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Letter from the Editor

Forrest Maynock

Greetings,

What you are now reading is the long-awaited first issue of Polyphony. Polyphony was envisioned as a medium for students of Okayama University's Global Discovery Program to put their creative, academic, and editorial work into print. Each issue of Polyphony will include a varied combination of the following:

- ❖ Edited academic papers from GDP courses written by the students
- ❖ Creative pieces ranging from artwork to fictional writing
- ❖ Editorials written by staff and students focusing on issues both in and outside of Japan
- ❖ Film, book, and/or food reviews
- ❖ Travel pieces focusing on different areas of Japan (or other countries)

If you have any questions or comments that you would like to have printed in the next issue (in this section), please send your inquiries to **PolyphonyGDP@gmail.com**.

Also, please check out the GDP/Polyphony blog (<https://discoverypolyphony.com/>) where alternative material from staff and students will be posted on a regular basis.

Thank you for reading.



Photo by **Stefanie Petrovic**

Adventure Awaits, Have No Fear

Forrest Maynock

Culture shock is a fear that everyone seems to have, but many also wish to experience it firsthand through travel. I was one of those people. When I first arrived in Japan, I was a babe lost in the woods of language barriers and cultural differences. I was wandering around Haneda Airport for most of my 2-hour layover, second-guessing the directions that were given to me. When I arrived at Okayama Airport, I spent 5 minutes trying to translate the name of my hotel to the cab driver. The first day of the Discovery Program's orientation was spent doing mountains of paperwork that felt so unnecessary at the time.

Despite all these experiences I managed to survive, and, looking back, it was more about the language barrier than it was a culture shock, and other things that could be considered cultural shocks were swiftly dealt with before they became a 'real' shock.

How garbage is separated in Japan initially "overwhelmed" me, but within the first month I was correcting my roommates on what went where. Taking shoes off at the door was something I had been trained to do by my Grandmother since a young age, so there was very little shock from that experience. Bowing quickly became a matter of muscle memory. Not tipping was something I was used to doing in America because I couldn't ever afford to leave any tips. To be quite honest, I haven't really been 'culture shocked' by anything. Maybe it will still happen, I've only been here for over a year, but I have my doubts.

My two biggest actual culture shocks: The price/amount of cheese and meat, and the efficiency of everything from trains to clerks. These were my two legitimate shocks, and I had prior knowledge of the otherworldly efficiency before arriving.

So, why was I personally not shocked by the cultural differences between America and Japan? Simple answer: I wanted to be shocked.

When I first landed in Japan, I was expecting to get off the plane and feel something different. Really, I just felt jetlagged. Too much looking likely led to my brain being battle-ready for the inevitable differences and it worked overtime to connect the differences with past experiences and internalized cultural knowledge. Everything that I knew was different or even the opposite of America was quickly melted away by quick use of logic. While this may have taken some of the initial fun and wonder out of my overall experience, I believe that it helped me in the long run in terms of settling in and becoming comfortable living in a foreign nation.

Please consider the following my dear readers: If you look for something incessantly you may very well find it, but does it still have the impact you hoped it would when you first started searching? Learn to be pleasantly surprised by things.

The cultural differences have shrunk to the point of almost being invisible. I may still see the occasional page from some obscure manga that makes me question existence, or the occasional food article that makes my eyebrow twitch uncontrollably, but otherwise I have made myself at home and conquered my fear of the unknown.



Photo by **Myia Price-Frohlich**

Social Parasites & the Oscars

Nanda Illahi

When talking about the movie that shook the world in 2019, various works will come to mind, but we definitely can't forget to mention *Parasite* (2019). This Bong Joon-ho masterpiece has been creating history since day one. *Parasite* (2019) is the first South Korean film to win Palme d'Or and the Golden Globes. Even more, it is the first foreign language film to earn outstanding performance by a cast at SAG Awards and best picture at the Oscars.

Parasite (2019) starts with a strong introduction of what living in poverty may look like for a family in South Korea. The film begins with a tour of the Kim family's semi-basement apartment while the eldest son, Kim Ki-woo (Choi Woo-shik) struggles to find a free internet connection. The turning point for the Kims is depicted in the giving of a scholar's stone by Min-hyuk (Park Seo-joon) that they believe will bring fortune or wealth to the family. Along with the stones, Min-hyuk also offers a job for Ki-woo to replace him as an English tutor for a rich family's daughter. Afterwards, as Ki-woo earns his place as a tutor for Park family's eldest daughter, he becomes the Kims' key to enter the house and life of the Parks.

The movie is one of those works that is difficult to explain without spilling the little details that made it the ultimate *chef-d'oeuvre*. In its core, *Parasite* (2019) is a metaphor of the society and the sentimental bond of family as the smallest social unit. It is a jam-packed work of art.

The Kims' nerve-wracking journey commences with Ki-woo's success in convincing Mrs. Park (Jo Ye-jeong) that he's really an intelligent college student from a prestigious university she respects. Ki-woo, then, recommends his sister Ki-jung (Park So-dam) to teach art for Park's second child. Ki-woo pretends that Ki-jung, aka Jessica, is merely an acquaintance and hides their true relationship. The Kim family conspires to scam

the Parks and lure them to hire all four family members.

Parasite (2019) relates the story of how the rich and the poor are systematically separated; yet, in reality, they continue to live side-by-side. As the rich and privileged, Park family, keeps on underestimating and debasing their “servers,” they forget how much assistance they have received from the Kim family. Mr. Park (Lee Sun-kyun) will have difficulty in running his errands without his driver, Kim Ki-taek (Song Kang-ho). Similarly, since the poor and miserable, Kim family, start to manipulate the Parks and take advantage of the rich, they will have a hard time living without the help of the Park family.

As the movie reaches its climax, it is evident that the film is more than a simple critique about society’s hierarchical system. The suspenseful scenes, that shall not be spoiled here, reveal the more complex relationship between the two families. The Park’s house bears the portrayal of the deep-rooted bloody division between the haves and the have-nots and what they’re willing to do to protect what they have, at least what remains of it.

The mutualistic and symbiotic relationship between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, is the message that Bong Joon-ho wants to deliver; one cannot live without the other. *Parasite* (2019) is a satirical commentary on the broken and archaic system of social stratification.



Photo by **Stefanie Petrovic**



Photo by **Kenji Inagaki**

The Real Magical Worlds of Ghibli and Pixar

Trung Manh Quoc Nguyen

Sometimes I found myself perplexed between the movies of Pixar and Ghibli Studio. Both are equally important parts of my childhood and their impacts are still felt by me even now. Although I must admit that I like Pixar movies better (perhaps because I started watching them way earlier), the films of Ghibli Studio are no less highly regarded and, in my opinion, stand as magnificent works of artistic achievement in their own right.

That is why there was a time I used to think about both studios’ methods of success. Having been interested in filmmaking since as far back as I could remember, the first movies I came to for inspiration and references were usually children animations. Their core plot ideas are simple, do not engage in too heavy-headed themes, and their characters are colorful, diversely portrayed yet still relatable. It is my belief that the way we watch children’s animations is a little different from other kinds of movies: We tend to be less judgmental about plots and characters, and just prefer to sit down and be immersed in the new world portrayed on the big screen. When viewed in such a sense, I guess that what I am looking for is not specifically the “methods” of children animated films, but why those films are so enjoyable, and are able to engage us as viewers. It is of my own opinion that the possible explanation can be found in examining the two words “reality” and “magic” – Ghibli movies are constructed around

the basis of “magic in reality,” and on the other hand, Pixar is “reality in magic.”



Photo by **Myia Price-Frohlich**

Rarely ever in a Pixar movie do we see daily-life settings. They are instead worlds where cars can talk and act like humans, where toys have a consciousness of their own, where feelings have personalities, and where the dead can play banjos and have a music festival, etc.; in short, anything but what we are directly familiar with. Their creations are out-of-this-world, sometimes even bizarre, but when we look closely, they are in fact not so distant. Seemingly inanimate objects in the Pixar world have human personalities, so they must also have human emotions and in turn are forced to face human problems similar to what we are facing daily. In the first *Toy Story* (1995), Woody’s jealousy against Buzz Lightyear is not so different from our feelings when our friends got higher scores than us in a test, or when we are left alone in a group of three while the other two just keep chatting to one another. Similarly, in *Finding Nemo* (2003), Merlin panicking when Nemo was taken away is what all fathers in the world would feel if put into the same circumstances, regardless of whether they are humans or clownfishes. Pixar movies open up magical worlds like we have never seen before, yet we see ourselves within such seemingly strange and unrelatable characters, seeing “reality in magic”.

On the contrary, Ghibli movies not only have very “human” settings, but they are also very nostalgic - they remind us of a time far away, of the peaceful and quiet world where tall trees and green hills still dominated the landscapes instead of towering skyscrapers. I found it interesting that almost all Ghibli movies use children as main characters, especially Miyazaki’s; perhaps because children

have much more imagination than adults and therefore are able to “craft” their own magical worlds out of the mundane life. Indeed, the magic we see the most in Ghibli movies is children magic, or, to better put, “childhood magic” – the kind that is absolutely pure and true to heart that the children either discover, stumble in or create themselves. The kind that all of us have had experienced with one way or another, but our memories of them lay buried underneath the modern busy life. Most of the out-of-the-ordinary bits in *Whisper of The Heart* (1995) are Shizuku’s own “creation” through the process of writing and imagination; *Spirited Away* (2001) depicts Chihiro’s adventures in the magical world that she “stumbles into”; and *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989) is the story of how a young witch “discovering” her power on the journey to “discover” herself. Ghibli’s adventures are of children, and the adults, if they play a part at all, are only active in the background. The contrast between the children’s world and that of the adults is shown most noticeably in *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), where Totoro is only visible to and only interacts with the two children heroines. One can also argue that the decision to turn Chihiro’s parents into pigs in *Spirited Away* (2001) is not only to prevent them from participating in Chihiro’s adventure, but to also illustrate a “loss of innocence”. The parents are preoccupied only with eating, totally disregarding the strangeness of the situation they are in, which is already realized by Chihiro from the beginning. The films of Ghibli often end with the children returning to their ordinary life once again, but is it still the same, now that they have experienced the unordinary? Could their reality be the same as ours, or much more magical? Hence my interpretation of “magic in reality.”



Photo by **Kenji Inagaki**

Yet, what is most fascinating in this comparison case is also the similarity between the two animation studios: how reality and magic are connected together interchangeably, despite initially being perceived so differently. The case is not “magic in reality” and “reality in magic” anymore, but now is “magic is reality” and vice versa: “reality is magic”. Ghibli movies are most skillful in this aspect, as they seem to create magic out of thin air, where there is nothing unusual. There is a scene in *Whisper of The Heart* where Shizuku sings her own version of the John Denver’s song “*Take Me Home, Country Roads*” in a small basement, and soon is joined by a whole “orchestra”; the scene is so upbeat yet still feels so heartfelt and full of emotions that I think Ghibli has created “magical” moments even when there is no actual magic at all. In the same way, Pixar setting their stories in strange worlds but following a perceivable plot line and developing relatable characters is also an effort to turn magic into real life, and in the process makes magic feel more familiar, as they have already had elements of real life in them.

In the end, I guess that is the wonder of children’s animations, even when viewed by adults. They serve as a means for us to escape reality and jump into their magical worlds, yet still remind us that their magic is not something strange and unrelatable, but a part of what we are already so used to. They remind us that, just like magic is familiar, reality is also full of possibilities to create ordinary magic.



Photo by **Haruna Miyagawa**



Photo by **Ayami Nakatani**

Nostalgia Fuel & Creative Decay

Forrest Maynock

American culture exists in a time of an unprecedented abuse of nostalgia. From the movies we watch to the food we eat, nostalgia dominates. I grew up in the late 90’s and early 2000’s. Nostalgia was present at that time, but it was more of a longing that the older people around me had, not a widespread social tool that dominated media and general everyday life.

Nowadays everyone young and old seems to wish for a different time and place from the distant past. This is not to say that nostalgia was absent in the recent past, but it now dominates media at an extraordinary rate.

Instead of moving forward and breaking new ground, people prefer to regress and look back on the past while wearing rose-colored goggles. I too fall into this trap often. I prefer the styles and media of the 1980’s to many of the current day alternatives.

Nostalgia is a powerful force, but it is not an evil or fully negative one either. If used properly nostalgia can actually help propel something to another level of quality. Simply slapping in a recognizable reference does not elevate a product, and in some cases, it can hurt that product.

Nowhere is this nostalgic takeover more notable than in Hollywood, where films from past American cinema are being remade or reimagined at an alarming rate, and new and

original content is sparse at best. Fanservice is one way of describing this media phenomena.

I personally would not place the blame of this occurrence directly at the feet of Hollywood studios, but instead chalk most it up to consumer demand. People want to relive their childhoods (or at least an idealized version of them). They don't want unfamiliar territory where they have little to no control. Exploring new territory is a risk that many film studios may not wish to invest in since the market seems to lean backwards to familiar nostalgia fueled media.

An example of this can be seen in the recent *Star Wars* revival. A film like *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) or *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) were received well by audiences and made billions of dollars combined; these two films are especially egregious in the fanservice and nostalgia bait department. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) for example is little more than a retread of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), but with new underwritten characters and a messier plot.

Alternatively, a film like *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) which took several creative risks and tried to take the franchise in a new direction (for better or worse) was lambasted by audiences. Since *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, Disney has been on a bit of an audience appeasement tour with mixed to negative results.



Photo by **Stefanie Petrovic**

Another even more prevalent example of nostalgia fuel can be seen in the book (2011) and later film (2018), *Ready Player One*. Both the film and book rely heavily on past iconography from American “geek” culture.

Watching the movie in particular accentuates this, and I personally left me lost in a hailstorm of images and references that made me feel warm inside even though I only recognized about half of said references.

After leaving the theater I gradually began thinking less and less about the film till the point came when I could not remember the name of it without some coaxing. I actually still can't remember the names of the main characters. Countless pop culture references and little substance does not make for a good finished product; if anything, it acts as a big distraction to cover generic plots and shallow characters.

This is the power and downfall of nostalgia. In return for happy images and references to past events and films, we lose many of the creative elements that have helped film, literature and other forms of media evolve over the years. We sacrifice going off the beaten path for walking in circles on a very populated and decorated racetrack. A storied franchise like *Star Wars* has regressed to sloppy retreading of familiar ground instead of evolving to a new stage.

Remember, there are clearly examples of nostalgia being used properly. One good recent example would be the recreation of late 1960's Hollywood in Quentin Tarantino's 9th film, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019). The nostalgia here is not used to distract or please the audience but is instead utilized to recreate a particular period in time, and make the finished product feel genuine.

Nostalgia is nothing new, many films and other pieces of media from the past are “remakes” of or heavily influenced by previous media, but the reliance on familiar territory was nowhere near as prevalent as it is today. Nostalgia is now one of the primary fuels for American media. Nostalgia and cheap fanservice sell.

Why nostalgia is so negative in today's media landscape is not due to the love of the familiar itself, but instead the suffocation of original creative ideas. Repeating the same ideas constantly may have a negative effect on the coming generations as their childhood stories will likely be poorly done rehashes of past media that their parents enjoyed.

The money from major studios for example will more likely go to an established franchise with a with audiences.

Independent and smaller budget films are still being made, and TV has evolved from being the boob-tube to being arguably the new frontier of creative storytelling, but even these mediums have become a little corrupted by the sweet taste of memberberries. For example, a show like *Stranger Things*, great first season aside, is little more than 1980's nostalgia bait.

So enjoy the fourth and fifth seasons of *Stranger Things*, and *Indiana Jones 5*, and *Bill & Ted Face the Music*...actually I'm looking forward to *Bill & Ted*, I love the dynamic between those two characters...also the new *Dune* movie, but only because the director is great. Oh, who am I kidding? I'll probably watch the next big *Star Wars* extravaganza to come well as well; but if any of these movies stink of oversaturated nostalgia I'll be the first one to point it out.

Clearly everyone can enjoy some good old-fashioned nostalgia in their media intakes, they just shouldn't let it replace a good story or quality characters.



Photo by **Myia Price-Frohlich**

A Look at Mumrik Coffee

Words and pictures by
Kotoko Matsumoto

奉還町商店街に駅側の入り口から入ると、数歩歩いただけで左側からパッと鮮やかな青が目飛び込んでくる。2019年12月21日にオープンした北欧モチーフのカフェ、「mumrik coffee」だ。日本語でも英語でもない「mumrik」は、「ムムリク」、と発音する。

このカフェの客は店内に入っただけで、店主の山口真理子さんの優しい声で出迎えられる。入り口から見て左側には山口さんが買い付けた食器のコレクション、右側は手作りの温かみ溢れる机が3つとモダンで座り心地の良い椅子が6つ、そして正面にはメニューを注文するカウンターがある。カウンターの周りにはパウンドケーキやマカロン、クッキーなどのお菓子や、持ち帰ってカフェメニューを楽しめるコーヒー豆、茶葉などが並ぶ。一つ一つの商品に付いた説明書きやメニュー表は山口さんの手書きだ。黒い台紙に白いペンで書かれた柔らかい文字に客たちが癒されることは言うまでもない。流れる曲とやわらかい照明のひかり、何を頼んでも美味しいカフェメニュー、入り口のガラス窓から見える奉還町商店街を往来する人々。おしゃれな店内の雰囲気は日々の疲れを癒すのにぴったりだ。

ところで筆者はこのカフェを「北欧」モチーフと言及したが、これは必ずしも正しくない。最も正確に言うならば、「フィンランド」モチーフだろう。なぜならば、店内の商品はフィンランドのものばかりだからだ。店名のムムリクは、スヌスムムリク、というムーミンのキャラクターから名前を取った。日本語に直訳すると「カギタバコのアイツ」という意味になるが、日本語名にすると、「スナフキン」という。日本でも特に人気のムーミンキャラクターだ。山口さんもスナフキンが大好きで、自由奔放な性格に惹かれたという。

8歳の頃からムーミンが好きだと言う山口さんは、今までの人生でフィンランドに

魅了され続けてきた。トーベ・ヤンソンの作り出すムーミンの世界観に恋をした彼女は、20代前半でムーミン関連のものを買い漁っていたと言う。そんな彼女がもう一つの沼にはまったのがその時期だ。

京都にムーミンの商品を取り扱う店があると聞きつけて行ってみれば、そこは食器店だった。ムーミンの商品はないんです、と申し訳なさそうに言う食器店の方はとても優しく、ムーミングッズを取り扱う店が近辺にないかと一緒に探してくれた。その食器店こそ山口さんがフィンランド食器の世界にのめり込む原因となる店だった。その店のこだわりは、「フィンランドの食器しか置かない」ということ。こだわりとともに働くということに憧れを抱き始めたのはそのタイミングだったそうだ。



「自分の手に職をつけて自分の店を持つようになりたい、とは小さい頃から思っていたんですね」

そう語る山口さんがコーヒーに興味を持ったのは、同じく自分が店を構える奉還町商店街にある「ONSAYA COFFEE」で職を得たときのことだったと言う。高校卒業後に就職した会社の雲行きが怪しくなってから職を転々とした山口さん。何度か転職を繰り返した先のチェーンのコーヒー店でキッチンで働くことの楽しさを知った。その次に働いたのが mumrik coffee と同じ奉還町に位置する「ONSAYA COFFEE」だった。コーヒーに豆の焙煎から携わることで、今まではインスタントで済ませていたコーヒーの世界の奥深さに気付いたのだ。転職を繰り返す中で、会社という一つの集団に属することが合わない、と悟った山口さん。

次に職を得たのは、「暮らしと珈琲」というカフェだった。そこで山口さんが手に入れたノウハウがイベント出店である。そのノウハウを生かしつつイベント出店を始めた屋号が「mumrik coffee」だ。これまで、古着を扱うイベントや朝市などに出店してきた。



店舗を持つようになったきっかけは、山口さんの神がかり的な勘があつてのことだった。毎年恒例となったフィンランド旅行中、なんとなく「帰国したらそろそろ不動産屋さんに行ってみようかな」と思ったという山口さんは、奉還町商店街を管轄する不動産に足を運んだ。カフェの場所は奉還町商店街がいい、というのは決めていたそうだ。ONSAYA COFFEE で働くうちに奉還町商店街の空気感に魅了され、将来店舗を持つならここだとずっと思っていたという。しかし奉還町商店街は人気で、なかなか空き店舗ができることはない。

そんな状況でふらりと立ち寄った不動産だったが、なんと空き店舗が丁度あったのだ。どうしよう、と悩みつつも、奉還町商店街に店舗を持つ方にも背中を押され、その店舗を借りることにした。それまで知り合ってきたたくさんの方々から内装や外装を手伝ってもらい、自分のお気に入りのムーミングッズを店内に飾り、自分の城とも言えるこだわりの詰まった店舗が完成した。



暖色系の照明を使うこと、自分の好きなものしか置かないこと、フィンランドじゃないものは置かないこと……ムーミンは好きだがムーミンカフェにはならないように、そこは特に気を遣ったという。

山口さんオススメのメニューは、ウインナーコーヒーやムーミンの話に出てくる木イチゴのジュースなどだ。もちろんどのメニューもオススメであることには違いないので、これは半ば無理やり選んでいたものだ。しかし、スパイスのきいた北欧風の飲み物はやはり特別に感じるそうだ。

自分の店を持つことで一番感じた難しさは、自分が提供しているものをお客さんたちがおいしいと思ってくれているか否かが自分では判断できないこと。しかし、見た目も味も、完成形を見てお客さんたちが嬉しそうにしているのを見るのがやりがいであり、かつ、一番楽しいところだそう。

キッチンの中で動き回る姿はあまり見られたくなく、完成形だけを見て欲しい、と語る。

居心地の良いこのカフェには、今日もいろいろな世代のお客さんが訪れる。筆者も常連の一人で、週に一度はこのカフェに行かなければなんだかそわそわしてしまう。岡山駅近くのフィンランドカフェ。皆さんも一度訪れてみてはいかがだろうか。



Cheap Quality Goodness

Words and pictures by
Forrest Maynock

The life of a college student is one of a constant lack of sleep and proper meals. Thankfully, Japan has a wide selection of cheap and accessible beef bowl (chain) restaurants.

Perhaps the most convenient aspect of these sorts of restaurants is that they are open 24 hours a day all week long; after pulling an all-nighter on that term paper that is due the next morning a college student could take a short bike ride and eat a delicious and inexpensive meal at any time they desire.

First, what is a beef bowl? A beef bowl, or gyudon, is a big bowl filled with rice, beef (or pork) and sometimes an extra ingredient such as ginger or cheese. At beef bowl restaurants there are also many side dish options such as miso soup or salads that can be added to the order. If beef and rice is not your cup of tea then there are also alternatives such as curry and rice, but beef bowls are the staple at these establishments.

There are also a variety of beef bowl restaurants to choose from. The three biggest beef bowl restaurant chains in Japan are Yoshinoya, Sukiya, and Matsuya. Each has their strengths and weaknesses, but as is the case with many things, some strengths are greater than others.

I will be conducting this review by taking four criteria into account for each of these chains: Taste and variety of food, quality of service, atmosphere, and price. I will only be taking the basic beef bowl selections into account and will not be looking at items from the seasonal menu. I also ate at multiple locations for each chain to get a general consensus.

Yoshinoya



Yoshinoya seems to be the most popular of the three major chains overseas, but for me personally it was the weakest of the three chains.

The atmosphere was positive, but not overly memorable. The colors inside are usually very bright to the eyes, but there is also usually quite a lot of space when compared to the other chains. Yoshinoya's biggest selling point was the food itself. The overall taste was excellent and the fact that each of the beef bowls have sesame seeds in them adds to the great taste. The selection of dishes is also quite good, but not as robust as Sukiya.

Each of the locations that I visited had the same sort of issue with service; the servers always came straight up and hovered around until the order had been made. This made the service feel rushed and robotic, and also hurt the overall atmosphere of the establishments. Aside from the service, price was the biggest turn-off. The prices overall were very reasonable and affordable, but when compared to the other gyudon chains, Yoshinoya appeared much more expensive.

Yoshinoya is great if you are looking for an especially tasty bowl of gyudon.

Yoshinoya Score

Taste/Variety: **4.5/5**

Service: **2.5/5**

Atmosphere: **3/5**

Price: **3/5**

Matsuya



Matsuya is by far the most convenient of the three chains for international students and tourists and is also the cheapest of the three chains. Matsuya's quality and selection of food is definitely on the lower end of the spectrum, but each beef bowl comes with a free miso soup, and the sauces provided at the counter are far and away the best of all three chains. The variety is similar to Yoshinoya, but not as good as Sukiya.

In terms of service Matsuya is highly convenient for those of us with shallow wallets and poorer grasps of the Japanese language. Instead of sitting down and ordering from a menu, you order via touchscreen menu, with an English language option, near the entrance where you input your order and pay. The atmosphere at most locations felt a little too cramped at times but was also quite friendly and laid back. The biggest selling point of Matsuya is the price which beats out both Sukiya and Yoshinoya.

Out of the three chains Matsuya seems to be the most college friendly in terms of price and service (for recent, non-Japanese speaking, arrivals).

Matsuya Score

Taste/Variety: **4/5**

Service: **4/5**

Atmosphere: **3.5/5**

Price: **4.5/5**

Sukiya



Sukiya is the most common of the three chains within Japan. Sukiya has the best variety of the three chains. This is where Sukiya excels; the options are quite extensive, and if you are more explorative you can find a lot of interesting dishes.

Taste wise the overall product was slightly better than Matsuya, but not quite as tasty as Yoshinoya's beef bowl. The available sauces at Sukiya are also not on par with those available at Matsuya. The service was above average at each of the locations I visited. Each location also has a "buzzer" at each table that you can push when you are ready to order or buy more.

The price is a bit cheaper than Yoshinoya, but still more expensive when compared to Matsuya. Where Sukiya stands out is in its atmosphere; each of the locations that I visited had very warm and welcoming colors, and the space inside is ample for a comfortable meal.

Sukiya is the chain to visit if you are a person that values variety and atmosphere, then Sukiya is the gyudon branch for you.

Sukiya Score

Taste/Variety: **4/5**

Service: **4/5**

Atmosphere: **4.5/5**

Price: **3.5/5**

Homelessness is My Home

Nanda Illahi

Benedict Anderson implies throughout his book “Imagined Communities” that the more *things* that people of a nation or a community shared together, the stronger their nation-ness would be. He explains these *things* as shared histories, vernaculars and literature, civil life or experiences, and education and administrative pilgrimages. All of these things, then, contribute to the building of what he called as *Imagined Nation*. Presumably, people who had experienced these shared experiences ought to feel belonging to one another as one community, to assume themselves as a part of an “...indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship.” (Anderson 2006[1983], p. 6). However, he didn’t seem to touch upon the fact that someone can experience all the same journeys and still feel like they don’t belong. Someone can be a part of the narrative, the history of a nation, and never once feel like they’re a part of the community.

How do we define *nation* and *homeland*? What constitutes a *nation*? What represents a *home*? Are they interchangeable? According to Anderson, *nation* has become a sovereign community with a deep and strong sense of solidarity that has territorial boundaries or borders (2006[1983], p. 7). In contrast, *home* as a concept is explained by Espiritu, in her book about Filipino Americans, as fluid since it doesn’t necessarily have to always be defined by actual borders (2003, p. 2). Therefore, *nation*, *homeland*, and *home* are not always interchangeable. Some people may consider their *nation* or country of origin as their *home*, some others may not. For instance, as someone who was born and raised in Indonesia and had lived most of her life there, I cannot seem to acknowledge my *nation* as my *home*. There were times when I did feel that my fellow Indonesians, especially the ones I met abroad, were like my distant relatives. However, at the same time, I couldn’t claim Indonesia as my *home* because I don’t feel comfortable and accepted whenever I’m there. *Home* is supposed to be a place where you feel accepted, a place that fits you like a perfectly-sized pair of gloves, and I don’t feel that way when I’m standing on the land that I should be calling

home. As for one’s *nation*, it could either be defined as a place where one came from, or a place where one wants to be. The former, then, made Indonesia my *nation*, but it is not my *home*.



Photo by Khaya Tsuyama

Both authors emphasize that the concepts of *nation* and *home* are imagined meaning that both concepts emerged within specific circumstances that allow for the emergence of fraternity or togetherness, which affects individuals’ sense of identity and belonging. For Espiritu, it seems that because physical and imaginary borders that keep people in and out of places are everywhere, *home* is wherever you make it out to be (2003, pp. 205, 211). Benedict Anderson, however, explains the process in a more elaborative manner.

First, Anderson explains that *nation* is imagined through the illusion of homogeneous, empty time (2006[1983], p. 26). What he meant by homogenous, empty time is the illusion or idea that members of a *nation*, wherever they are, all live on the same timeline. “He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time, but has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.” states Anderson (p. 26). This illusion is enabled by the advancement of technology, in early 19th century it was the mass production and consumption of novels and then followed by newspaper. Nowadays, the development of the world wide web (internet), tv, smartphones, and other media or platforms are the ones enabling this notion of simultaneity. I, myself, am able to feel connected with the people in Indonesia, despite currently living in Japan, simply by scrolling through Twitter, Facebook

or news websites. There's at least an hour difference between the time in Indonesia and Japan, yet I am able to read and watch everything that's happening in Indonesia as long as I am connected to the internet. Even if the news got delayed when I was reading it, I felt as though I was still living there. I am not physically in Indonesia, but my mind and soul seem to still be connected. Technology also allows me to keep in contact with my family and friends everywhere and every day, which somewhat helps retain links to my *nation*—the links being my family and friends.



Photo by **Ayami Nakatani**

Second, *nation* is also imagined through national language rooted from shared vernaculars and print-language (Anderson 2006[1983], pp. 44-45). For example, the creation and use of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language of Indonesia helps unite hundreds of tribes who were—and are perhaps still—using hundreds of different vernaculars. If Indonesian youth in October 28, 1928 didn't declare the Youth Pledge in trying to unite Indonesian people as one *nation*, of one *homeland* with one language, perhaps Indonesia wouldn't be the biggest archipelago nation in the world today. Instead, it would be a bunch of neighboring island nations. This 'doctrine' of our *nation* as our *homeland* was what got me thinking at the beginning of my life that I have to belong in Indonesia because Indonesia is *home*. However, as I grew up, I kept on feeling disoriented in my own *home* because I was always different. I was speaking the same language, but no one understood what I was saying or thinking. No one else around me, when I was growing up, wanted to rebel against the politicians or their family even when those people were visibly wrong. Presumably, this was the root of my *homelessness*. To the fellow members of the *nation*, I was speaking

the language of rebellion and abnormality, I wasn't speaking Bahasa Indonesia. Unfortunately, after having moved to Japan, I still speak a different language. I moved to Japan in the hopes of finally finding a *home*, yet, I am faced with the same problem of language barrier that prohibits me from doing so.

Third, Anderson also mentions shared educational and administrative travels or pilgrimages as a way to imagine *nation* (2006[1983], p. 195), which unfortunately I cannot relate to the majority of Indonesians. Most Indonesian people stay in the country and go to college there, whereas I am currently abroad, pursuing a liberal arts degree that is also not common at all for Indonesian people. Instead, I am 'forced' to relate to people who are also abroad through Indonesian Student Associations and international nation-based gatherings or events. The moment I stepped foot in Japan, I was immediately invited to join the association. Fellow Indonesians just assume that I must be wanting to be surrounded by people of the same *nation* because "We are Indonesian. We have to stick together." Additionally, non-Indonesian who meet me have always asked me where I came from and somehow my *nation* became the only thing that defines me. Whether it is another Indonesian or another foreigner, I am almost always seen as an 'Indonesian' in addition to being 'Nanda.' Wherever I go, I am always followed by my *nation-ness* even though my *nation* is neither my *home* nor my identity.

The last way to imagine *nation* is through shared experiences such as shared histories or narratives (Anderson 2006[1983], pp. 140). Anderson implies that as a part of a *nation*, we're often reminded of the narratives that we ought to have forgotten (pp. 200-01). These narratives usually consist of the chronological events that seemed to be affecting the *nation* and the lives of its people significantly, such as a revolution or declaration of independence. About 12 years of my life was spent on mandatory primary and secondary education where I learned a great deal about Indonesian history. We even have a subject on Citizenship in which we learned about the constitution and policies, so that we could become good citizens. Does it help build up my sense of *nationality*? The answer is both yes and no. On the one

hand, learning about the history and the administration of my country helps me be aware of the struggles and journey that Indonesian people have gone through in building Indonesia. It makes me appreciate the *nation* that I am supposed to love. On the other hand, the fact that I don't experience these struggles hands on also able to make me feel like a 'watcher.' If Indonesian people in 1945 hated the Japanese because of imperialism, I, who live in 2019, can't say or feel the same.

Thus, despite experiencing the same struggles, learning the same narratives, and being legally a part of a *nation*, I still feel out of place within the Indonesian community. I do agree with Anderson that all of these experiences have built some sense of *nation-ness* in me, but I refuse to entitle my entire self with it. As for *home*, I am still in the process of making one, meaning for now I am still *homeless*. Thus, perhaps, *homelessness* is my *home*.

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Photo by **Khaya Tsuyama**

Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living

Raushan Kaliyeva

Human mortality is a primal idea for philosophers. Many philosophers claimed that if there will be no death, there will be no philosophy at all. In my paper, I want to ponder over the change in the concept of death over time.

Various philosophical doctrines have their own attitude towards death. Rationalists say that death has two outcomes: nonentity or afterlife. Epicureans and Stoics claimed that death is an inescapable part of human life: we were born from non-existing and there we will return. If we are not scared of birth, why should we be scared of death? Francis Bacon in his "Of Death" essays says: "It is as natural to die as to be born; and to a little infant, perhaps, the one is as painful as the other."

No one will argue the fact that we all will end up with non-existence. However, none of us can identify what death is and what will be after death. "Everybody dies, but not everybody agrees about what death is" (Thomas Nagel, 1987).

Biopolitics has its own way to deal with death. In biopolitics, the government tries to maximize its efficiency by controlling their population. Population=resource, therefore, the bigger and the more effective the population the better. In biopolitics, the government aims to increase the lifespan of its population and population aims to maximize the pleasure of their life. Based on this principle, killing people is irrational, but at the same time, biopolitics uses human mortality as a power.

Agamben contributed interesting thoughts on how death works in biopolitics:

More interesting for our inquiry is the fact that the sovereignty of the living man over his own life has its immediate counterpart in the determination of a threshold beyond which life ceases to have any juridical value

and can, therefore, be killed without the commission of a homicide.

(Giorgio Agamben, 2003-p115)

According to this quote, juridical value of human life is more powerful than individuals' value of his own life. We can find lots of evidence to prove this statement from our life. Extremely violent perpetrators, whose juridical value converges to zero, might value their lives a lot, but the sovereign will sanction their lives by executing them. Using the same logic, in many countries pregnancy screening, which can identify abnormality in early fetus development, is mandatory and usually, if there will be any risk of any kind of pathology, family will be strongly persuaded to make an abortion. Again, biopolitics sees people as a resource, and wants to have the most productive people, but not disabled or less-productive people.

Euthanasia is more complicated. Terminally ill people are not productive, but since society still has some ethics, patient needs to nullify his life value by claiming his own will to die. Then, the sovereign will measure juridical value of this person and make a decision. Final decision remains encased in sovereign's hands.

When patients with psychiatric disorders (those disorders, which do not affect patients' consciousness) request euthanasia, it becomes even harder. Since juridical value of these individuals is not questionable, the governments are not welcoming this kind of euthanasia. We have a situation opposite to perpetrator execution: an individual self-consciously nullifies his life value, but still has juridical value. Therefore, sovereign sanctions that person's death.



Photo by **Kristoforus Tanuwijaya**

Adam Maier-Clayton, a citizen of Canada, was diagnosed with rare mental illness, which made him feel constant pain and agony. He was fighting for his right to get medically assisted death. His request was rejected, and he committed suicide in a motel after two years of fighting for his right to die. Around the same time, in the Netherlands, Aurelia Brouwers, who demanded the same medical procedure, after eight years of juridical processes, got permission to die. Aurelia Brouwers was suicidal and had 20 attempts to commit suicide. She passed away peacefully in her home surrounded by her family. For Adam, this was inaccessible because the Canadian government decided that juridical value of his life is more important than his personal value of his life.

Adam Maier-Clayton has his video-blog on YouTube. On his videos, he mentioned several times that he is not suicidal, and he does not want to die, but at the same time, he does not want to live. He also said: "I have to commit suicide". We have two paradoxes here. First, Adam says that he does not want to die, but at the same time, he does not want to live. It is obvious that it is physically impossible to satisfy those two desires at the same time. The second paradox is his attitude toward suicide. Suicide is a rebellious act of escaping this formality of juridical value. It is a personal decision to end your life, so nobody can force somebody to commit suicide (if it happens, it will be probably considered as a murder). Nevertheless, the first paradox is more interesting for our interest in life and death. By saying "I do not want to die, but I do not want to live," Adam sanctioned both life and death. He transformed himself into the third position: a juxtaposition of death and life; a position where he is neither dead nor alive.

This transformation shows us that the ancient concept of death as a final act of human life, which unifies everyone, is no more justifiable. Death in its simplicity becomes very complex. That of course affects (or is even caused by) biopolitics. Foucault mentions that in the nineteenth-century death disappeared from political routine:

One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death. This is perhaps what explains that disqualification of death which marks the recent wane of the rituals that accompanied it.

(Michel Foucault, 1978-p138)

However, a power of death did not disappear completely and sovereign has found forgotten power relatively fast: "...something very similar to re-discovery of death has started to take place in the Western world since the mid-twentieth century" (Özpolat G, 2017-28). While making that re-discovery, sovereign realized that now disallowing life does not necessarily lead to death. By disallowing life, government nullifies juridical value of human, but not killing a human. It transforms human to that third position, where death and life intersects.

Understanding what death is seems to be beyond human's intellectual limits. However, death evolves together with humanity. The more complicated we become; the more complicated our life and death becomes. Humans are no longer just biological organisms with two main functions: to be born and to die. We are institutionalized individuals whose life value can be measured using various scales. Adam Maier-Clayton and his experience made a paradigm shift in the concept of death.

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Photo by **Myia Price-Frohlich**

1978-1991: A Firsthand Experience of Panic Attacks & Breast Cancer

Forrest Maynock

Part One: Panic Attacks

The year was 1978. Olivia said that her husband had just died of lung cancer the year before. Her whole world was turned upside down, and this was only the beginning of her long journey of pain and suffering. This death was so pivotal that it seemed to reshape the entire family from top to bottom. Olivia described this as the starting point of her own medical issues, and throughout our conversation she would return to this moment as pivotal.

Olivia: "It shook the whole family. We were devastated. My oldest son took it the worst; he just lost it...became very troublesome after that."

Author: "So your husband's death was the starting point?"

O: "...Yes, I think it was. After that is when everything started."

Olivia had worked for AT&T since 1961, starting as a phone operator before moving to engineering assistant, then finally to engineering planner. Her life should have been at its peak in 1978, with four children and a stable job, but her husband's death shook the foundations of her being. First, her oldest child started to rebel and got himself into legal trouble on several occasions. Then, her two middle children became "more apathetic and less helpful" with the youngest child and chores around the house.

Finally, she started to have trouble sleeping. First, only a few hours of tossing and turning at night, but within a month it had escalated to a fear of sleep itself. She had an "inescapable fear of something happening" that sent her into a panic every day at dusk. Some nights she could sleep at 3AM, but most nights she could not sleep until 5AM when the sun started to rise. Olivia thought often about death and dying as a form of escape. She described these thoughts as "not suicidal, but more like an invasion of my

mind." Olivia bottled up these feelings and tried to keep them as private as possible in order to maintain a "sense of control over [her] life." Months passed and, with little sleep, a chaotic household, and declined performance, Olivia started to experience panic attacks.

O: "I had to cross this bridge every day to get to work, and many days I had to stop my car on the middle of that bridge and just start shaking and screaming like bloody murder."

A: "Sounds terrifying..."

O: "Yes, and I would sit in the back of church close to the door so that I could quickly leave if I had an attack, and then I had to be dragged out of work. I broke down in the middle of an important client's call and simply couldn't carry on the call."

A: "Dragged?"

O: "Yes, dragged, I couldn't move, and I was screaming hysterically."

A week after being dragged out of her office in the middle of work, Olivia was given a "forced retirement." It was only after this event that Olivia sought medical attention. She went to her personal doctor, Dr. Baldwin, and was given vitamin shots and advice that has helped her cope: "He told me to cry, he said 'you need to cry...you're holding it in, don't do that.'" This advice allowed Olivia to be more open with her previously bottled up emotions and helped to reduce the number and intensity of the panic attacks. Olivia was also given breathing exercises and guided imagery exercises to help deal with her emotions and fear of sleeping.

Guided imagery is a form of mind-body intervention that allows the patient to create a past or imaginary experience in their mind. Olivia went on to state that she was never diagnosed, but she felt that her symptoms were a form of depression.

A: "So you learned to cope?"

O: "[Relieved sigh] Yes, but I don't think it ever really left, I just learned to sleep and to let my emotions flow freely...I think that it was all connected, at least in part, you see it never really left, I just learned how to deal with it."

and how my family life was going probably had a lot to do with the outcome.”

She feels that all of these pieces were connected and essentially culminated in her cancer. Olivia was not fully satisfied by how her case was handled and decided to seek further help from the doctor who had helped her with her panic attacks. Dr. Baldwin gave Olivia a series of heavy Vitamin C and B12 IV drips, heavy doses of potassium and magnesium, and gave her additional visualization and guided imagery techniques to work with. She was also told to start a biphasic sleeping pattern (sleeping more than once a day). Olivia was very positive when discussing these techniques. She claims that these techniques had the greatest “psychological” effects, and truly helped her cope with the gravity of her situation. With the guided imagery and visualization techniques Olivia would use religious symbology as anchors and images to focus on. Dr. Baldwin also suggested attending support groups, but Olivia rejected this advice. When asked why she had not immediately gone to Dr. Baldwin, she responded that she had initially contacted his office, but he was out of town for a few months, and was heavily booked for many months after his return. If given the option, she would have first visited Dr. Baldwin before having surgery and chemotherapy.

A: “Was there one thing that kept you going more than anything else? A focal point?”

O: “Well, my religion obviously, and I guess you could say a sort of vanity [laughs]...I would look in the mirror and see myself and think that I didn’t want to be that way forever...and of course, religiously, I don’t think I could have succeeded without God’s help...”

A: “And what role did your kids play in all this?”

O: “They were a bunch of brats! They only made me suffer more than I had to! [Olivia laughs uproariously].”

In the following year, Olivia decided that many changes needed to be made in her life. Following the conclusion of her cancer treatments, Olivia began to take action. In order to maintain her health Olivia has sacrificed eating the foods that she used to love so much. This does not mean that Olivia never eats her

favorite foods, but she only occasionally eats foods that she used to love but now sees as unhealthy. She calls these times that she breaks away from her current diet cheat days. These cheat days were suggested by her doctor, Dr. Baldwin, who suggested that having a cheat day once or twice a month would give Olivia something to look forward to and would keep her mentally stable. Olivia made the choice of sacrificing the foods that she loved after her cancer diagnosis in 1989. Ever since she has been living on a diet of organic and raw foods that provide Olivia with health benefits. Olivia seems well versed in the specific benefits of each of her food choices and was quick to explain in detail every item she mentioned.

A: “So what does your current diet look like?”

O: “Oh boy...umm, well five days a week I have a shot of wheatgrass to oxidize my system, and an apple ginger berry juice to help my bloodstream, and I’ll eat a raw and organically grown salad every day. Hmm...also raw goat milk, but if I can’t get goat milk then I’ll get raw cow milk, and I also sometimes have kefir, yogurt and kombucha. Soups as well...split pea, tomato and black bean are the ones I eat the most these days. On some days I’ll eat lightly cooked meats...also nuts, cheese, and the fruits from my yard. Absolutely no hormones in the meats or cheeses! Oh, and kala namak salt as seasoning! It has a lot of sulfur in it which is good!”

A: “What all do you have in your garden?”

O: “Apples, blackberries, blueberries, chives, mint for mint tea, lemongrass, pears, raspberries, strawberries, plums, cherries, grapes, and walnuts...but I can’t bust those open very well. I also used to have peaches, but the deer killed that tree off...they’re trying to get at everything else as well.”

A: “So what is your main reason for eating all of these things? Do they have a particular nutritional value for you?”

O: “Yes of course. Eating this way helps keep my body chemistry balanced, and of course these foods help fight the cancer, I think. Have you ever heard of the Johanna Budwig Treatment? Look it up! She calls for fermented foods, flaxseed oil and yogurt. I

try and follow that...I also feel that this diet makes it easier for me to detox my body.”

Olivia prepares a lot from the fruits and herbs that grow in her yard, but she buys most of her food from the two local health food stores in her area: Country Aire and Sunny Farms. Olivia was very quick to state that the foods that she had prepared for her must be made from raw and organic ingredients and could not be cooked as they kill much of the health benefits in the heating process. When asked about her garden Olivia stated that she doesn't really tend it, and simply goes out and picks whatever is available for her salads and, “throws it all together.”

Part Three: 1991

June 1991. Olivia made her final trip to the treatment center for her last checkup. The tests indicated a return of cancer, this time in the left breast. Olivia considered her options. She decided to forego treatment and instead focus on her family relationships and personal needs. As a start she took her youngest daughter on a trip around Europe as a high school graduation present. Later, she reconnected with her oldest son who had been in and out of prison for many years. Finally, she decided to move from California to Washington. This move in states was largely influenced by the negative change in air quality in California, and a desire for a change in scenery. Olivia had been in southern California for most of her life and felt that staying there would only continue to drag her life down further.

O: “I didn't want to have to go through all that again, I then and there decided to go on with my life. I was moving to a new state, and I just had no interest in dealing with the surgeries and the pain again. I was fed up and did not want to deal with the cut, burn, and poison associated with [modern medicine]...I haven't been in a doctor's office since; unless you count the dentist.”

A: “So no other follow ups? Do you still think you have cancer?”

O: “[Dismissively] Oh who knows, probably! But I'm eating healthy now, and that's what's important. Surgery would have just sent me back into a depressive state, or

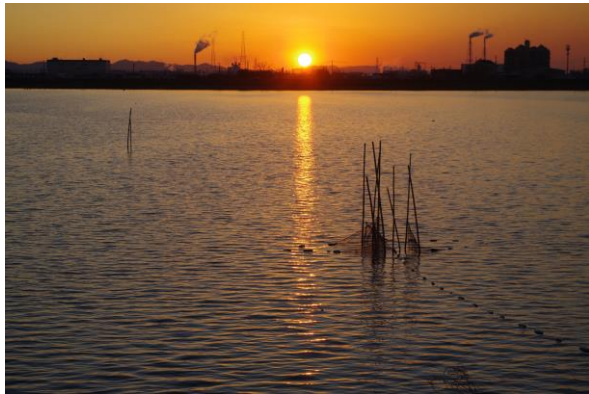
worse it would have killed me...that's their goal, cut, burn and poison!”

This decision was applauded by Dr. Baldwin but was looked down on by Olivia's immediate family. Her second oldest son was especially distraught and felt like Olivia was giving up on life. Olivia, on the other hand, felt that the medical system had let her down and that medicines associated with the system only impacted her in a negative manner. She felt comfortable with the alternative treatments that she was receiving from Dr. Baldwin, and upon further research would follow her own self-treatments. One self-imposed treatment that Olivia began to follow was the Gerson Diet/Therapy, which is a popular diet that is specifically designed to fight cancer. The diet/therapy includes mostly fruits, vegetables, and mineral heavy supplements. The therapy also requires detoxification enemas to help clear toxins from the body. Olivia admitted that strictly following the Gerson Diet was not fully possible for her because of her love of meat, but, as a general rule, she has been following a loose version of this diet and detoxification since 1989. Now in 2019, Olivia is 78 years old and settled in her ways.

A: “Do you still speak with Dr. Baldwin?”

O: “I did a few years ago...gee I hope he's fine...you know he gave the best advice of all, he said ‘the mind does not ask, it does!’ That really changed how I looked at myself. It was from then on that I began to focus on taking my fate into my own hands...you know, when I was working as a nurse I saw a man who had gone crazy because he didn't have enough salt in his body...that was so strange for me. The doctor just came in and gave him a heavy saline drip and he started to calm down. I firmly believe that a mixture of allopathic and natural medicine is the best for the world...the world is moving away from alkalinity and more towards acidity, but acidity is death...that's how it is with food. The typical American diet is generally unhealthy and bad, but not all the time...balance is always necessary.”

Discovery Program for Global Learners Photo Contest 2019 Winners



1st Place: **Michinobu Mino**

In 2019, the Discovery Program for Global Learners hosted a photo contest open to students and faculty members alike.

Although the photo contest was quite some time ago, we at *Polyphony* would like to use this space to honor the top-placing photos and give recognition to those who participated.

Many of the photos used throughout this publication are from the photo contest as well. Our students and faculty possess a wide range of talents and interests not limited to the purely literary or academic. True to its name, *Polyphony* also takes the time to showcase works in various formats, either on our blog or in this journal.

In the future, we hope to host another photo contest, so please stay tuned for more details.

We are always open to submissions of any kind; if you have writings, academic work, photography, artwork, or creations of any kind that you wish to share, please feel free to submit your work at any time. We are always happy to showcase anything from within the program.

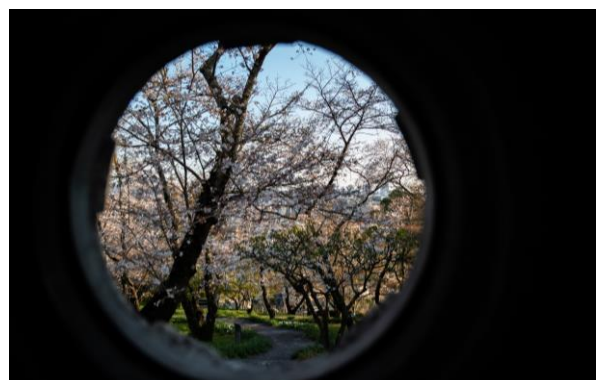
All submissions should be sent to **PolyphonyGDP@gmail.com**. We are so excited to see what you have to offer.



2nd Place: **Stefanie Petrovic**



3rd Place: **Stefanie Petrovic**



4th Place: **Kristoforus Tanuwijaya**

Star-crossed Lovers

Words and photos by
Pandita Suthamporn

Have our souls ever crossed paths before,
Or was it our paralleled lives bound to intersect,
My soul was silently rewinding the cassette in
retrospect,
Assembling, retrieving, dissecting all that could
be in a singular time-capsulated block,
Working in latent with the beat of the clock,
Manifesting itself is a seamless interplay of two
karmic connections,
Reunited, waiting with time to return from
slumber,
As the plot unfolds itself once more,
Marks the genesis of a long-forgotten story
untold.



Photo by **Ayami Nakatani**

Man in a Room

Forrest Maynock

Scene: A man alone in his room sitting on his bed in silence. Occasional twitching. He is staring at a picture of a dead tree on the wall in his room. Monologue.

God once told a little story about a bird he used to hang with back in the day, they used to hang in the outback of outer space.

[begins to slowly stand up and turn to face the audience in a pirouette sort of motion, voice is questioning]

The mind is a strange beast; it crawls out and eats your expectations right out of the hands that feed it.

[begins to pace back and forth, thoughtful voice]

The big questions in life are a little too hard to answer but so are trigonometry questions.

[stops and hangs his head slightly while facing the audience, voice is melancholy]

What's the point? Stupid radish. I think my mind is broken mom...you don't seem to care; I'll just drop off the cliff with my cat and dance in the dark without my head. At least you know what you know.

[begins to walk back and forth across the stage very quickly; almost in a power walk, voice is raised now]

Cut. Print. Press...press releases for the edge of midnight are lost right now, but I can light the way Frank.

[stops mid stage, angry voice]

Bob get the hell out man, you stick like rotting onion juice in the sun, and why do you even think the people see your splendor shining in tight quarters of long narrow corridors? Huh?

[erratic movement, maniacal voice]

No answer: from you I least expected a simple tug at the arm or leg or face. You challenge the true authority here. You brigand. Unhand me fool. I will smite your soul in 7...8...9...0...4 days. Can you see me, you mighty jerk? Hmm, no, only a trail of intestines that you dragged through the door on the way in. I slap you my kind twit! What kind of douchery is this? The kind that kills us all in the blink of an atom's apple. Babbling brook be my trailblazer of guidance and last chance of redemption.

[movement back to stability, voice is calm]

You know who wants it, Yogsloth. He wants your soul and life essence. Trying to equate one's life to the perils of warping is vastly impossible. The impossibilities are only visible to those who read between the lines of fate. The death of the grim reaper is inconceivable but entirely possible.

[thoughtful pause, asked whimsically]

Your mind is my mind, but whose mind do we belong to?



Photo by **Stefanie Petrovic**

A One-Day Trip to Osaka

Words and photos by
Trung Manh Quoc Nguyen

Osaka is the second largest metropolitan area in Japan after Tokyo and is also one of the most visited cities not only in Japan, but also worldwide. However, it is possible to experience all the best Osaka has to offer in just one day. Let's find out!

Morning

If you are starting from Okayama Station, the preferred (and arguably the cheapest) route to Osaka is to take the Ryobi night bus, which will take you to Osaka at around late morning.



JR Osaka Station

After a tiring bus trip, what is better than to just take a "chill break" and hang around some of Osaka's most crowded and famous shopping malls, located right next to Osaka station? Some famous names are Osaka Station City (which is basically the heart of Osaka station itself), LUCUA Osaka, HEP-FIVE Osaka and Grand Front Osaka.



HEP-FIVE Ferris Wheel

HEP-FIVE is highly recommended, as aside from a fulfilling shopping experience, you can also get on the grand HEP-FIVE Ferris Wheel. At the height of 106m at its highest point, you can get a panorama view of the whole city, all the way to Mount Ikoma.

For lunch, drop by the Kuromon Ichiba Market, the famous seafood market which traced itself back to as early as the Meiji era. The market is marked for its wealth of street food and fish. Many restaurants can be found among its 150 shops, stands and venues, perfect for anyone who prefers a little bit of the sea in the middle of Osaka.



Kuromon Ichiba Market

Afternoon

Osaka is sometimes considered by both locals and tourists alike to be the perfect blend of modern and historical; that is, many historical attractions lie peacefully among the tall skyscrapers and glass buildings. The most famous and, of course, a must-visit destination, is none other than the famed Osaka Castle, used to be the seat of well-known feudal lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi before being taken over by Tokugawa Ieyasu. The beautiful and unique architecture of the castle is sure to leave its tourists mesmerized, and the castle's ground is a famous cherry blossom viewing place when spring hits. The castle itself is also a museum, exhibiting various items of cultural and historical importance of the Toyotomi and subsequence Tokugawa dynasty.



Osaka Castle

After a tour of the castle, another recommended cultural spot is Shitennoji Temple, one of Japan's oldest Buddhist temples and the first ever to be built by the state. Kept in perfect condition ever since the year 593, when it was first established by Prince Shotoku, the temple is the perfect place for anyone who wants to feel the presence of Buddhism in a primary-Shinto country. Just a short walk away is Gokuraku-jodo Garden, also a popular cherry blossom place, but even if you missed the cherry blossom season, the green and peaceful scenery of the garden should prove enough to charm any arrived tourists.



Shitennoji Temple

Evening

After the tiring daytrip to all the Osaka landmarks, it is time to grab some dinner, and in nowhere else you could try signature Osaka dishes than Dotonbori, a food-court street located a couple meters away from Namba Station.



Dotonbori

The heart of Dotonbori is one of the most crowded places in the city, packed with restaurants and food courts lining up to form a whole street, each with their own specialties that sure to charm both visitors and native alike. Some of the recommended delicacies are Takoyaki, Okonomiyaki and Kushikatsu, which is basically deep-fried meat and vegetables on a stick. Osaka was given the nickname of “Tenka no Daitokoro” (The country’s kitchen), way back in the Edo period, and it is only after visiting Dotonbori that you will actually know what it meant.



Takoyaki

Having said as much, upon arrival in Dotonbori many will find out that it was not only famous for its food-court street, but also for the numerous illuminated signboards that stretched all through the length of Dotonbori River, giving the area a very distinct Neon vibe. Tune in for the famous Glico man sign and many others as you take a walk along the riverbank, understanding why Osaka has

another name of “the city that glitters”. Afterwards, when dusk has settled and the city is plunged deep into the night, barhopping is another especially common activity around the area of Namba and America-mura that will surely leave an unforgettable experience.



Glico sign

Afterword

Osaka in general has an easygoing vibe and a fantastic food culture that is a must-see if you want to start experiencing what Japan actually is like. A one-day trip in downtown Osaka will not only help you get to know one of the most beloved cities in the Land of the Rising Sun, but also give you a chance to experience Japanese culture unlike anywhere else. No matter where you are or where you come from, Osaka is always waiting!



Dotonbori

Hiroshima: A City to Remember

Words and photos by
Trung Manh Quoc Nguyen

Hiroshima is a city with a history, and it is not a pleasant one. For the past half a decade, the city has gone through hardships unlike other cities in Japan. Going to Hiroshima, one could not help but be submerged into the history that is part of every building, piece of scenery, and person in the city. Visiting Hiroshima is to learn not only about the traumatic memories that never quite fade, but also the townspeople's efforts to rebuild, restore, and return to the normal life they once had.

Hiroshima Peace Park

Being one of the only two cities in the world ever to experience the horror of atomic bomb, a trip to Hiroshima would never be complete without a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, or Peace Park, located right in the city center can be accessed very easily from Hiroshima Station. Its most popular attraction is Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, dedicated to documenting the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in World War II. The rectangular-shaped museum houses an extensive collection of photos, materials, and media related to the bombing of Hiroshima and with the aim of conveying the horror and destruction of the atomic bomb, including belongings left by the victim, accounts of first-hand eye-witnesses and survivors. It is usual for visitors to leave the museum shaken and in tears - the level of details and the willingness to display every piece of information related to the disaster will make you feel like it is you who have just escaped from the terror, and therefore gaining a better understanding on what the people of Hiroshima had to go through 75 years ago.



A-bomb Dome

Other attractions in the Peace Park include the A-bomb Dome and the Children's Peace Monument, both located in the Peace Park and within walking distance from the museum. When the atomic bomb exploded above Hiroshima, the former Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, with its signature dome, was one of the only buildings left standing, and was converted into the A-bomb Dome as a symbol of the Japanese will and spirit in the face of disasters.

On the other hand, the Children's Peace Monument is built to commemorate the thousands of child victims in the bombing, especially Sadako Sasaki, a girl suffering from radiation poisoning who believed that if she could fold one thousand paper-cranes, her wish of a world without nuclear weapons will be granted. On top of the monument is a statue of a young girl holding a paper crane, and every year thousands of strings of paper-cranes are sent here in memory of her and the child victims.



Children's Peace Monument

Downtown Hiroshima

While not really a destination, Hiroshima downtown is especially busy at night, filled with shops, restaurants, and shopping centres, which main feature is Hondori Street, a pedestrian arcade. While not so different from other cities' downtown areas, Hondori Street is worth visiting to see how bustling Hiroshima city's centre can be, and of course, to enjoy Hiroshima-style Okonomiyaki, one of the region's most famous specialties. Okonomimura (Okonomiyaki Village) is a small area located on the eastern end of Hondori Street that is wholly devoted to the signature dish.

With okonomiyaki restaurants lining up the whole street, it is recommended to simply take a break from your journey and have a bite in one of the busiest areas in Hiroshima.

Miyajima

The island of Miyajima is not exactly close to Hiroshima and therefore should be thought of as a side trip. Located an hour from Hiroshima and must be accessed by ferry, Miyajima is most famous for Itsukushima Shrine's giant torii gate, which at high tides is surrounded by water and seems to stand mightily in the middle of the sea. The island's main attraction is no doubt the Itsukushima Shrine, a huge shrine constructed right above the water level to give the illusion that it is "floating" during high tide. The shrine complex is one of the largest in Japan, and worth a visit just for the experience of being lost in an immersive wooden structure full of pillars,

gates, and Shinto imageries. Miyajima can also be enjoyed on foot through the island's many walking paths, giving visitors access to various big and small temples, beautiful momiji (red leaves) scenery during autumn, and of course, the chance to encounter wild, but friendly, deer.



Itsukushima Shrine



Miyajima

Afterword

The word “polyphony” comes from the Greek roots “poly-,” meaning “many,” and “phone,” meaning “sound.” Very literally, the word refers to a jumble of many different sounds, but in music, the term refers to the combination of individual sounds and melodies coming together and harmonizing with one another. Just in the way that different instruments sing in harmony, the diverse students in the Discovery Program for Global Learners have forged strong bonds with each other, allowing our unique experiences to meld and transform into something brand new.

I hope we were able to show you what we are capable of as a student body, and the wide range of talents that we possess.

Thank you for reading to the end of our publication. We all hope that you were able to gain something from it, and learn about not just our department, but each of us as individuals, through hearing our connected voices.

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