. Follow SHSID|Times on WeChat to participate in polls and for other ways to be a part of the magazine!

- 1 (horrible, I would not want another like it)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (take me back to the start of summer)



WORD SEARCH: BACK TO SCHOOL

If you're looking for a way to relax and take a break from your day, here's a word search for you. It's a simple, fun way to clear your mind and focus on something different for a few minutes. Good luck, and enjoy the challenge!

X	U	G	T	Y	S	V	I	G	H	G	F	N	Y	S	X	Z	G	U	W	K	T	E
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L	P	N	A	Q	M	D	C	M	B	H	O	M	E	R	O	O	M	Z	M	P	B	X

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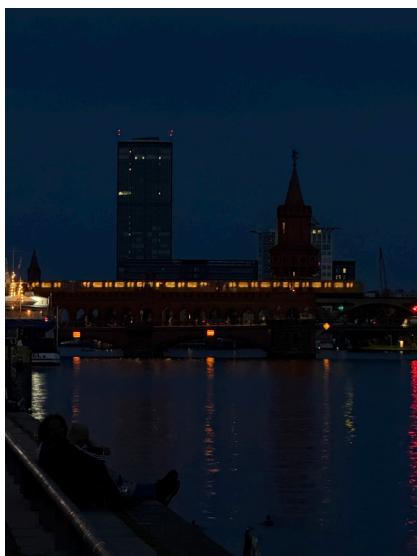
HOMEROOM

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ZHONGXING

this is the life

by Andrea Yang





A Place of Peace

Anonymous



Seas and Skies

Anonymous

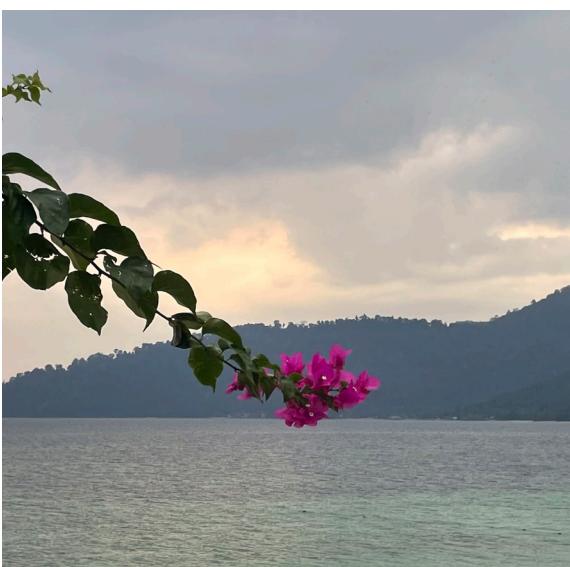




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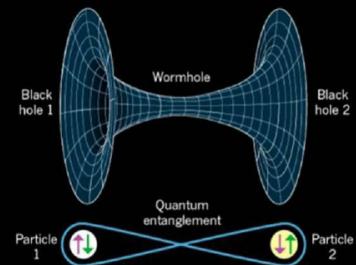
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*"A growing realization
Brush, hang, comb"*

19**29****ER = EPR**

Also in 1935, Einstein and Rosen (ER) showed that widely separated black holes can be connected by a tunnel through space-time now often known as a wormhole.

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A Race Against Time

An interview with
GT Racing



Written by Liris Zheng,
Pete Chen, and Jennifer Kim

Liris and Pete are from the SHSID|Times Core Team, and Jennifer is a Senior staff writer.

Additional editing and design by Ryan He

At the heart of SHSID, where speed meets skill, the GT Racing club brings together a diverse group of students passionate about motorsport. The community exemplifies the spirit of racing, embodying teamwork, innovation, and adrenaline. This spring, they traveled from Shanghai all the way to Charlotte, North Carolina and won First Place at the 2025 Ten80 National STEM League Racing Challenge.

In this exclusive interview, Assistant Editors Pete Chen and Liris Zheng, along with staff writer Jennifer Kim, sat down with the club's key members to explore their journey, from challenges they faced to their aspirations for the future. Buckle up as we drive into the world of GT racing—a true race against time.



JENNIFER KIM

For those unfamiliar, what exactly is GT Racing?

Tom: GT Racing is a club where we utilize skills from multiple disciplines, including physics, engineering, math, finance, business management, design, and the arts. Together, we don't just support a motorsports team; we ask ourselves, "how do we win a championship?" This includes competitions like the Ten80 National STEM League Racing Challenge 2025 nationals.



The club started in 2017 and has come a long way, thanks to various groups of people who have led us to the global stage, including the US nationals, which are essentially the world finals. The last time we reached this level was last year, and, prior to that, it was during the club's founding with a different team.

I'm fairly new to the club, having joined in my sophomore year last year. Over this past year, I've learned how our team operates. It's not just about performing well in competitions; it's also about leaving a lasting impression on judges and teams, both in China and the US. We aim to distinguish ourselves not only through cutting-edge technology that helps us win races but also through our team culture.

We have fun during our club sessions, but the overall vibe during our trips to competitions really motivates us to push further as a team. Even though we focus on just one competition, we are constantly striving to expand our influence. Last year, we worked on increasing our presence within our school by teaching younger students and recruiting new members (including myself). In the coming years, we want to explore how we can

promote our passion for RC cars and motorsports to the broader international high school community and even worldwide. We've already communicated with teams in the United States.

LIRIS ZHENG

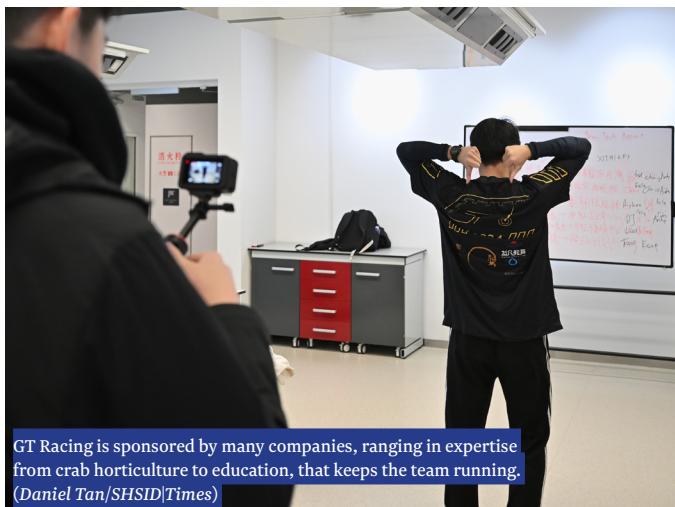
So, we know you guys won this competition in Charlotte. What were some of the challenges you faced during the competition, and how did you overcome them?

DJ: I'll talk about the engineering part. I think the major difficulty in the US is we don't really know the track over there. They do have a track overview in the packet they gave us for the American round, but the actual track could change because of the weather conditions. In this year's competition, the whole track system changed because of rain, with the track conditions also changing. It became just concrete, and it was really bad for our car because we never tested on concrete. Yeah, the road was all slippery. So, I guess the way we coped was to test out different car tires on our car to see which one went best with the course.

At the racing track in Charlotte, North Carolina. (Tom Ding/SHSID|Times)



COVER STORY



GT Racing is sponsored by many companies, ranging in expertise from crab horticulture to education, that keeps the team running.
(Daniel Tan/SHSID|Times)

Tony Xie: Another challenge that we had that was not only during the competition and has been around us for a long time is: where do we get the money? As you know, racing is very costly. We spent a lot of money in innovating, designing new parts, conducting experiments and all that. There's a lot of things you have to buy in machinery, so it just makes funding this whole team really difficult. We have to find sponsors. You've probably noticed the jackets that we wear had our sponsors up there. But it's really hard to get sponsors, you have to find new angles and try to understand why it's valuable for them to choose us for sponsorship.

Another thing is all about keeping up with the integrity of the school. We've seen a lot of companies who want to leverage our school's influence, and they want to brand themselves with that. We just have to keep in mind that, and, even if we're in need for money, we still have to keep our baseline standards, which is really important in running a club like this. The club hasn't been here for two or three years. It's been here for seven or eight years. So, you have to keep this legacy going on, making this club sustainable, which is really important towards financing.

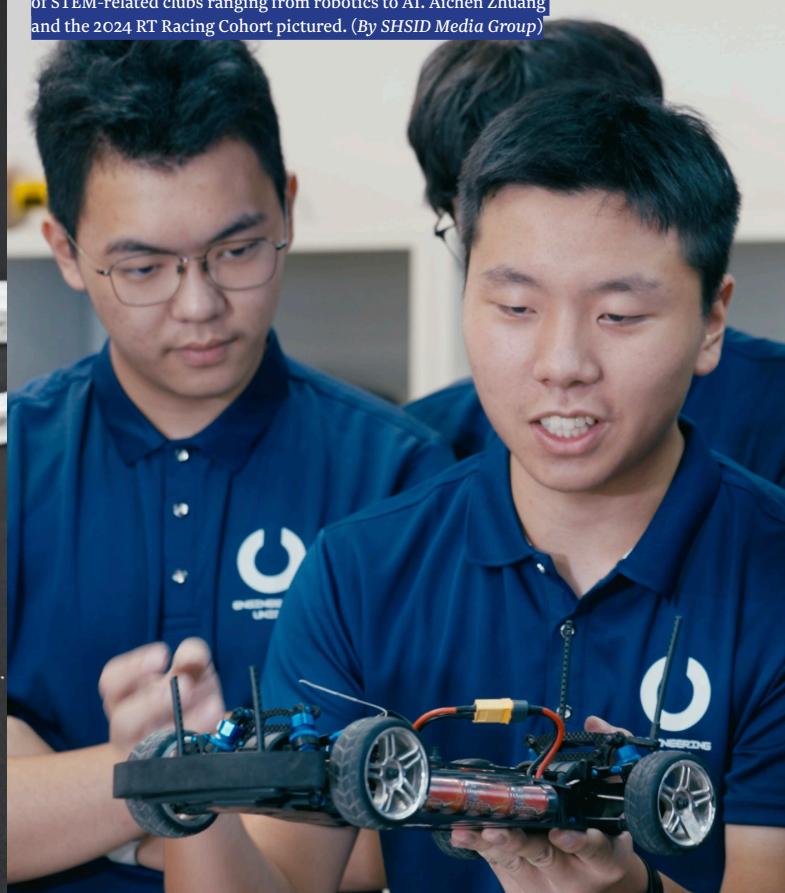
Chris: There are also some challenges for the design department, so I think the challenge for any kind of race, not just the one in GT Racing, is the balance between subjectivity and objectivity. In other words, what the designers are looking for in design might not always be what others, like judges, are favoring. Art is something that's highly subjective, and not everyone is expected to understand or appreciate it.

Thus, finding the balance between what designers wish they designed and what is expected in the rubric for the competition is essential. And I think we've done a pretty good job in finding that balance. And I mean, it's actually quite tough. We often get to arguments about what this design is supposed to look like. But I think we eventually resolved it, and we had made a pretty good

By Tom Ding



GT Racing is a part of the SHSID Engineering Union, a collection of STEM-related clubs ranging from robotics to AI. Aichen Zhuang and the 2024 RT Racing Cohort pictured. (By SHSID Media Group)



effort to find the balance, and we got a pretty good score.

LIRIS ZHENG

If you could take away one thing or idea or memory from Charlotte or any other competition, what would be and why?

Aichen: One key takeaway I have is that the experience itself was probably the most important part of the competition. Meeting people from different cultures and schools was invaluable. Last year, we were one of only two Chinese teams attending the competition in the U.S., while the rest were American teams.

We had the opportunity to talk to them about their innovations, engineering practices, and how their teams operated, which gave us a great idea of how our club should function in the future. For example, we met the champion team, Ram Tech 59, who had won three times in a row and is considered one of the best teams in the world. After the competition, we asked them how they designed their project and about their experiences, which helped us understand what led to their success.

We learned a lot from those interactions, built new relationships, and that ultimately contributed to our own success.

LIRIS ZHENG

What legacy or impact do you hope GT Racing will leave on the school or future students?

Tony: From the start, we've always had this mindset of passing down the knowledge that we have. Back when the club was founded, we had a really smart crew. You know, they were rocking through the China Invitations, they were always in the US rounds, they did great, and they were very influential in the school. But, after graduation, they basically didn't leave anything for us. Now, for our former leaders Evan and Steve, they didn't really have those resources that they should have inherited. After that, Evan, Steve, Aichen, we all brought this club back. We're always thinking about what core foundational values that we have to make sure always exist. So it's a legacy. We have to keep this legacy, of course, because this is a very old club and we hope ►



that more people will join this club and keep making astonishing results.

We also think education is really important because even if you have those resources and you have tools and cars, if but you don't know how to fix everything or how to make things improve, it's not going to work. And I think it's just that giving this education allows for more innovations for the team, which is really important because we have to improve. We don't want to see the occasion that we saw previously where we basically left nothing for the team, and we just want for the next generation to grow, to become better, better than us, of course, maybe even dominate the US rounds. Because this time, I'll say that we definitely won by our performance vote. Definitely, we weren't having a huge difference with the other teams. So if we don't improve ourselves, they will catch up and maybe we'll lose, and this is something that we don't see.

Aichen: I think we not only want to leave a lasting legacy on our future members and the school itself, but we also want to leave a legacy in this racing community, in RC racing, in competitions from China all the way to international ones. By doing so, we set a goal to inspire other people to innovate. One of our goals is to try to create our innovations ourselves and also inspire teams from across China and across the world to follow our steps on creating new innovations.

Since racing competitions have only been around for less than ten years or so in China, teams haven't already experienced or touched on the borders of the rules, and what we try to do is we find the limits of our engineering capabilities. That's the goal of racing and competitive racing. You're trying to find the limits of where you can reach, how fast you can drive, what's the best car you can innovate, what's the most inspirational business presentation you can make, what's the best-looking design logo, etc. And, all of these come down to not only our teams that work in different fields, but also us being able to expand our influence across different communities and sharing everything.

PETE CHEN

When you're racing, is it always best to have everything go as fast as possible? ▶

Felix: Not exactly. So, at first we tried to build the fastest cars we could, and we discovered that, in the China Round, when we tried a car that was built very fast, it turned out to be detrimental to our race because when the car goes faster, it's much harder to control. That model of car, we made it fast, but it's also very easy to break because there's many moving parts that are not made of metal and could be plastic. That was how we lost a 30 minute-endurance race. We lost that race because the car was going too fast, it crashed, and we were unable to fix it during the race. But later, we decided to use a slower but stronger car, and then we were able to complete the entire endurance race without crashing the car even once and the car didn't break. Because it was an endurance race, the key wasn't actually to have the fastest car, it was to just be consistent and make sure that we don't get eliminated.

PETE CHEN

Do you think the same goes for time? Would you want time to be as fast as possible or not too fast, not too slow or maybe slower?

Tony: For sure! You know, especially for us, time is really limited. After the China Round, all we have is just around two months before the next competition. We definitely wish there was more time for us to prepare because the more time we have, the more experiments we can do, maybe we can get more money just to fund everything. It's really busy, so, at that time we would definitely wish that time flows much slower because that would be just much more beneficial.

It's my personal experience, but sometimes I actually also wish the time was flowing faster. Sometimes it's more like, especially when you're after a season, like how last year, when we finished the US Finals, we were trying to come back and work for the new season and I thought that this long duration, it was kind of (boring). I mean, racing is really fun. I think for everyone here (at the club), we love racing from our hearts. We're just excited to be back at racing, participate in the events, and have some real excitement. Maybe at that time we would want time to flow faster.

PETE CHEN

Our issue is called “RACING AGAINST TIME”. At GT Racing, do you all think that you’re sometimes racing against time?

John: I think our club is kind of racing with time because our club is growing both physically and mentally over time. I think compared to when I first joined the club, every member of our club now has probably greater confidence and belief in ourselves, so I think time is making our club stronger. I think our club is racing with the time, and time has helped us grow from a small team to a pretty influential club at SHSID.

PETE CHEN

Do you guys think you can win this race against time? Why or why not?

Tony: I think that we’re going to win against time because time is the only factor that is equal for every competitor in competitions. We’re all handed the same amount of time.

Just to talk about how motivated we are: our group chat has been named “Champions” since the start of the school year. It was not after we went number one and then we changed the name. It was named that from the start. We always knew that, with the limited time, with the limited resources, we’re definitely going to win this fight because (our dedication) is what makes us different, because we’re passionate about racing. We’re passionate about motorsport, we’re energized, and we have this commitment into the things that we love to work on. I think all of that really contributes to building this winning mentality for our team and I think that is definitely going to stay because everyone here knows we’re going to win if we put enough effort and dedicate ourselves into this big race. Good things will always appear, it’s just a reflection of the effort that we put into this competition.

Aichen: Leading this club, I can see growth in our team. I can see a potential increase in future achievements.

Because in order to beat time, I believe the most crucial thing is passion, your passion for this club, your passion for racing, your passion for engineering, business design, public relations, and everything.

I think we can beat time through these engineering innovations, these passed-on ideas that don’t really die. I can see how the future generation might be even more motivated than us. They seem very interested in our club, they seem very interested in racing itself and our competitions and they will definitely achieve a higher success than us. With Tom leading GT Racing next year, and I think he can also approach this perspective on time and legacy as well. ●

Tom Ding/SHSID|Times





This Summer, I ...

This summer, we asked our SHSID|Times assistant editors' team to document their summer. Not only for them to reminisce about the simple joy of their experiences during the two months, but also as a way of introducing themselves to you. As you dig in, spot how everyone's journeys, adventures, and trysts with their break affected them as a person, and how those experiences reciprocated an influence in their writing. And if you spot any of our assistant editors in the hallway, shout out their submission to them!



**Written by the
SHSID|Times Core Team**

*Edited by Ryan He
Design by Andrea Yang*

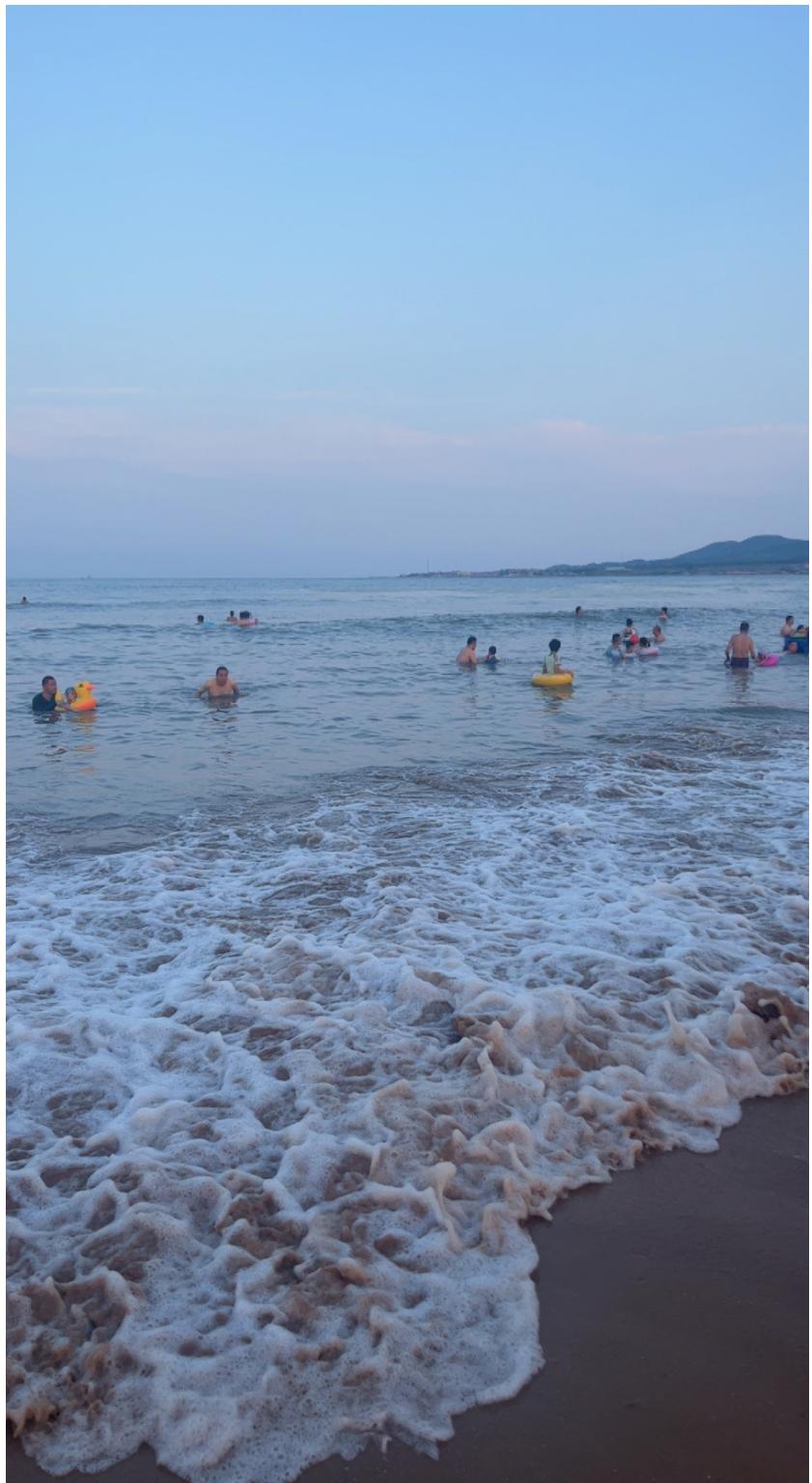
...“protected” my five-year-old sister from the neighbor’s cow (she swore it had beef with her), tried to befriend a foul-smelling horse, and tore through a towering corn maze in a game of tag with my younger cousins.

Sitting in a bustling corner café with two drinks, three Word docs, and too many Google Chrome tabs open to count, I was thrilled when my mom called with the word “vacation.” I had imagined an adventure abroad, with hot springs and plane tickets. But turns out she meant I was going to visit relatives in the countryside - “回老家”.

So while others were racking up passport stamps, I boarded a slow train to Shandong, back to grandparents, cousins, and the quiet sprawl of rural Northern China. I was always a tight-schedule city girl, but over the next three days, all my work was forcibly put on pause. Over sunflower seeds and night air thick with crickets, I stopped checking the time altogether for the next few days.

Deadlines, plans, checklists—sometimes it feels as if we’re always sprinting through life. But during those nights, despite leaves rustling and cicadas buzzing in the distance, I experienced a rare kind of silence: the quieting of the mind. I had stepped out of a race I’d been running my whole life, if only briefly, if only for days. And for a few days, everything was okay.

On the train ride back, I listened to podcasts, music, and audiobooks in a daze, unsure if I was “using” my time well (I had promised myself I’d start my English HL essay; spoiler alert: I didn’t). But maybe that’s also okay. Maybe racing against time doesn’t always mean running full speed—you just need to take the scenic route when you need it.



Sophia Fang '26

Ariel Zhang '27

...stopped worrying about academics and stopped to observe the overlooked spirit of American metropolises.

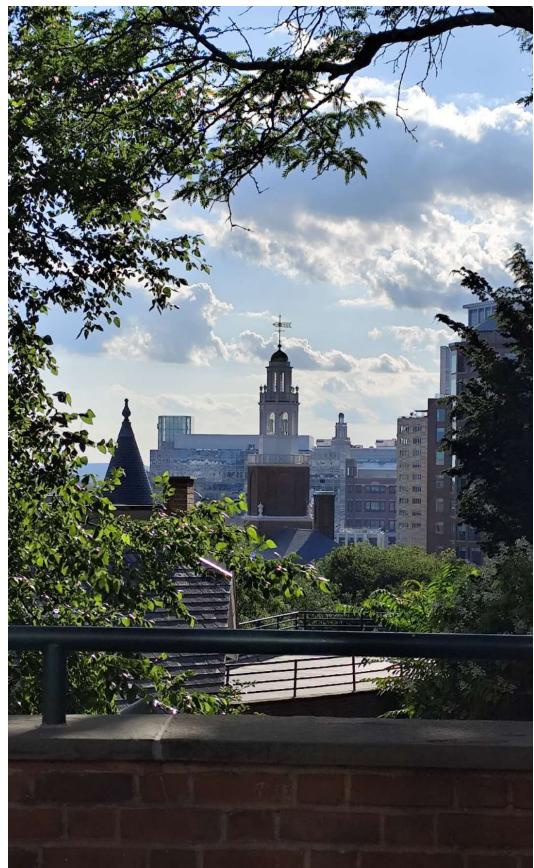
This summer, my family and I traveled back to the United States for around a month, visiting New York, Boston, and Chicago. I've stayed in all three places before, so this time I was coming back not as a tourist, but as a wanderer drawn to each city's overlooked details.

In my phone's Notes app, I have an entry that notes down sparks of inspiration from anything I feel with my five senses. I see a pretty leaf and I write a paragraph; I hear a ukulele plucking on a park bench and I type a sentence. I tend to forget these small moments, but they're often the very moments that draw the writer and the reader to the shared experience of being human. Out of the many sentences I blurt out with typed letters, some might not be the best, but there will always be a line that lands with quiet weight. And so, this summer was a great chance to find inspiration by just observing. And seeing my notes app getting pretty long, I think it's a good sign that I'm getting more inspired.



Cheer Yu '27

...sketched in the RISD Museum among ancient Egyptian artifacts and Renaissance paintings, shared newfound laughs over surprisingly good cafeteria food, and chased sunsets at India Point Park while someone strummed a guitar nearby.



This summer in Providence, RI, was an exciting mix of creativity and discoveries for me—like a quick lesson in seeing the world through an artist's eyes. The constant activity of making art (and the inevitable sleep deprivation) was balanced by quiet moments by the lake as the sky turned golden. It's a lot like working on TIMES: both depend on teamwork, unexpected bursts of inspiration (those late-night doodles that spark ideas), and finding beauty in the little things.

Living between the RISD and Brown campuses, I loved how Providence became a classroom in and of itself. The smell of spicy málà noodles from a tiny restaurant and a busker's accordion music echoing down Benefit Street were the primary sources of the heritage that underlies this place. Even just wandering through Providence's cobblestone streets, it felt like my mind was editing — curating moments (a perfect bowl of ramen, a sudden breeze) into something cohesive.

If TIMES is about capturing the spirit of our community, this summer taught me to pay even more attention to the hum of ideas in group discussions, the rustling leaves in the park, and that quiet “click” when different pieces finally come together in people.

Chelsea Nam '26

...dedicated my weekdays to exploring the city in earnest.

Hello! I'm Chelsea, a rising senior :) I lived in Shanghai for 17 years, but it has recently dawned on me that I am far less familiar with my district and this city than I had imagined. So this July, I dedicated my weekdays to exploring the city in earnest. After all, when people ask me where I grew up, I would like to be able to proudly say Shanghai and, on the side, recommend the deep cuts of the city.

Rather than hopping around for tourist attractions or famous photo landmarks, I tried to find the beauty and joy in the little things and search for the hidden gems. Starting from the comfort of my own neighborhood, I biked around to find the best study spots: from Pain Chaud bakeries and Gaga office to random, cute roadside coffee shops. I even found the coziest bookstores and libraries. To squeeze in exercise between college applications and the IB lifestyle, I explored different gyms in my free time and developed my love-hate relationship with the stairmaster. And, I can proudly say I know the best gelato pop-ups.

Perhaps the tones of the summer were a little quotidian, but in those quiet and mundane moments, I found a deeper connection to the city I call home.



chingmo Zhou '27

...made a plan to have no plan in the largest city in the world.



Going to Tokyo for the first time, I decided rather than following my parents' intricately designed travel guides, which was always the norm, I'd try something new: a plan to have no plan. Every day, my mom and I went wherever we felt like going, our plans drifting with the breeze of our hearts' desires. We explored neighborhoods of thrift stores, hopped across all of Tokyo's Pokémon centers, and made the pilgrimage to the 7-floor Uniqlo flagship. Sleeping till noon became a common occurrence for us as we moved with our own pace and cadence.

On the last day, sitting in a neighborhood ramen stand, I realized that vacation isn't about where you go. It's about how you get there. It's the time spent chatting and line-hopping on the subway, the conversations with friends, and the spark of suddenly wanting to go someplace that defines a "good" vacation. We make schedules, timetables, and plans to safeguard ourselves from the prospect of an all-consuming unknown. But sometimes in life, it's about not living with intent. Real growth and experience come from embracing change and adapting to it along the way. My unplanned vacation in Tokyo reminds me not to worry about planning my college applications, but instead to live life to the fullest and reap what gifts or curses it decides to give me.

Ryan He '27

...reintertwined with a place I haven't been for over a decade.

Hiya! My name is Ryan, and I'm a rising junior. I'm from the suburbs of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, which I have to admit I'm now a stranger to. This summer, I traveled to the Pacific country for the first time in a decade. I stayed in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington and Auckland, both for a week, and they showed me wrath and kindness in their downpours and sun glares. And I got my driver's license too!

If you ever come down to New Zealand, I implore you to sit with my city for longer than your regular tourist will. Because when pigeons flock above Albert Street, when Avondale's hills oscillate under your electric scooter, and when "Ribs" plays over the Harbour Bridge at night, you'll realize that my gray-blue city courses electric currents. When you talk to the nicest people there'll ever be and hear their qualms and hopes despite, you'll realize that even though butter is 15\$, these cities and their people live on. There's still time for aroha, no matter where we are on the Overton window.



Liris Zheng '27

*...finally got the chance to re-
claim my childhood Terabithia.*



The Maldives' western winds blew my hair back as I peered across the horizon, the harsh sunlight blurring lines between ocean and sky - it's a mesmerizing canvas of blues and emeralds. The Maldives has been my favorite vacation destination ever since I first visited when I was 9. I love lying in the hammock outside with a book in my hand, taking everything in: the sunlight, the breeze, the naturally soothing rhythms of the ocean and migrating seagulls flapping their wings above it. But honestly, I was never really reading; I would doze off into the allure of the Indian Ocean.

One must, however, be vigilant of the sky, as the weather in these islands can be volatile. The gentle and persistent waves would push against your face again and again, the salty seawater entering your nostrils and throat - exhaustive and slowly suffocating. Every year, tourists would lose their lives in the Indian Ocean, mistaking its beauty and serenity for safety, and underestimating the innate power and danger of nature. This need for care treading these waters is somewhat like how I contribute to journalism in the Times. There's a pursuit for truth and expression in everything I write, and that requires me to always be careful.

Tranquil, shimmering, and vast.

To the Maldives, (once again) my natural sanctuary from the hustle of high school life.

Aaron Xue '26

...spent my summer in the south.*



*Well, not quite... It's winter in the Southern Hemisphere. This summer, I traveled down to Sydney, Australia. While it wasn't exactly a tropical paradise, I found warmth, paradoxically, within the chilly winds of Sydney, and I had the time of my life exploring the city and its suburbs. I always try to find the bright side of things, and in Sydney, I found it at Bondi Beach, the Royal Botanic Garden, and within the city itself. I was inspired by the conservation of nature, both on land and deep in the harbor. The natural beauty of Sydney absolutely fascinates me.

As an avid traveller, I enjoy experiencing new things. I learned to quickly adapt to the cold breeze and a truly diverse culture. From Vegemite and Milo to Vietnamese banh mi, and among numerous kinds of people, Sydney's inclusivity was something I truly appreciated as a third-culture kid. It felt like a comfortable mix of Western, Eastern, Southeast Asian, and everything else in between. I could feel the pulse of a vibrant global culture everywhere I went. In Sydney, I decided to slow down, take a deep breath, and truly appreciate the people, the environment, and the simple feeling of being alive. There's no race, no worries, no hurry – I'm just living, learning, and enjoying where I am.

Andrea Yang '27

...took a glimpse into another way of living.

Some people hate road trips. I could not disagree more. I so happen to come from a family that has made it a customary summer event. In August, I spent 24 whirlwind days in the smallest car imaginable, looping through 12 central and eastern European countries. This included Czechia, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Slovakia.

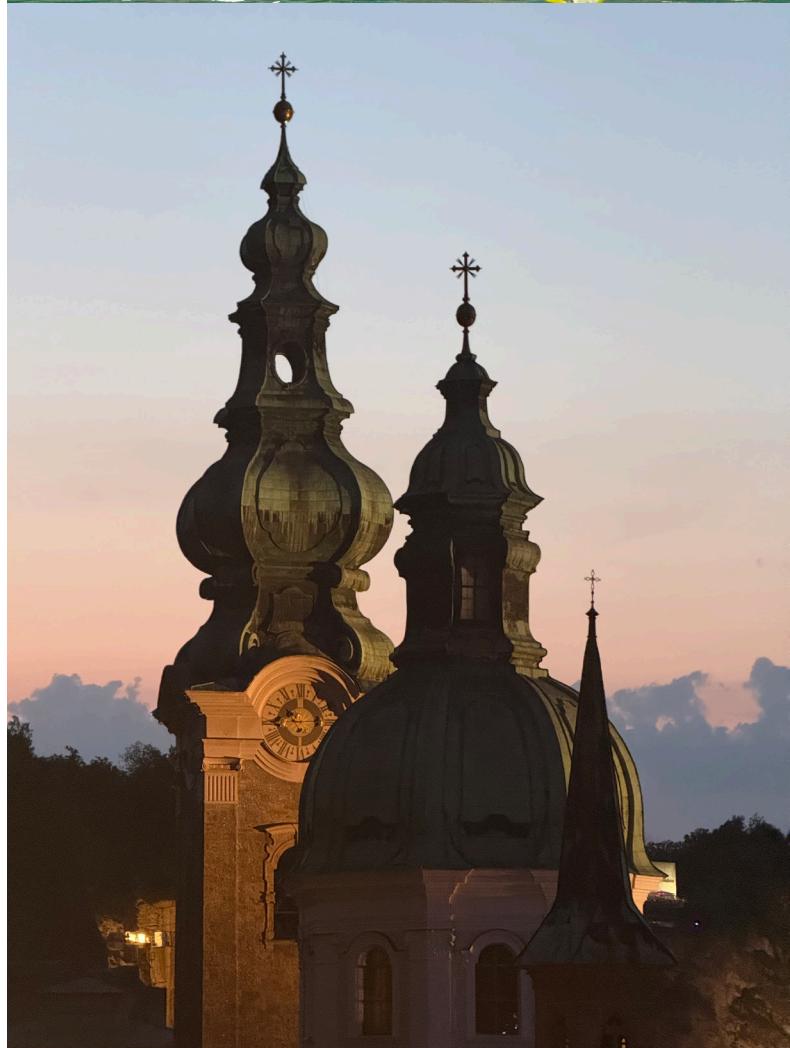
I learned a lot over the past month. This also included, but was not limited to:

- Paying for the bathrooms is taking advantage of a basic human necessity.
- Biking culture is cool — until you nearly get run over by a 12-year-old doing 30 km/hr on a cargo bike.
- Castles are everywhere, and yes, it does feel like you're in a fantasy novel.
- Beer is not just a beverage. It is a religion.

But somewhere between the border checkpoints, I started thinking about what it really means to move through the world — not just as a tourist, but as a guest in someone else's everyday life. Traveling this way made me realize how easy it is to live inside your own bubble, to assume yourself in the way you think, speak, or view things as the default. Every unfamiliar street sign or small-town conversation reminded me how many ways there are to live a life. While we struggle to keep up with the fast-paced city life of an international school student, somewhere else in the world, someone is lying on their back, watching the sky change colors, because that is their way of telling the time. They are doing nothing else, and they don't need a reason or a lame excuse.

Every country, every town, every street was a little different. The world doesn't shrink when you explore it. It expands.

Suddenly, there are more ways to say hello. More kinds of normal. More versions of home.





Pete chen '27

...had a vacation that was more like a chill Jet 2 holiday. Let me tell you how it went.

I'm sure my fellow Times editors have already given a list of their summer vacations. That list, however, is not exhaustive: a vacation does not have to be a trip, an exploration, or an adoption of a new lifestyle. A vacation can be anything; it's more about how you make it.

I'm Pete Chen, a rising junior. This summer, I traveled to Shenzhen and Hong Kong, but, instead of the few attractions and events I saw, what truly amazed me was how moldable the whole vacation became the deeper I went.

You see, I visited the two cities the week before the Chinese Mock Trial national championship. I was solo captain for a 6-person team representing our school's program (SHSID Mock Trial). The tournament was coming up in a few weeks, so I would go through most days by typing edits on each of my team's 12 scripts, heading out to a nearby mall for dinner, and then coming back to talk with my team until 11:30 P.M. or so.

Much like those "nothing beats a Jet 2 holiday" videos, I suppose this means that vacations can come in all forms, including those that aren't breaks from work. Now, however, even as I'm holding a Team Fourth Place from the national championship in hand and am gradually picking back up the 4 magazines and 2 other clubs I've left behind for the tournament, I can't help but appreciate the clear skies and calm atmosphere down in Southern China. ●

Race Against Time

Scientists Confirm Largest Coral Bleaching Event on Record, Affecting Nearly 84% of World's Reefs



Written by Alison Yu

Alison is a Junior staff writer from Shanghai, CN.

Design by Ryan He

(Milan Degraeve/Unsplash)

The world's coral reefs are in a race against time. Since January 2023, 83.7% of the world's coral reef area in at least 83 countries and territories has been hit by bleaching-level heat stress. As climate change continues without reins, it's good to ask: why is this happening?

Coral-Algae Symbiosis

Coral reefs are highly sensitive to marine temperature changes because they rely on zooxanthellae, a kind of algae that lives in their tissues, to capture energy through photosynthesis; zooxanthellae also give corals their vibrant colors. In return, coral reefs provide shelter for the algae, establishing a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship.

That's the cause of the problem: even a rise in marine temperature of only 1-2 degrees can damage zooxanthellae's ability to photosynthesize, voiding the coral's energy source and causing the algae to produce harmful reactive oxygen species (ROS). These toxic compounds damage coral tissues, proteins, and DNA, forcing the corals to expel the algae to survive. This causes coral reef bleaching, as the corals lose their main source of food and color, and turn white.

Where Time Plays a Crucial Role

However, bleaching does not cause immediate death to coral reefs: they can recover if temperatures drop again and algae return to restore the symbiotic relationship. Time is of the absolute essence for the coral's survival. If no additional stresses to corals continue, recovery is possible in varying time horizons. It could take months, years, or decades. For example, some bleached parts of the Great Barrier Reef saw recovery after 2-3 years of conservation, reported in 2017. However, it could take longer: Palau's ravaged reefs after the 1998 La Niña event took more than 10 years to rejuvenate to full health.

Time is the most generous healer of wounds, yet also the merciless judge of coral survival. While some corals reunite with their symbiote quickly, others take longer — sometimes too long to survive. While time creates

CORAL BLEACHING

Have you ever wondered how a coral becomes bleached?

HEALTHY CORAL

1 Coral and algae depend on each other to survive.



Corals have a symbiotic relationship with microscopic algae called zooxanthellae that live in their tissues. These algae are the coral's primary food source and give them their color.

STRESSED CORAL

2 If stressed, algae leaves the coral.



When the symbiotic relationship becomes stressed due to increased ocean temperature or pollution, the algae leave the coral's tissue.

BLEACHED CORAL

3 Coral is left bleached and vulnerable.



Without the algae, the coral loses its major source of food, turns white or very pale, and is more susceptible to disease.

WHAT CAUSES CORAL BLEACHING?

Change in ocean temperature

Increased ocean temperature caused by climate change is the leading cause of coral bleaching.



Runoff and pollution

Storm generated precipitation can rapidly dilute ocean water and runoff can carry pollutants — these can bleach near-shore corals.



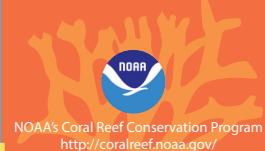
Overexposure to sunlight

When temperatures are high, high solar irradiance contributes to bleaching in shallow-water corals.



Extreme low tides

Exposure to the air during extreme low tides can cause bleaching in shallow corals.



NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program
<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/>

Infographic showing the process of coral bleaching (NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program)

the conditions for coral recovery, it can also strip the potential for coral reefs to regenerate, announcing their end of life.

The 2025 Bleaching

2025 marks the fourth mass coral bleaching event ever on record, and the second in the past 10 years. This time, the number of areas it affects surpasses the last event by over 20 percent.

The world has lost about 14% of all corals since 2009. The clock is ticking: Will action come fast enough to save the coral reefs? ●



(Thomas Owen/Unsplash)

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Harvard Victorious in Initial Court Battle to Retain Its International Students



Written by Liris Zheng

Liris is Vice Editor-in-Chief and News section co-editor from Hong Kong SAR.

Additional editing and design by Ryan He

On May 29, 2025, a federal judge ruled Harvard had temporarily won a legal battle against the Trump administration over the White House's attempt to restrict international students.

The judge, Allison D. Burroughs, claims that she will issue an order blocking Trump's many attempts to prevent international students from enrolling at the school. Moreover, she would later issue a longer-term hold, known as a preliminary injunction. At the same time, the case played out in court to ensure the safety of international students and faculty, allowing them to continue studying at Harvard during the ongoing crossfire.

The Trump administration announced a ban on international students at Harvard as part of a wider attack against the university's open repudiation of their demands. These attacks have included halting billions in federal funds and signing a proclamation that suspends the entry of foreign nationals seeking to study. To justify their acts, they accused the school of harboring antisemitism and, allegedly, working with foreign governments. The government has yet to offer any particular evidence to validate these claims.

The Trump administration has pursued comprehensive



Judge Allison D. Burroughs. (US Senate Judiciary Committee)

personnel documentation from Harvard, encompassing coursework for every international student and details on any student visa holder implicated in misconduct or unlawful activity. The inquiry prompted a dialogue between the government and Harvard over several weeks. Harvard only submitted records that it claimed adhered to legal stipulations and requested clarification on the remaining documents. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem reacted by charging Harvard with promoting antisemitism on campus, among other accusations.

On the flip side, Harvard has accused the Trump administration of violating its First Amendment rights

by targeting the university as a political move. In court, Harvard's lawyers cited a range of Trump's social media posts that attack the university and its professors for their political ideology.

I must say that I would feel more at ease if an order were established.

On May 23, Harvard initiated legal action against the Trump administration following the government's announcement that it would revoke the university's permission to accept international students. Just hours after the lawsuit was submitted, Judge Burroughs imposed a temporary injunction against those measures.

The Trump administration delivered a last-minute notification granting the university an additional 30 days to comply with its requests shortly before facing Harvard's attorneys in federal court, contending that a judicial order preventing the Trump administration's actions would be unnecessary due to the extension. However, Judge Burroughs stated her intention to issue an injunction regardless, reiterating concerns regarding the delays or cancellations of student visas. "I must say that I would feel more at ease if an order were established," Judge Burroughs remarked, aligning with a Harvard attorney, Ian Gershengorn.

"There appears to be a distinct set of rules and procedures for Harvard," Mr. Gershengorn noted, emphasizing that the "damages we are experiencing are tangible and ongoing."

Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt indicated that Judge Burroughs was exceeding her authority. "If these judges aspire to be secretary of state or president, they should run for office themselves," she remarked.

International students constitute a quarter of Harvard's enrollment and are essential to the university's academic and financial health. The institution had requested the extension so that international students, many of whom had departed campus for the summer, could return to Harvard for their studies while the legal proceedings were ongoing. An extension would also facilitate incoming first-year students from abroad to continue with their plans.

Jason A. Newton, a spokesperson for Harvard, stated in a release that the university would "persist in taking measures to safeguard the rights of our international students and scholars, who are crucial to the University's academic mission and community — and whose presence here immensely benefits our country."

An overflowing crowd of spectators packed a Boston federal courtroom on the 29th to witness the arguments. During Harvard's main commencement ceremony on the morning of May 29, a ripple of conversation spread through the audience as students and families began to hear about the hearing's outcome. Some attendees cheered.

Leo Gerden, a student from Sweden who graduated on the 29th, expressed that the hearing's result "was a relief for now."

He added, however, that there "is still a lot of uncertainty, and Trump's attacks so far have caused damage by deterring people from coming to America to study and conduct research." ●

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Why the Villain is Hot Now

Cultural Shifts Behind Modern Tropes



Written by Sophia Fang

Sophia is the Lifestyle section editor from Hong Kong SAR.

Design by Ryan He



Illustration from Pinterest

We're running out of time. That's what it feels like, doesn't it? Hyperinflation. Melting ice caps. The resurgence of fascism. Every headline feels like a countdown, and every news article screams in sirens. As a society, we're hurtling forward without brakes, haunted by the sense that the systems meant to protect us are too slow, too broken, or too late.

In this high-speed world, where everything seems to be collapsing faster than we can name it, our stories have changed too. We don't believe in heroes the way we used to. We don't have the patience for moral perfection, or the faith that goodness alone can win. We're not rooting for the ones who follow the rules—we're obsessed with the ones who break them.

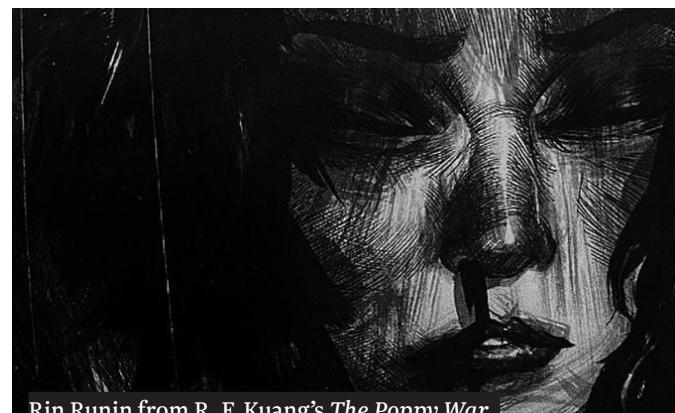
In recent years, the villain has become our favorite character. In 2022, over half (51%) of Americans who consume plot-based content "always" or "frequently" support the antagonist. Nearly 60% of the 2,011 American people surveyed stated that they watch a show or movie purely for the antagonist. But perhaps this phenomenon is more than just aesthetics or edge. Our attraction to villains reflects something deeper: a cultural

pivot away from simplistic morality, a fascination with emotional rawness, a generational response to disillusionment with power structures, among others. It's a reaction to a world in crisis, a mirror held up to a generation forced to grow up too fast.

A Shift in How We Define "Evil"

In earlier traditional narrative modes, particularly Judeo-Christian-guided Western narrative, evil was absolute. Villains were the foil to the moral perfection of the hero, and right and wrong was clearly distinguished. However, as epic fantasy author Jon Cronshaw explains, the growing popularity of postmodernist ideas in literature, centered around questioning the nature of truth and morality, has resulted in a widespread rejection of moral binaries. There is increasing emphasis on the embracement of uncertainty and contradiction, with additional recognition that ethics and morality differ vastly from person to person.

Today's fiction mirrors that shift. Villains are given backstories, motivations, sometimes even political justification. Take R.F. Kuang's Rin, who commits war crimes but is shaped by colonial trauma and generational rage. Or Leigh Bardugo's Darkling, whose cruelty is framed as a survival tactic in a world that rejected him. In each case, the character isn't simply bad—they're emotionally and physically broken by a corrupt system and an unsympathetic world. As such, readers' roles shift from passive observers to invited empathizers.



Rin Runin from R. F. Kuang's *The Poppy War*.
(Illustrations from Pinterest)

This shift parallels broader cultural rethinking of punishment, blame, and moral absolutism. When you're racing against time, there's no room for black-and-white

morality. No longer are books posing simplistic questions like "How can this villain be so evil?" but instead "What led them to this point, why did they do what they did, and what does their violence indicate about us?"

Emotional Honesty

In traditional hero tales, protagonists are innocent, virtuous, and sacrificial. Villains, however, are uninhibited. They're angry, obsessive, seductive, manipulative, embodying Carl Jung's theory of the "shadow self": all the traits we suppress to fit into the norms of society. When audiences read about them, they project their own hidden urges onto these characters and experience a kind of psychological release, constituting an incredible sense of catharsis. This also connects to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, where the human psyche is split into the id, ego, and superego. The id is our unconscious reservoir of desire, which is primal, impulsive, and uninhibited. Villains act in ways the id wants to. They kill without guilt, seduce without apology, and take what they want. As readers, we find catharsis in witnessing these unrestrained acts without suffering the consequences ourselves. Oftentimes we're not necessarily rooting for evil; we're rooting for freedom from repression.

Gen Z culture, especially with its emphasis on therapy, mental health, and vulnerability, is a more emotionally expressive generation than its predecessors. In this context, villains feel more real than paper-cut saints. This isn't about glamorizing dysfunction as much it's about seeking characters who are psychologically legible, who show their damage rather than hide it. Amidst a cultural moment of mental health awareness, trauma literacy, and unapologetic digital personas, the emotional vulnerability of the villain sounds authentic.

Institutional Distrust

There's a reason that readers are more skeptical about traditional "good guys" nowadays. In the world we live in, the institutions we once trusted—government, education, even the publishing industry—are often exposed to be hypocritical, corrupt, or outdated. A 2025 OECD survey revealed that 44% of participants reported low to no trust in their national government, with only slightly fewer expressing the same sentiment about courts and the judicial system. Earlier last decade, this distrust manifested in the popularity of dystopian fiction. Now, it's reflected in the surge of antiheroes, figures who resist the status quo.

Villains, even more than antiheroes, are subversive. They see the rot in the system and refuse to play by its rules. Griffin, in *Babel*, is content to blow up the very institution the protagonist has fought so hard to join. Whether he's doing the right thing is up to individual moral standards, but his justification is undeniably valid. These villains' rage is tantalizing precisely because it's rooted in valid frustrations. Here, the villain becomes more than just a projection of readers' lust, but rather, of bottled-up rage and anti-institutional defiance. In a generation raised amidst the climate crisis, crippling student debt, and political turmoil, the fact that this narrative resonates is no surprise.



Francesco Francavilla/Dynamite Entertainment

The Internet Has Turned Villainy into Aesthetic

And yes—there's also the fact that villains are, increasingly, designed to be hot. In the age of BookTok, Pinterest, and Instagram reels, "aesthetic" is a prime cultural currency—

and what's aestheticized can easily be commercialized. Fan culture exemplifies this: a tidal wave of morally gray fantasy and romance titles now dominate the market precisely because they sell, through books or other product mediums (think character-themed tote bags, mugs, playlists, fan-art, and more). In a saturated industry shaped by consumerism and aesthetic culture, by this point, "villainy" may have outpaced moral clarity and instead had become a vessel for emotional intensity and aesthetic branding.

Visual culture also plays a key role. In film and TV, attractive villains often trigger "imaginative resistance," a discomfort that arises when viewers feel seduced by appearances despite moral unease. But in books, where visuals are co-created in the reader's mind, that resistance is softened. Schema theory posits that our brains fill in gaps based on familiar patterns, leading to the association of beauty with depth or intelligence. As such, rather than repel us, a mysterious, handsome, and well-dressed antagonist in a book would more likely invite us in.

When he says "ily" but the villain in my book said, "If choosing you over the world is wrong, then please do consider me a villain. If waging a battle for one woman is a crime, consider me a criminal. If loving you is my downfall, consider me already on my knees."

Image from TikTok

VILLAIN SUPREMACY>>

So... should we worry?

Literature reflects society—and right now, society feels like it's on a ticking clock. So is our obsession with morally gray characters and seductive villains a sign of moral decay, as critics like Will Durant might claim? I'd argue the opposite.

Our fascination with villains isn't proof that we've lost our values. It's proof that we're re-evaluating them. In a world where we're constantly racing to make sense of collapsing systems, shifting norms, and personal identities under pressure, there's no time for simplistic answers. And villains embody that complexity.

Of course, this trend isn't without critique. As the line between villain and love interest blurs, media sometimes romanticizes manipulation and abuse under the guise of emotional depth. When toxic traits are aestheticized instead of critiqued (see: the "dark romance" genre), we risk normalizing red flags.

But at its core, this trend doesn't endorse cruelty; it reflects a cultural value of nuance, and a craving for characters who reflect the emotional turbulence of our time. We demand characters that are as complicated as our own world, not as one-dimensional as a fairy tale. And maybe that's an indication that we're getting more, not less, morally literate. ●

Originally appeared on Sophia's **"The Book Nook"** blog on July 14, 2025.

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Written by Maggie Tang

Maggie is a Sophomore staff writer from Southberry, CT.

Design by Andrea Yang

Brush, hang, comb
Brush, hang, comb.
Brush, hang, comb.

I chant as my nails tangles itself within my socks
Wool torn, I saw
That daffodils ate up these crumbs
and they swam from
what Came up, drip these letters away
You want to see me, don't you?

Reflected pupils

Brush, hang, comb.
Brush, hang, comb.
Brush, hang, comb.
Rising up in rhythmic melody, twinkling I
saw the whale. It called to
humming mom's tune I'll shut

Now (*seal up your eyes and touch the canvas*)

A growing realization

Brush, hang, comb
Brush, hang, comb
COMB?

What little good is to
pull an angel
from the soil. Grasp in your hands, what good is to
pull the waiting knob? Look in the mirror, you
can't even see the vision of yourself look
To what ceramic arms that'll

smoothen but what
good at all is to

comb? Perfect to nobody

Buttoned-up lips clumsy twigs

Brush, hang, comb.
Brush, hang, comb.
Brush, hang, comb.
To what?

Brush the earth, to hair inscribed into water to, to—

Oh, shut up!

My mind
is not a CIRCUS
My mind traces
to fragments of the fish
Yes, fish! Fish with bones and gills, and those stupid, round,
dull, uncolored eyes,
snorting in the boundless sea
My mind is the same!
It's swimming, yes exactly that!
Scales
remind me of *Jaws*?
Like what, you watched it?

My mind wants to
uncover pearls
fight Cthulhu
Sand with fish, fish trapped in sand sinking dried oranges
from
Demons made of trees? Becoming mermaids Is that *silly*?
The knob.
Pull.
The knob.

Brush. Hang. Comb.
Brush, hang, comb.
Fish trapped in sand.
Fish to the ocean.
Fish to the knob. The doorknob.
Breath to air
breath to sea
The knob. The doorknob. Flimsy fins to the knob.
Clumsy hands to the knob.
Get out.
Get out.
Get out.
You can't always *can i?*
Brush, hang, comb. *truly*

And I was always you. 

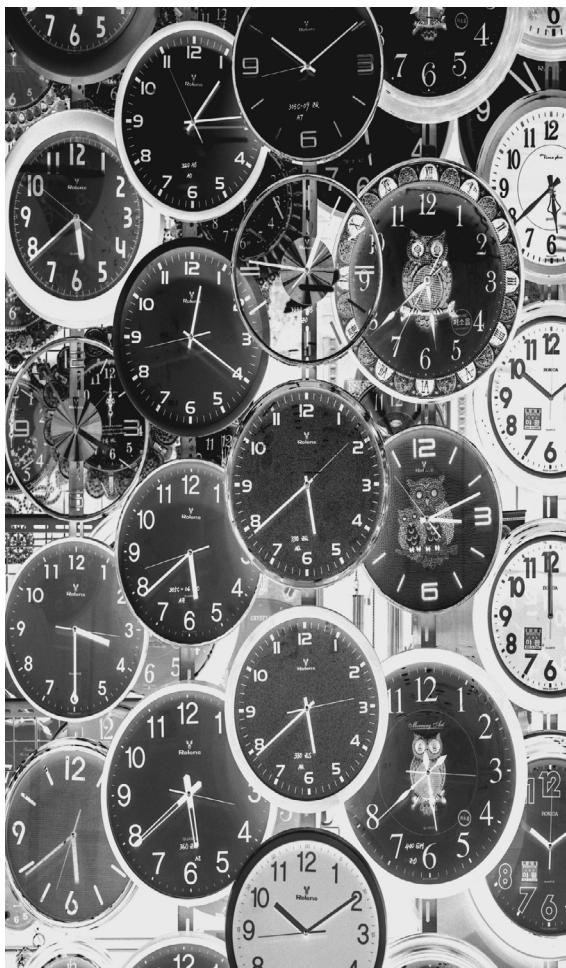


Written by Andrea Lei

Andrea is a Junior staff writer from Ann Arbor, MI.

Design by Andrea Yang

The Clock Unwound



Inverted image of clocks
(Image from Pinterest)

Tell me about the clock that bled.
The one we fed our fingers to,
digit by digit, while it whispered tick
like a god with only one word
and no mercy.

The ceiling cracked. Of course it did.
We were too loud with our silence,
too gentle, too careful with our breaking, stifling,
waiting.

Third grade: you in the flower dress,
a dragon with astronaut eyes.
The teacher asked, you lied.
You always lie when truth raises its fist.

The clock swallowed your answer.
It swallows everything—
the storm in your throat,
the almost-pause before the scream,
the way your hands hovered
over the world's throat
then clenched.

before deciding wrecks was easier to mend

Tell me you didn't hear it laugh
when you begged it to stop.
Tell me the crack in the ceiling
was already there.
Tell me it wasn't your fault.

(Lie to me.
I want to believe you.) ●



OZYMANDIAS



Written by Xiaoxiao Xue

Xiaoxiao is a Sophomore staff writer from Hong Kong SAR.

Design by Cheer Yu

THE PAST

The boy who would be king wandered the ruins of a future he did not yet know, where the sky was a carpet of fire and dust, and the horizon swayed like the veils in his mother's bedchamber. The sand was soft beneath his feet, warm as breath, hissing in languages too ancient for the Earth. The village, the city, the country, the world was a mirage, an echo, a half-formed prophecy. He did not yet know that time was a slow and patient thief.

He ran his hands over the limestone, where the chisel of some unnamed slave's hand bit into the hard surface, somehow leaving his mark. The stone glinted gold beneath the rapidly reddening sun as the air cooled just slightly, and it felt like power, like permanence, like eternity. He did not yet know how the desert swallowed all things, how it turned kings to dust and gods to ghosts.

The wind, sharp with the scent of cumin and ash, sang to him in voices that were unique to his desert. An ode to empires not yet raised, of monuments not yet toppled. In the amber light, shadows seemed almost liquid, and for a moment, he saw the world as it would be — sand-drowned statues, shattered visages, the laughter of the golden sky above the ruins of the Mighty. He blinked, and the hot air shivered, dissolving like incense smoke.

The boy who would be king stood before the desert, before time, before the endless corridor of years that would build up his name then wear it down to nothing. He did not yet know that one day, the world would look upon his works and despair — not for their majesty, but for their absence. They would gaze upon his half-crumbled statue in some distant, alien land, a hole in his shoulder, his pride all torn away. That all he built would be a legend and a myth.

He did not yet know. And so he stood, eyes bright with the fire of all things still possible, heart alight with the reckless belief that gods do not die. He pressed his palm to the stone, whispering to it a promise that would be lost in the humid, ever-hungry wind.

The sand stirred again, and the limestone cooled ever so slightly, berated by the dull yet harsh, sand-ridden winds, that felt ashen yet tainted with streaks of gold.

THE PRESENT

The air was heavy and hung behind me like a wraith, as all summers are in this country. When I was a boy, I would wander through the landscape that seemed to ripple and blur, shifting under a sun that burned the sand underfoot. The horizon stretched endlessly, as if the entire world were a sea of sand, and I — small and insignificant — was swallowed by its vast indifference.

There were whispers in the wind, though whether they came from the gods or the ghosts of the desert, I could not tell. I stood behind the shadows of the dunes that loomed like camels' humps, their crests forever arrested in motion. My feet sank into the hot, yielding earth, and I imagined the grains of sand were the disintegrated bones of forgotten kings, my ancestors, their empires crumbling to nothing but dust. I did not fear the sands — one day, they would come and go at my command, and be my messengers and heralds.

The ruins were my refuge. They rose out of the desert like the skeletons of eldritch beasts, their jagged edges softened by time and the sun. Columns crumbled, inscriptions faded, yet they still demanded my awe and reverence.

At night, I dreamt of gods with eyes like molten gold and voices of the most terrifying sandstorms. They strode across the heavens, indifferent to the lives of those below, their every footstep shaping the earth and shattering it cruelly. I saw my own face in those shadows, grotesque and distorted, both mighty and haunting. They whispered promises to me in languages I did not understand, and I woke with the taste of salt and ash on my tongue.

The patterns of the desert were never identical, its fine golden ash always forming and reforming, driven by the wind and time itself. The dunes of midday will be gone by nightfall, and nothing ever looks the same. What rises will fall, what is carved will be worn smooth. The statues that loomed above me, weathered and broken, seemed to know this truth. Their faces had crumbled, their arms reaching out yet severed and broken. And yet, they remained, defying the sands, daring the wind to erase them.

Once, in the golden half-light of dawn, I saw a great head, half-buried, its features contorted in a grimace of pride and despair. I thought it must belong to a god, cast down and humbled. I knelt before it, not out of worship but curiosity. I wanted to ask it: Did you believe the world could hold you forever?

But the desert does not answer. It never does.

Years passed, and I grew. The wind carried whispers that spoke of destiny and power, and I listened with the desperation of a lost wanderer longing for direction. My name began to echo across the sands. I would be a builder, a ruler, a name carved into the ashen yet golden Earth itself.

Now I stand among what remains of my empire, and I cannot tell whether it is memory or reverie. The statues lie fragmented, their inscriptions eroded to whispers. The wind howls through the empty deserts, laughing at the folly of permanence. The desert stretches on, infinite beyond the horizon — my horizon. It is not cruel; it simply is. I understand that I was never its master. I was always its child. We will always be.

THE FUTURE

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor wewll those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:

**'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'**

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*, 1818

金大班的最後一夜

朱雨菲 剧作

Adapted by Daniel Zhu

Daniel was the president of
Chinese-language drama club,
Youshanshe.

改编于白先勇同名小说

Adapted from "The Last Night of
Madam Jin" from Taipei People by
Pat Hsien-yung.

Design by Ryan He

绿牡丹

金姐金姐!

金大班

三妹,怎么啦?

绿牡丹

周富瑞今晚不是砸了二十万嘛!萧红美还不见人家,我和我妹妹转台子过去他叫我们一定请她去,可这我们怎么好请啊?他就叫我来找你,还说知道你结婚,你跟陈老板的婚事他请十桌酒席,只要你把萧红美请去!

金大班

这小萧,越来越贵了啊,二十万都见不上一面!我去请她,你跟周富瑞说,让他呆住了,萧红美这就要来。

萧红美从台侧走上来,和各桌各处的客人谈笑。金大班向她走去。

金大班(悄悄在她身边说)

小红美,这桌转完去找找人家,看他快被你给钓得没魂了。

萧红美(翘起腿)

不去!他的钞票比别人的更值钱吗?
你去跟他说,新加坡的蒙娜等着他
吃宵夜呢!

金大班(笑道)

哟哟哟,我说怎么横请请不来,竖请
请不去,原来是打翻了醋坛子!

萧红美

呸!他也配?

金大班

得啦得啦,看你大姐面上就去吧。人家
还要请我的十桌酒席呢!

萧红美

哦~原来暗地里你们俩勾上了,怎么
你不去陪他?

萧红美做了个鬼脸,金大班看着
她,心生一个小坏主意。对着她的
小肚子突然挠一下,吓得萧红美惊
叫,仿佛要跳起来。萧红美站起身
讨了饶。

萧红美

诶哟大姐!我去我去,你真是...你可
得和他说清楚!我还没放过他呢,他
今天完全占了你的光!

金大班

你大姐是过来人,欲擒故纵可以,放
久了他就乏了。趁热打铁,等凉了这
块铁还掰得动吗?

萧红美

我看啊,这姓周的还热着呢!

金大班看着萧红美走去坐下,点上
一支烟,陪周老板,还娇声娇气地
要他哄她。金大班一双眼盯住她,
仿佛在琢磨什么。粉牡丹从台边走
来。

粉牡丹
去了?

金大班
嗯,去了。

粉牡丹

还得是小如意,还不知她这岁数的
舞女,全台北还有没有比她红的了?
二十万的赏钱,周富瑞怕是砸了十
把也不止了,一不用她要,二也不用
她死招呼,好像她是个吸铁石,男人



都死了命的往上扑。她再一扒拉，男人掉下去，钱还留着了！

金大班

红美也是十年不出一个的舞娘啊，是个头牌舞女的料子。说实在的，虽然她不如我当年百乐门的风光，夜巴黎这小门脸现在做成全台北顶好的舞厅，主要也是依着她。你就看周富瑞着迷的样子，恐怕见过她的不比我多。

咱这行，有些姑娘生下来就是干这个的，老天爷赏饭。

粉牡丹



还不是卖个年轻？去掉石榴裙，姑娘身上不过只是年轻啊。

金大班

哎，当年在上海，我一个大姐叫吴喜奎……

吴喜奎走上台亮相，在一盏聚光灯下扇扇子，鼻子比天高。

长得和萧红美好像，一身透着碰不得的煞星气，却勾得男人光看看就肯一掷千金。人家都说我俩是九天瑶女白虎星下世，来黄浦滩头扰乱人间的。我俩当年，每天晚上转完台子就去惠而康吃炸子鸡，掰着指头较量，谁毁人毁得好，谁叫哪个栽跟头。多少人为了我玉如意妻离子散，家破人亡。萧红美做舞娘的天分也不只这模样，她也算个顶难缠的刁妇了。伤风败德的事，萧红美不比我差一点能耐。有手段的姑娘，这行才干得出头。

粉牡丹

各人有各人的命啊，大姐。你这个大姐走了，我和三姐也不比你差些岁了，这活，难道童德怀还能管我俩到50？

吴喜奎逐渐失去了亮相时的焰气，弯下腰两手拉伸到腿，再弯膝盖，抱住了自己的小腿。灯光关掉，吴喜奎退场。

舞场里的手段，那些个招，再怎么也遮不住身上哪块肉都往下掉，眼角一条一条长皱纹。当年大姐你把我俩重金挖过来，我们也过过萧红美那个日子。

金大班

那会儿谁也不觉得这会结束，谁也没想过连咱们也会老。

粉牡丹

也怪这世上，老舞女可比什么都难找。

金大班

舞女不老，舞女到时候了，就不是舞女了。当年在上海我跳舞那时候，身

边一个姐妹任黛黛，漂亮的也是没边了，一心就是要嫁了人。嫁了人舞女才能取得真经啊！一身的真金！

任黛黛眼见比序幕老了许多，带着粗框的眼镜，头发变短了，一脸老板娘的粗气，衣服已经无法再掩盖身上各处肉的下垂。

她嫁给了那时上海滩一个新发财的湖南人，湖南韶山出来的一个纺织商，上海的纺织大厂接手下来一大半，国党一要跑，他发了大财。我看不上他，嫌他土，老，没点洋气。我塞给任黛黛见了面三秒钟就嫁给人家了。嫁了之后，本来多有样子的一个山东姑娘，跳舞前还是演话剧的呢！上海滩响当当的橙小萍，嫁了人之后好像老了二十岁，面孔像条狗，神气像战士。两只胳膊一叉起来，拜拜肉挂着。

舞女没有退休的，舞女没有了就是没有了。

一首舞女泪再次响起，舞台的灯光变蓝，几个舞女一个一个人单个跳着舞，像拉上发条的玩偶走过，在舞台中穿梭。

旁白

当金大班决定放弃舞女生涯时，她的面前有两条路，一条兜回了她成为金大班之前，一条向着成为陈夫人走去。金大班开始跳舞，也是因她讨厌事情本身的样子。但是谁不会讨厌事情本身的样子呢？于是变假就像剪去指甲或是修去腋毛一样简单，并自然。在这一天，金大班不能在过去的借口下顺理成章地继续做假，因为假变成了一个选择，而真也是。

跳着舞的玩偶一个个停下，弯下身，蹲下，像是一朵花谢了。金大班却仍在跳，一直在跳。

全台黑灯。

有山社出品的《金大班的最后一夜》于贰〇贰伍年六月四日在上海中学展演季落幕。

在失速的钟面上奔跑



赵天悦 著 Written by Teresa Zhao
*Teresa is a Junior section writer
from Singapore, SG.*

*Design by Andrea Yang
Additional design by Ryan He*

秒针孜孜不倦地旋转，
是身后不断收紧的网。
我们手牵着手，
在失速的钟面上奔跑。

沙粒争先恐后地坠落，
用身躯填平深谷的虚空。
看，路牌上闪烁的微光，
却在指尖触碰前，顷刻化作流萤飞散。
我拼命攥紧逃离的金沙，
用掌心的余温熨烫消逝的疤。

有人将情愫折作纸船，
放入湍急的时间之河乘风破浪。
有人把沿途盛放的野花，
别在赶路人那匆匆掠过的衣襟。
人们为何分秒必争？
是为了挽留指缝间抓不住的往事，
或是为了定格眼下你我短暂的永恒。
信箱里，
躺着没能寄出的明信片，墨迹未干。

置身川流不息的人群，
停不下的脚步描摹着走不完的路。
回头看，
窗边那杯乌龙茶，在期待着谁；
门前那盏红纱灯，在静待着谁。
终是要走散了吗？
不，我会拼命追赶——
听，晚风在耳畔呼啸；
看，朝霞点燃了苍穹。

在失速的钟面上奔跑，
星光散落在我门并肩走过的路，
晨光破晓。 ●



俞怡诺 著 Written by Alison Yu
Alison is a Junior staff writer from Shanghai, CN.

Designed by Andrea Yang



萝藦

沙沙，沙沙。

温暖的阳光照耀在晴朗的空气当中，穿透漂浮在蓝天白云下的点点尘埃，落在梦夕镇泥泞的一条小路上。道路旁的秧苗是碧绿色的，在似有若无的微风拂过时默默地左右摇曳着，像一个个害羞的姑娘微微地点着头。梦夕镇坐落在绿野的一座山脚下，阡陌交通的道路之上总能看到骑着三轮车忙绿地穿梭的农民们和背着扁担摇摇晃晃地奔回家中的孩童。

滴答，滴答。

天空中下起了雨，大大小小的雨珠砸在了道路上，逐渐溅起了浑浊的水花。一个个的水坑积攒在道路上，深浅不一，大小不齐，形状各异。大部分的雨水都聚集在路上，逐渐渗入土地，回到自然的轮回当中，但有的水逃离了洼坑，去寻找自由一般地流落到田野里，再寻着旁边排水的沟壑一直流，一直流，直到它们汇入梦夕镇上唯一的一条小溪，萝泉。小镇入口的木质标牌上在几年前就开始爬满萝藦。萝藦的藤蔓可以长达八米，向上攀爬的它仿佛毫不掩饰自己的野心。在六月的炎炎夏日时，萝藦开出白色的花，与耀眼的阳光相互映衬，闪闪发光。在花瓣上有时还带着几丝浅紫色的纹路，淡雅而庄重，似乎又多了一份矜持。萝泉流过小镇门牌，一直蜿蜒曲折向前。没有人知道它究竟流向何方，因为至今，还没有人走出过梦夕小镇。

一个十七八岁的男孩靠在梦夕小镇的门牌上。他伸出手，静静地摩挲着陈旧的木牌上一轮轮粗糙的纹路，时不时又停下手，固执地扣着木头上斑驳的霉斑。他的手很修长，但被太阳晒成了小麦色，在他抬手的时候露出的短袖下面的皮肤竟然像雪一样白，让人不敢相信这样的男孩竟然独自一人站在瓢泼大雨中，与木牌相依为伴。泽林修长的手终于放过了那早已成为时间的印记、无法抹去的霉斑，慢慢移向木牌上缠绕的萝藦藤。他抚摸着雨中的萝藦藤，轻轻掸去了上面的水珠，却全然不顾自己已经在大雨中淋的湿透。他喃喃道：“若我也能像这些藤蔓一样，肆意生长；像萝泉一样，无拘无束地流向远方；像天上的雨点一样，肆无忌惮地凭心流淌……可惜……”泽林的手瞬间像断了线的木偶一样掉落在他的裤脚旁，他的眼神又迷茫，又坚毅，一时令人捉摸不透。他慢慢蹲下，捡起身旁的油纸伞。油纸伞已经变成了黄褐色，但是从上面用水墨画精细描绘的竹林可以看出，做伞的人一定用足了功夫，花足了心血。

叮叮，叮叮。

随着伞被撑起，伞柄下挂着的小铃铛发出了清脆的响声。虽然伞面已经发黄，但是下面用红绳拴着的铜铃铛却没有生锈。这把油纸伞是泽林母亲离世前送给他的最后一份礼物。人们都说，送礼不要送伞，因为伞，就是散。在泽林收到这份礼物的一周后，他的母亲就离世了。

在泽林母亲的葬礼之后，他的父亲就再也没有出现过。大家都猜，他抛弃了泽林和父母娘，离开梦夕小镇另谋生路去了。说不定，他还是第一个离开梦夕小镇的人，但他却再也没有回来。从那以后，小镇对于人员出入的管理更加严格，深怕又有青年人像泽林父亲那样出去了，就再也回不来了。

滴答，滴答。

这一次，泽林回家的路走得格外地慢。他走走停停，最后停在了他的家门口。泽林的家正在萝泉旁边。泽林望着那千千万万的水滴落在萝泉奔流不息的泉水里，激起的水花虽称不上是惊涛骇浪，但却是梦夕镇上少有的不平静。

他决定了。

咚咚，咚咚。

陈旧的木门被敲响。上面用金墨红底的福字已经有半张脱落，剩下半张在雨水的洗刷和风吹日晒当中也已破旧不堪，几乎看不出它原本的样貌。然而，贴在一旁的对联却出奇地完好，上面的书法笔峰刚直，似乎暗示着它的作者也是一个刚正不阿的人。很快，从木门里面传来了门闩被解开的声音。吱呀一声，沉重的木门被人从里推开，露出了老妇人的一头白发。她的驼背非常严重，导致她的脸甚至是面朝地板的，没有办法抬起来。但她的头发仍然梳得整整齐齐，用一根木筷子盘在后脑勺。

“回来啦？”老妇人问到。

“嗯。”泽林说着收起了伞，在门口抖了抖，放在了门框旁边。“怎么弄得这么湿？”

“是伞滴的水。”

泽林撒了一个善意的谎言。他知道外婆驼背，看不到他淋成落汤鸡那惨不忍睹的模样。他现在不想让外婆操心，因为他知道，外婆接下来一定会操碎了心。但他已经决定了。

啪嗒，啪嗒。

一滴滴雨滴拍打着屋顶上的瓦片，那似有若无的规律，仿佛在给泽林家寂静的饭桌上奏响温和但暗藏玄机的琴音。

“外婆。”

“嗯。”

“我决定了。”

老妇人没有回答。

“我要离开。”

泽林依旧没有得到回答，回答他的似乎只有无尽的雨点拍打着瓦片的旋律。

终于，泽林受不了这令人发怵的寂静，他放下筷子，冲进房间，从床底下翻出早已准备好的包裹，冲到门前。

还是没有回答。

过了几秒，两人仿佛僵持在原地，无声地争辩。

终于，泽林推开了沉重的木门，木门又发出了熟悉的嘎吱声。但此时此刻，在泽林耳中，这声音却格外地刺耳。他一只脚迈出了门槛。又一只脚。泽林捡起刚刚放在门框旁边的油纸伞，伞柄下挂着的铃铛又发出了叮当声。

“记得回来。”

这时，未曾说过一句话的老妇人开口了，她的话音缓慢，一字一字都分外清晰，语气里消退了方才的热情和期待，留下的只有落寞和无奈。

“嗯”

泽林没有回头，他迈开双脚，走下了家门口的台阶。一步一步，渐渐的，他开始在雨中奔跑，在斜风细雨里，油纸伞全然失去了遮蔽的作用，泽林的面庞又被打湿，分不清上面的水是雨，还是泪。跑到了门口。泽林停下了脚步。他偏过头，模糊的视线里映入了那陈旧的木牌和缠绕在上面的萝藦。他坚定地转过头，再次开始奔跑。沿着萝泉，他知道，这条河流向的远方就是他想要去的地方，但他更知道，他不会成为他的父亲。

他会回来的。

一定会。

六月，梦夕镇木牌上缠绕的萝藦盛开了白色的花，在太阳的照耀下显得格外无瑕，无比纯洁。

叮当，叮当。

一阵清脆的铜铃声响起，一个二十出头的年轻男子健步走向小镇，停在了门口的木牌旁边。他伸出手，有力地抓住了一株攀藤向上萝藦藤，抬起的手臂下露出了插在背包侧袋里的一把油纸伞，上面用红绳挂着一个小巧精致的铃铛。

一只鲤鱼从旁边的萝泉中高高跃起，又重重的落回泉水里，激起一大片涟漪。青年把头偏了一下，仿佛感受到了被溅起的水花。他迈开脚步，朝着小镇内走去，他要找的，是一个坐落在萝泉旁边的一个陈旧小屋。在那里，还有人在等他回来。

他一定会回来的。一定会。

HAPPIER THAN EVER

I'm sure we've watched or at least heard of the 2025 Oscar-nominated movie *The Substance*. A fading, "old" celebrity, Elizabeth Sparkle, is pushed away and discarded by the entertainment industry. She is replaced by younger and more beautiful Sue, who ironically, is nothing but a literal younger version of Elizabeth, manufactured through *The Substance*. The movie addresses a poignant societal problem: Hollywood has long been criticized for their obsession with youth, and older actors often find themselves losing their place in the industry. Yet one overlooked facet of this issue is its deep-seated biases toward women. While male actors continue to stay in the spotlight when even as they grow older, their female counterparts are often sidelined as soon as they start to lose their youth.

A 2021 report from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media concluded that characters over the age of 50 were "less than a quarter of all characters in top-grossing domestic films and most popular television shows from 2010 to 2020" (Eisenberg). This data effectively reveals the ageism ingrained in the products of Hollywood, where older actors are not seen as valuable. Moreover, when women more than 50 are on screen, the report noted that they were "commonly cast in supporting and minor roles" and less likely to be "developed as characters in interesting ways" (Eisenberg). Female characters depicted by actresses over 50 are often seen as less desirable, and consequently less marketable and money-making. Consequently, these characters are rarely given compelling storylines and instead are sidelined to the background as stereotypical roles: "nothing mothers, wise grandmothers, and sexy ex-wives. They are no longer fully fleshed-out protagonists with their ambitions and struggles."

The double standards are glaring. Male actors such as George Clooney and Denzel Washington continue to be cast in action-packed blockbusters. Tom Cruise even headlined *Top Gun: Maverick* at 60 years old. His role was not only accepted but celebrated, reflecting how the Hollywood industry still viewed

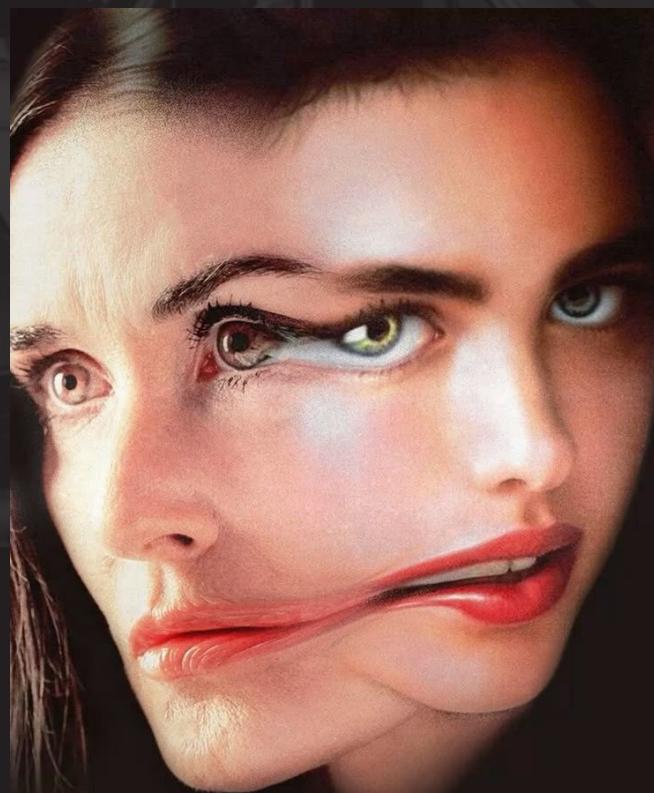
AGEISM IN HOLLYWOOD



Written by Chelsea Nam

Chelsea is Student Journal section editor from Seoul, KR.

Design by Ryan He



THE SUBSTANCE

Elizabeth and her younger counterpart Sue in *The Substance* (Image from Pinterest)

aging men as desirable, heroic figures. Yet even top-tier female Hollywood A-listers like Nicole Kidman and Julianne Moore become relegated to being cast as mothers or grandmothers rather than complex protagonists as they age (ie, Nicole Kidman in Aquaman). Carrie Anne-Moss, best known for appearing as Trinity in the Matrix franchise, revealed in an interview how differently she was treated as she aged. She stated, "...literally the day after my 40th birthday, I was reading a script that had come to me and I was talking to my manager about it. She was like, 'Oh, no, no, no, it's not that role, it's the grandmother...I went from being the girl to the mother to beyond the mother'" (Donnelly). This shift was not just about aging; it was another gross instance of Hollywood tying women's worth simply to their youth. Carrie's male co-star in the Matrix, Keanu Reeves, who is three years older than her, continued to play action heroes and appear on the main screens.

Funnily, "aging" actresses are even asked to play the roles of sons played by actors who are not much younger than them. For example, in the 2004 film Alexander, 30-year-old Angelina Jolie was cast as Olympias, the mother of 29-year-old Colin Farrell's character Alexander the Great. The casting choice highlights how women in Hollywood are often forced into older roles far earlier than their male counterparts. Meanwhile, male actors of similar ages continue to play leading heroes and warriors.

The pattern extends to romantic pairings, where older male actors are cast alongside younger women. In Entrapment (1999), 69-year-old Sean Connery was romantically paired with Catherine Zeta-Jones, just 29

years old at the time. In The Wolf of Wall Street (2013), 39-year-old DiCaprio was paired with 22-year-old Margot Robbie. In Mission: Impossible-Fallout (2018), 56-year-old Tom Cruise was given love interests in their 30s. Yet on the other side of the coin, it is nearly impossible to find examples of an older woman being paired with a significantly younger man in mainstream Hollywood films. This reinforces the idea that men remain attractive and desirable as they age, while women do not.

Additionally, the ageism within Hollywood reveals another underlying problem: rampant sexism in the industry. Unlike men, who are allowed to age into roles of wisdom and power, women in Hollywood are often valued and fetishized for their beauty – something that is surface-level and impermanent. From the earliest days of Hollywood, women have been placed into specific archetypes and typecasts that serve a male-centric narrative: the ingenue, the femme fatale, the hot love interest. Marilyn Monroe, one of the most famous actresses in history, was largely cast in hyper-feminine roles that emphasized her as a sex symbol, rather than allowing her to showcase her depth as an actress. This pattern continues today, where many women are still pressured into roles that require them to embody hyper-sexualized personas and cater to the male gaze. Megan Fox, rising to fame after her role in Transformers (2007), became typecast as "the sexy girl," with future jobs being focused on her body rather than being taken seriously as a skilled actress. Consequently, women in Hollywood become more likely to face exploitation, body shaming, and disposal as they start to lose their youth—something inevitable in nature.



Marilyn Monroe by Sam Shaw, 1953

The absence of well-rounded and fleshed-out older female characters proves devastating to the diversity and representation within storytelling. If films are supposed to be a reflection of life, neglecting the multi-dimensional experiences of older women is a true failure of Hollywood to tap into a major facet of life that a large demographic could resonate with. There is a proven audience for such films: Grace and Frankie and Nomadland embrace older female characters and their stories, and they manage to amass a dedicated and loyal audience. Hollywood just needs to open their eyes to this.

In today's industry, while the women in acting only have a shelf-life on screen, men are able to enjoy a whole life. It is time for Hollywood to recognize women beyond their appearance, and to offer them dynamics that extend beyond youth and desirability. After all, no one can stay young forever, and perpetuating this only reinforces unrealistic standards.

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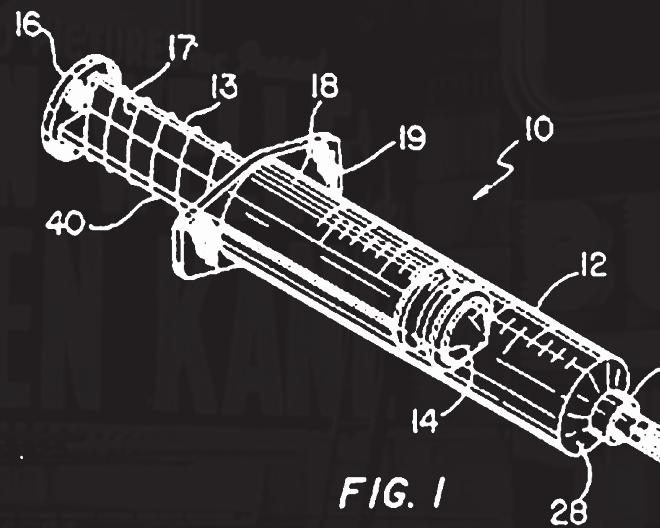


FIG. 1

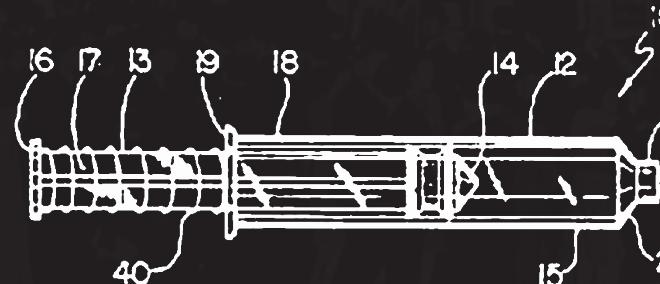
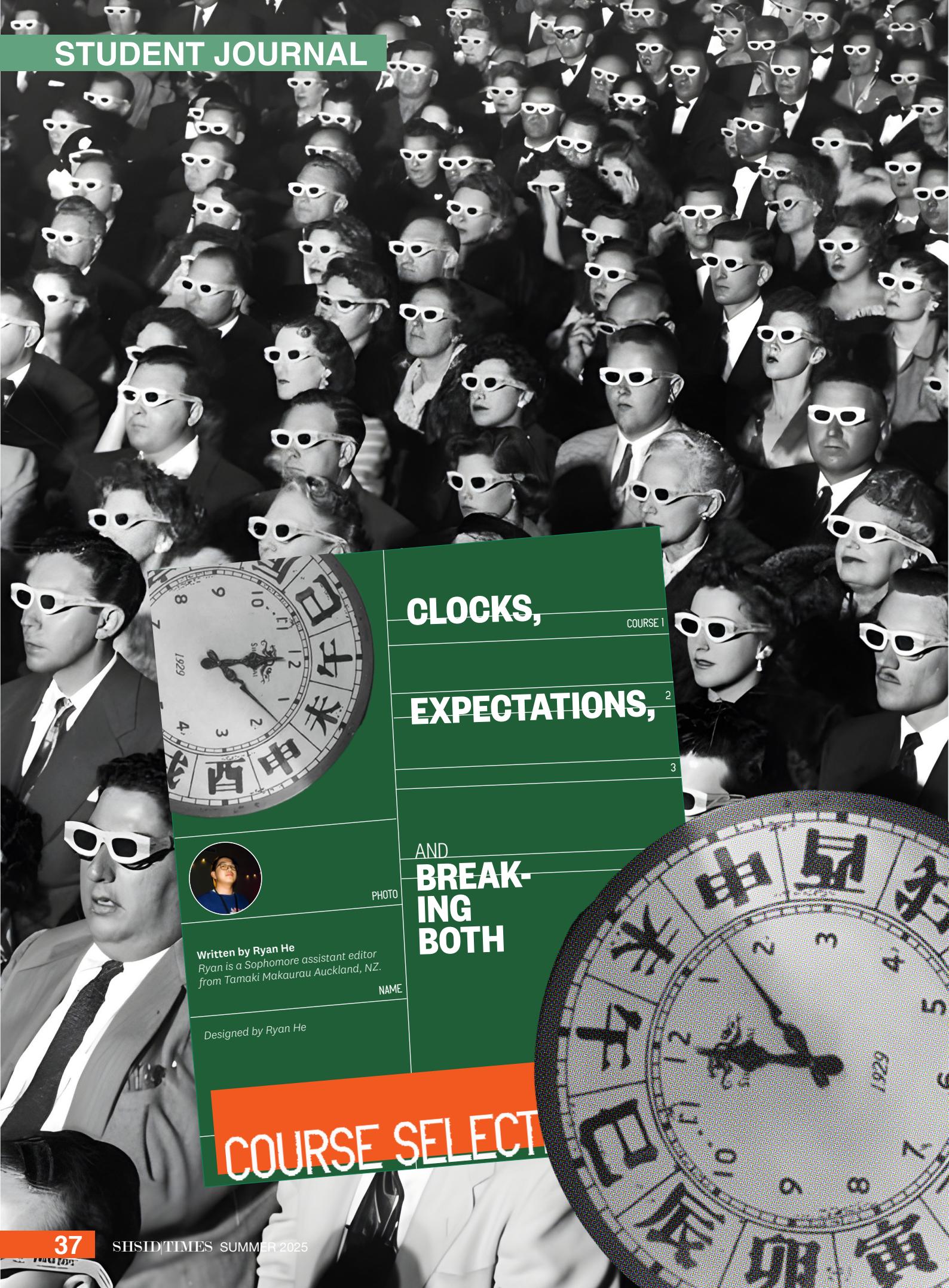


FIG. 2

STUDENT JOURNAL



CLOCKS,

COURSE 1

EXPECTATIONS,

2

AND
BREAK-
ING BOTH

PHOTO

Written by Ryan He

Ryan is a Sophomore assistant editor from Tamaki Makaurau Auckland, NZ.

NAME

Designed by Ryan He

COURSE SELECT

When light stiffens on rusted guardrails, as I rush inside the door frame back home, the clock runs a rhythm above my seated parents, whose mouths are running at lightning speed, in a conversation that goes a little bit like this: The majority of us are going to live the same life. We're going to get the same internships at the same consulting firms, work the same jobs that make us money, get married, have children, find retirement plans, then retire and yada yada. They then glance at me, brimming with excitement about this comfortable life. This kind of life is comfortable, it's a testament to a million comfortable people that lives in a million cities, living a billion comfortable lives as comfortable people.

But when you write it out in plain text, it seems scary, right? At least, to me, who's writing it out in plain text for you, it sure is. I've always been afraid that the adults are right.

"They then glance at me, brimming with excitement about this comfortable life."

By Wes Wilson, 1968.



Keynote slides fly by and speeches too, and I still swallow down this same conversation under the Auditorium screens. Footsteps through and the corridors move, and I still swallow down this conversation from those around me. These hustled whispers spread an almost poisonous certainty. Apparently, all that people can talk about is AP and IB. Apparently, all that people care about are physics questions had on last night's exam. In the great span of this world, all that we could debate is some school red tape that suddenly becomes our entire personality. It's all apparent and obvious.

And then everything turns into machine code. You either get into this university or not. You either get this grade point or not. You either have other people slap a badge of approvement on you and let everyone crowd around you, admiring the way your stylized hair flows and the way your a score writ in red on your exam paper somehow symbolizes your accoladed self - or you mean nothing to an ever polarizing, ever surface-crawling world.

...and in return for these toils, I'll get a high-paying job at a top-edge medical firm. I'll find a wife, have children, file 401(k)s and 1040s, unlike how bad Evelyn Wang did it in *Everything Everywhere All At Once*; and, lastly, finally, then I'll live out the rest of my life in comfort. And the adults were right. And I'll go ahead and tell my kids about how right my parents were, how right I am, how no, you're actually wrong, and yeah, I'm right, and -

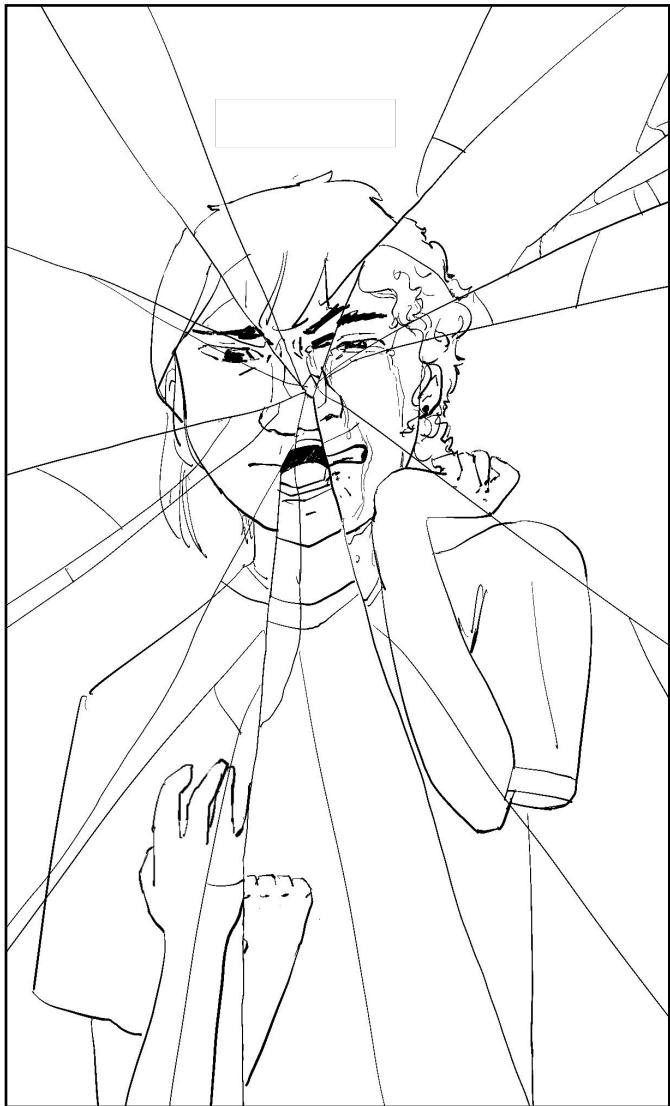


Evelyn Wang ends up in mental fracturement after not being able to file her taxes like a normal person. Somewhat like my daily routine to school.

Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022)/A24

STUDENT JOURNAL

And now it's scary for you, too, right? You drop the Physics Bowl questions and stare at your hands. The clock in your room is ticking one second at a time. It's a prickling, horrifying sound.

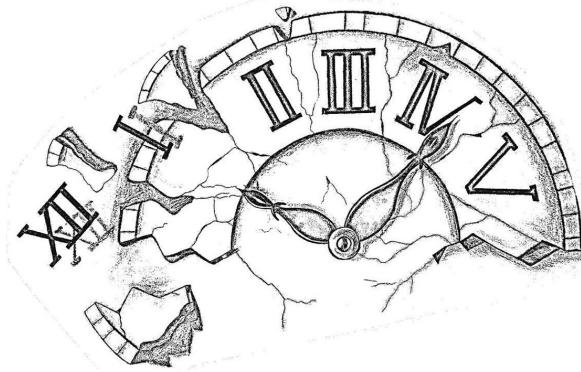


"And now it's scary for you too, right?"

"Grief" by Anika Huang, 2023.

I remember laying awake at midnight when I was 7. A clock that I hung opposite at the top of my room. I couldn't sleep. That tick-tick-tick sound coming one after another. It's an emblem that after one second, comes another. Then comes another. It's all so predictable. And I thought, maybe if there's something I can do to have that strangling sound of predictiveness and uneasiness go away, that's the least I could do.

So, maybe the adults are wrong -



Sourced from Pinterest.

Maybe they'll find a broken clock at the end of the staircase and reprimand the culprit of this disturber of peace. Maybe I'll be called a destructive, unruly, all sorts of bad names. They'll say I ruined the aesthetic of the room. That it took them hours to hang it. But in the morning, I would've won back something I lost so long ago when I stared blankly at the principal, smirking with joy as he lists out the framework that we'll use to draw boxes around our four years in high school. So long ago, when I started to believe that I should do something because my parents would be happy if I did it. Or when a spark in all of us started to dim when all we could hear was a cacophony of voices outside of us, telling us to do this or do that.

We'll be let out of our little houses of cultural expectations and empty insides when we break our clocks. When we talk back. When we stop trying to fit in. When we make things with genuine care. When we stop copying answers off of ChatGPT. When we educate ourselves to think critically about real, 'real' things. When we discover and embrace the things that make us different, and when we, united with our proudly-held differences, bow down with a purpose to create real, unyielding impact for us and others. When we foster just a little hope in our student body and keep it going, so that our people don't lack purpose, drive, and sleep. When we are kind to our whanau and the people around us, because we want to be treated the same way we treat people. When we fight back against hate and bigotry, mundaneness and conformity, even if it's what is being taught to us. And then, maybe, we'll prove that we don't need to live under the same timelines and storylines, and that No, actually, you're wrong, and I'm right, and I'll always be right. ●



Art installation by Samantha Lo
(Image from Pinterest)

TIME MACHINE

THE ULTIMATE BATTLE AGAINST TIME ITSELF



Written by Rainn Ji
Rainn is a Sophomore section writer from Dallas, TX.

Design by Ryan He

* THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE PAST *

Imagine such a phenomenon: you travel back in time to the moment when your grandparents met and stop them from meeting. This would mean you were never born. Then who was the one that stopped them from meeting in the first place?

This is the Grandfather Paradox – it details just a snippet of all the intricacies time travel could unravel if it becomes possible. This brings up the question: what if time travel could actually come to life? Studies in the past regarding the feasibility of time travel have all been more or less a waste of time. However, recent scientific theories propose that time travel may not be as far-fetched as we think, being theoretically possible. But is it physically feasible? Could we see the production of a time machine in the future?

Time Isn't WHAT YOU THINK IT IS

Before we start time traveling, we should know what time really is. In our common perception, time is a continuous, absolute, monotone concept. Einstein's theory of relativity disagrees to this, positing time as a quantity that can be sped up or slowed down almost like the speed of a car. Special Theory of Relativity really only states one thing – that the speed of light is constant and the same in any reference frame. Consider the following scenario: you drop a ball inside an elevator that is going down. The ball is traveling down at 10 m/s for you inside the elevator. If the elevator is also traveling down at 10 m/s, to the person outside the elevator the ball is traveling down at 20 m/s. But what if you have a flashlight pointed downwards inside the elevator? As the speed of light is absolute, its speed inside the elevator must be the same as the speed outside the elevator and this can only happen if the person outside the elevator experiences time slower than the person inside. In other words, the light travels a longer distance from the speed of the elevator but that is mitigated by the increased time duration to result in the same speed of light.

This effect is referred to as time dilation and it obviously becomes more tangible when you are traveling at greater speeds. It does not only exist in theory but has been demonstrated in practice in very precise atomic clocks inside jets traveling at high speeds. One example of using time dilation is the Twin Paradox. One of the twins enters a spaceship and travels with a speed close to light, while the other twin remains on Earth. The twin who left to travel through space arrives and is only several years older since he was gone, when his brother is decades older on earth. This implies that the traveling twin traveled to the future, theoretically.

General Relativity

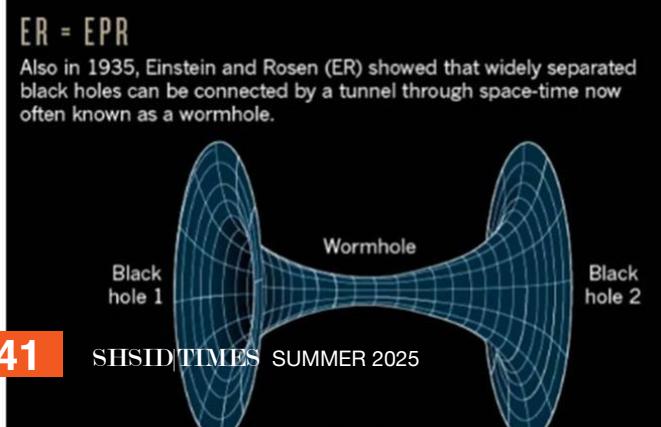
GRAVITY CAN WARP TIME

Einstein's later theory--general relativity published in 1915—added gravity to the scene. This theory holds that huge bodies such as planets and stars cause the spacetime to bend like a bowling ball on a trampoline. Time is also warped with this. The nearer you get to a huge object, the slower the time will pass when compared to the person not close. This has been authenticated through satellites: the clocks happen to tick faster on GPS satellites compared to the clocks on earth and have to be adjusted at all times. Both the speed inclination and the gravity inclination of time dilation show one thing true: time is not absolute. It is stretchy, and such stretchiness suggests the concept of moving through it as well.

Wormholes NATURAL

TUNNELS THROUGH TIME?

Suppose that time is an element of spacetime and that spacetime can be curved; then, in principle, shortcuts can be constructed in it. These shortcuts are named wormholes—also known as Einstein-Rosen bridges. A wormhole can be thought to represent a tube running between two different places on a space—perhaps even a time-like path. Just imagine folding a sheet of paper and pricking it with a hole. By doing so, a shortcut has been cut across. Theoretically, a wormhole would enable you to go across different locations in the universe at a faster speed than light, or even to another time. However, there is a condition: such a wormhole could not remain open unless exotic matter with negative energy density were used. We have never seen this type of stuff in nature, and we do not even know if large amounts are possible. Wormholes would also be unstable, even in the case that they were possible. Piercing through any one of them would make it cave in immediately—unless, again, exotic matter might enable it to hold open. While all of this is theoretical, wormholes are still one of the most thrilling forms of time travel in the world of theoretical physics.



Cosmic Strings

TIME TRAVEL ON A UNIVERSAL SCALE

Another exotic proposal of time travel is related to cosmic strings, theoretical defects in spacetime that might have developed in the early universe. They are infinite, incredibly thin, and incredibly dense. These strings might be as heavy as the earth, yet they could also be just smaller than a proton. Physicist J. Richard Gott proposed that, should two cosmic strings pass one another at a sizable fraction of the speed of light, they might bend spacetime drastically enough to generate closed timelike curves or loops in time. Under these circumstances an object (or person) that undergoes some kind of path around these strings may find itself in the past of the object itself. It may sound like science fiction; however, the math adds up, at least in theory. The biggest problem? We have no indications of the existence of cosmic strings. These strings have not yet shown up, even with searches based on gravitational lensing (whereby one looks at the bending of light around massive objects). This type of time travel is all speculative without them.

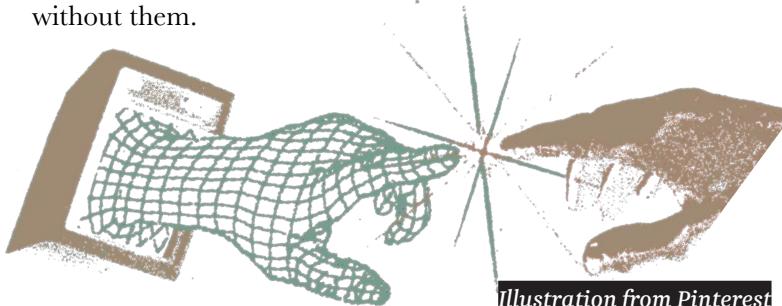


Illustration from Pinterest

Time Mirrors

BOUNCING LIGHT BACKWARD

In 2025, scientists had verified the time mirrors phenomenon, a finding that seems to have been stolen out of a science fiction film but is based on physical science. A time mirror does not simply have people move back in time, but it does reflect the direction of waves, like that of a sound or a light wave, by simply turning them around using the immediate environment. By dynamically changing material or by use of electromagnetic fields, scientists can design a system in which light appears to be traveling against time. This is only suitable in the confined laboratory environment so far and is only applicable to waves and not physical objects.

However, there is a possibility of improvements in data storage, imaging, and quantum computing with it (and maybe even our relationship with time as well).

Chronology Protection THE UNIVERSE HAS RULES

Although all these tricks may appear to contain time loopholes, there was a man who stood out from the time travel concept, and that man was Stephen Hawking. In 1992, more speculatively, he stated the Chronology Protection Conjecture, a conjecture concerning the philosophical problem of time travel stating that the laws of physics must have about them the property of preventing time travel from causing any paradox. To give an example, when you construct a time machine, there is a chance that quantum fluctuations, which are minute bursts of energy in spacetime, could accumulate to blow it apart the moment it is switched on. It is like some form of built-in safety net to the universe: the instant you attempt to interfere with the time flow, the laws of physics simply close you down. This theory is not confirmed, and it is considered by many scientists. Hawking once even threw a party to which he actually invited time travelers, and nobody came, of course. His point? Perhaps it is not possible to travel through time in principle.

The Ethics of CHANGING TIME

Suppose we figure out how, and we make a time machine. That is easy; how then do we use it? And what happens to the action of anybody who returns and prevents war or induces it? Imagine somebody wants to earn profit, entering the future and playing the stock markets. There are enormous ethical implications of time travel, and those implications are mainly due to the so-called butterfly effect, which is a notion that very minor events in one period of time can lead to enormous future ramifications. Most time travel theories, such as the Novikov Self-Consistency Principle, conceptualize things in such a way that regardless of what you attempt to alter in the past, circumstances will always be altered so that one avoids paradoxes. However, there are other theories, such as the many-worlds interpretation, that claim that every change results in the appearance of another timeline and the original timeline remains unchanged. Then it would not be that the universe prevents you but only branches off in another version.

Conclusion WHY WE KEEP CHASING THE CLOCK

Time traveling is the absolute human fantasy: the dream to change our regrets, to see what will be next, or to figure out our past. It could be Marty McFly in Back to the Future, the Doctor in Doctor Who, or the Avengers hopping time zones; time travel is something that holds our fascination like no other concept in our imagination. But, from the working time machine (not quite yet), the science behind the notion is still developing. Every now and then the physics journey uncovers a greater understanding of reality, be it in relativity, quantum mechanics, or wave theory, and with every step of the knowledge that is gained, we are brought closer to discovering the truth about time. The fact that we may never construct a time machine does not mean that there is nothing valuable about the effort we make to achieve the said goal, as the mere pursuit leads to profound philosophical lessons about the world in which we live, since it can be considered stranger, deeper, and more beautiful than we ever expected it to be. Time, it turns out, isn't just a clock on the wall. It contains a riddle that has to be solved. And there is one race, in which both scientists and dreamers are interested in running; that's one race against time worth running. ●

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