

# Polyphony

Issue 2

September 2021



A journal by the students of the  
Discovery Program for Global Learners  
at Okayama University.





# Letter from the Editor

**P**olyphony in print form is back, and with improvements on every level.

This time around we have put a lot of emphasis on making a visually appealing product that not only catches the eye, but also tickles the brain. Compared to our first attempt at this we have all learned valuable lessons and strived to improve upon our past mistakes.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a special shoutout to our two layout team members Mattie Balagat and Kayla Guevara, without you this would all be impossible; you two bring life and excitement to an otherwise dry experience, and your commitment and creativity have not gone unnoticed.

I also want to give special thanks to who can only be described as my second in command at this point, Mạnh Quốc Trung, who has put many stressful hours into maintaining and collecting articles for our blog which also doubles as the resource pool for this very issue. It is a tedious job, and without you there would be no content, and no interest from the outside.

The Global Discovery Program has also changed much since our last issue. Our director has changed, our first batch of students have graduated, and Zoom has destroyed our lives. Moving forward I hope and pray that there is some semblance of a return to normalcy upon this issue's publication.

As editor and chief it has been a wild and rocky journey to get to this point in time, and it is time for me to step aside to put more focus into my final year of studies, but the two and a half years I was able to put into this student run journal have been quite the experience. I will continue to write



content for the blog and the upcoming third print issue of Polyphony, but my days in a leadership role are over.

The student journal and blog will be in competent hands moving forward with our layout editor, Mattie Balagat, taking the reins.

The world is a crazy place, and there are many crazy things to write about. Simply looking at my own list of articles and topics that I plan to write, I think that the third print issue of Polyphony will be a great success.

Thank you to all the readers, and thank you to all the staff.

Forrest Maynock  
Editor-in-Chief

# Table of Contents

**04** Film Creativity in Isolation:  
Dealing with COVID-19 and the  
Loss of Normalcy  
*Mei Mukose*

**06** Misdiagnosis  
*Mattie Balagat*

**07** Bangkok Through My Eyes  
*Pandita Suthamporn*

**09** 夕焼けをみる者—  
吉野弘『夕焼け』を読んで  
*Genki Hase*

**10** Eden's Story  
*Eirin Kiyota*

**13** Home Away from Home  
*Mattie Balagat*

**15** The Kitchen Crisis  
*Natsuki Noguchi*

**16** A Womanhood Among Stories  
*Manh Quốc Trung*

**17** Are We Kind to Ourselves  
*Chigaemezu Ibegwam*

**20** 或る奴隷の道徳  
*Taichi Inoue*

**23** Running, Crying, and Tearing  
Each Other Into Pieces  
*Manh Quốc Trung*

**24** The Screwtape Letters - An  
Interpretive Essay  
*Kayla Guevara*

**26** GDP Photo Gallery

**28** Acne Vulgaris  
*Yushi Song*

**32** Escaping the Cycle  
*Forrest Maynock*

**33** Second Best but Never Enough  
*Risa Akiyama*

**36** Farewell to the Graduates of 2021!  
*Forrest Maynock*

**37** Power in Game and Cheats as a  
Revolutionary Power  
*Genki Hase*

**39** Crisis  
*Forrest Maynock*

**43** An Unexpected Win by an  
Unexpected Member  
*Justine Villena*



45

The Journey Begins! Fresh Impressions of Japan and Okayama  
*Justine Villena*

46

The Town of Childhood  
*Mạnh Quốc Trung*

48

Second World  
*Mattie Balagat*

### Legend



Feature



Poem



Academic



Essay



Review



Short Story



Travel



Special

# The Staff

**Editor-in-Chief**  
 Forrest Maynock

**Blog Editor**  
 Mạnh Quốc Trung

**Layout Editor**  
 Mattie Balagat

**General Editors**  
 Genki Hase  
 Chigaamezu Ibegwam  
 Karin Inoue  
 Justine Villena

**Assistant Layout Editor**  
 Kayla Guevara

*Photos on cover by Yushi Song, Sonava Tadao, Hinako Hamano, Rakan Ishida, and Mikina Tanaka.*

*Special thanks to this issue's contributors:*

### Photos

Rakan Ishida  
 Yushi Song  
 Sonava Tadao  
 Mikina Tanaka  
 Hinako Hamano

### Art

Yuki Genko  
 Mila Song  
 Đào Minh Tú

### Articles

Risa Akiyama  
 Taichi Inoue  
 Eirin Kiyota  
 Mei Mukose  
 Natsuki Noguchi  
 Yushi Song  
 Pandita Suthamporn



# Film Creativity in Isolation: Dealing with COVID-19 and the Loss of Normalcy

Words by Mei Mukose  
Pictures by Miyuu Ouchi

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, many of us in different parts of the world have experienced major lifestyle changes. Having started the enhanced community quarantine in mid-March, these two months here in Manila have led me to consider ways in which I'd be able to spend my time more constructively.

Social media has put a lot of emphasis on various ways to stay productive, whether it be through elevating one's culinary skills or taking on a new fitness journey. Personally, none of these methods seemed to be quite appealing to me. However, it was a local advertisement for vintage film cameras that really piqued my interest.

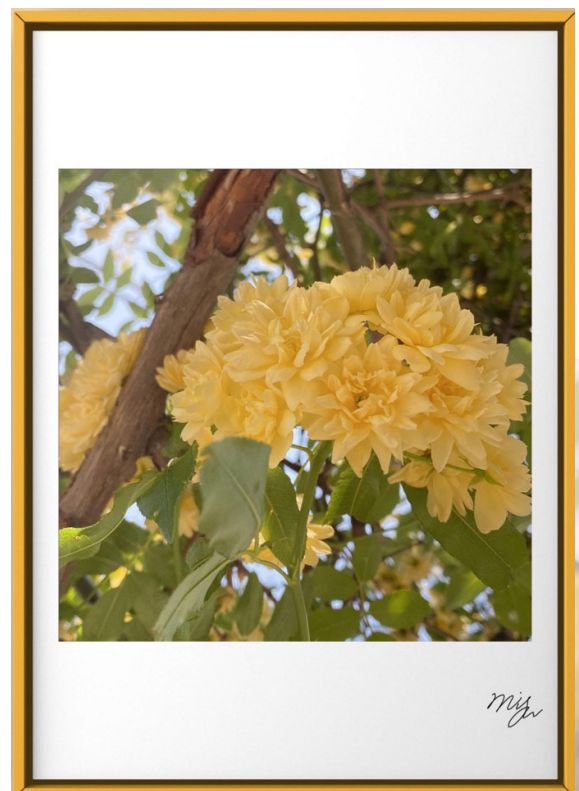
With my new sense of determination and absolutely no prior knowledge in film or photography, I began to scour the internet for a suitable camera to start with. And honestly, it was quite overwhelming. There were so many terminologies I didn't understand, and being a student, a handful of these options did not fit my price range. Soon enough, having spent several sleepless nights mulling on this, I landed on a popular vintage point-and-shoot camera.

I was pleased to have finally sorted things out, and I was more than eager to start on the next step: taking photos. But as the days went by, I realized how staying at home put so much of a constraint on both inspiration and creativity, and that left me stumped.

*How are creative people dealing with loss and the sense of normalcy?*

*Where can you find inspiration in, and what do you do?*

To explore these changing times through different lenses, Miyuu Ouchi, a second-year GDP student and avid photographer, shares some of her insights with us.





*How did you get into photography?*

About 2 years ago I got an approval from the Kanagawa BoE (Board of Education) and made it to Maryland/Washington D.C. for a tuition-free language program. I just wanted to keep every single moment while being there so I bought the camera before departure (in Japan). Perhaps I didn't trust my iPhone when it came to photography. Well, now I am 100% sure that the iPhone is awesome!

*What kind of photos do you normally like to take?*

- Photographs of people
- Plants
- Whatever I want to keep

*Where do you get your inspiration?*

WHEREVER, WHENEVER, WHATEVER!

*In what ways has the pandemic influenced your photography style and muses?*

Exploring the neighborhood and capturing something impressive is part of what I got out of the pandemic I guess.

*Even if COVID-19 has changed the world, time goes by. Flowers are blooming, the sun rises and goes down every day. I'm impressed with the ordinary but extraordinary moments.*

—My Mom

*Any on-going projects or plans for the future?*

Online Photo Exhibition via Instagram, or whatever. **p**

Keep up with Miyuu here:

Instagram: @tsuruppo





# Misdiagnosis

Words and collage by Mattie Balagat

As with the common flu, we ladle  
Chicken soup for our sensibilities,  
In heaping aphorisms (CTTO<sup>1</sup>,  
Our nonblasphemous relative).

Why does *protest* smell of  
Smoke and molotov? And *prayer*,  
A vanilla-scented candle?

The remedy, we preach,  
Is to admire the sunlight  
Filtering softly onto the *sala*<sup>2</sup>.  
So follows the ending of a blockbuster  
Where bullets shoot the antagonist dead,  
And hunger sits a footnote to human grit.  
Let the narrative be continued without its cast —  
Else is a headline thrown away tomorrow.

Why does *oust* scatter  
Rabid dogs howling at dust? And *justice*  
Prolong a gilded melody beyond our grasp?

Retreat: to the wounded Body,  
stripped to barely human,  
By a comment resurrected in glory.  
By another crucified with apathy.  
We of little faith, barking wildly  
From our ivory cages.  
Comfortably

Six feet away.

<sup>1</sup> Short for Credits To The Owner.

<sup>2</sup> Living room (Filipino).

Collage made from photos by Lyndon  
Aguila / Pexels; Gabriel Banzon, Eric  
Mclean / Unsplash







# Bangkok Through My Eyes

*Words and photos by  
Pandita Suthamporn*

**S**hanty old series of houses so densely packed side by side surrounded by the infrastructures of the modern times is not an uncommon sight to see, especially in the heart of Bangkok—a city that in each and every inch, huge skyscrapers, large shopping complexes, and commercial buildings are clustered together along the street. Within the same block, there are many alleys that run like vessels deep into the living quarters of the lowly commoners as they buzz around like bees hopping from one vendor to another about their day just like any other day. Taking a stroll down the alley is almost like opening up a whole other dimension that I often take for granted as an urbanite who has witnessed these sights for over twenty-years and grew a blasé attitude towards it.

Within the same block, there are many alleys that run like vessels deep into the living quarters of the lowly commoners as they buzz around like bees hopping from one vendor to another about their day just like any other day. Taking a stroll down the alley is almost like opening up a whole

other dimension that I often take for granted as an urbanite who has witnessed these sights for over twenty-years and grew a blasé attitude towards it. A middle-aged man wearing an oversized t-shirt and short khaki pants was carrying in his hands the source of daily sustenance of the entire family wrapped in small plastic bags. Another middle-aged aunty holding up a colander overfilling with noodles, hot steam covering almost her entire face, swallowed an entire bowl of exhaustion.

Drops of sweat running down her face from the escalating temperature radiating out of the burning charcoal and the unpredictably hot Bangkok weather. Across her shop, a woman stationed behind a metal cart that she uses to sell pieces of fried chicken and sticky rice every day. Even in the tiny speck of people swarming around in one of the alleys in Bangkok there could be so many people from all walks of life with a multitude of trajectories, stories, and backgrounds sharing the same space and time.





A few blocks later, situated a tall and luxurious condominium – far-fetching for many who can barely afford food on their plate and roof on their head. In the front entrance of the condominium where we stayed for a short time, there were construction workers drilling holes into the road in front of the condominium and making loud noises from their drilling machines every morning as we left the place to get breakfast. Dirt and wet mud were stained on their clothes and shoes under the burning hot sun that is right above their heads. While we were enjoying the comforts of the modern-day amenities, these people had to work countless shifts all day to drill holes in the road for a living. This is a parallel world where we co-exist yet widen apart with each passing day – wider and deeper is the rupture of our society. In the deepest parts of a bustling city, the alleys and roads live the humble folks trying hard to make ends meet. They are not standing still; in fact, they are working very hard to change their predetermined fate that has always been so hard on them. They are people, who, despite so much adversity and discrimination, still put a smile on their faces as I greet them in the morning on my way to a shop to have breakfast. They do not cease to work. In fact, they cannot cease to wake up every single morning to set up their stalls and start boiling their noodle pots. They wake up with the mentality that if they do not work to earn money, their parents or their children may not be able to live a little better and breathe a little deeper. This the hot and steamy Bangkok that I used to take for granted.

Bangkok does not lay in an ivory tower, or in shopping malls, but Bangkok definitely is living and breathing between these alleys facing the inevitable uncertainties and harsh realities of life with a fighting spirit. As I witness and experience with my own eyes, we are in the middle of an urban tragedy - which is that of a deeply engraved social inequality manifesting itself in the asymmetrical distribution of wealth and resources. Consumerism is taking a toll on everyone's lives, but the impact is much more for the vulnerable populations working to make ends meet. **p**

*Ethnographic vignette for Urban Sociology (2019).*

## 夕焼けをみる者 吉野弘『夕焼け』を読んで

*Words by Genki Hase*

*Photo by Rakan Ishida*

吉野弘の『夕焼け』は「娘」の「やさしさ」を扱った口語自由詩である。

電車という固定された舞台で起きる日常の一コマを切り取った本作は、満員電車の中、「若者」と「娘」が座り、「としより」が立っているところから始まる。「娘」はぎゅうぎゅう詰めの車内で晩年に近づく身体を有する「としより」を見かねて席を譲る。だが、席を譲る際の「娘」はうつむいており、ここから「娘」の消極的な様子が窺える。何故、相手を思いやって道徳的ともいえる行動を、社会的に評価される行動をしているのにも関わらず「娘」は「うつむいて」いるのだろうか。

席を譲りうけた「としより」は礼も言わず次の駅で降り、その空いた席に「娘」が再び座る。この場面においても「娘」は苛立ちを露わにするのではなく、ただ「うつむいて」いる。そして、人波にもまれてきた新たな「としより」にも席を譲り、今回はお礼をもらったが、また次の「としより」が「娘」の前に押し出されたときには、もう「うつむいて」席を立つことはなかった。



「やさしい心の持ち主」である「娘」は何度も席を譲ったが、満員電車にいるのは「娘」だけではないため、席を譲ることができる人はたくさんいる。しかし、「としより」に席を譲るのはいつも「娘」で、終いには「としより」の方が「娘」側に押し出される構図となっている。電車において座っている状態、つまりは楽な状態から抜ける状況は、席を譲る時か電車を降りる時かのどちらかである。けれど繰り返すように「席を譲る」選択をとるのは「娘」だけで、ここから「やさしい心の持ち主」がやさしさを体現できない者より熱量の消費を必要とされる不条理を読み取ることができる。

相手を思いやるという行為は共存社会を存続させる上で最も肝要な行為であるといえる。相手への理解なくしては感情を伝えることはできないし、相手への尊重なくしては集団を築くことができない。相手への思いやり、すなわち「やさしい心」は、集団の断片として生きる上で求められる器官であるなのだ。しかし、「娘」が陥った状況のように、実際には多くの人が「やさしい心」という器官を働かせることなく過ごしている。それにより「やさしい心」を働かせる人には働かせていない人の差分がのしかかる。本作ではこのやさしさの負債を背負わされる者を「受難者」と表現しているが、「相手を思いやる」社会的規範とされる行為を行っている者が苦しむ滑稽さは読み手に「やさしい心」と社会との矛盾を摘発する鋭い表現だ

といえるだろう。

やさしい心の持ち主は「他人のつらさを自分のつらさのように感じる」から受難者となる。相手を理解してしまうが故に自分がもし相手だったら、と考えて「やさしさ」を施してしまう。「娘」が「うつむいて」いたのは、そんな施しを与えてしまう自分を責めたうつむきだったのかもしれない。もしくは、「やさしさ」を空想の理論として扱う他の人々と同一になれないが故の「うつむき」だったのかもしれない。「やさしい心」を持つことが良しとされているのに、「やさしい心の持ち主」がその「やさしい心」そのものに責められる社会の矛盾が、不条理さがここにはある。

また、本作の視点が同じ車内にいる人物による一人称であることも、この不条理を脚色する役を担っている。「娘」をみる視点は、「娘」の行動をみて「可哀想に」と気持ちを漏らしている。この感情の吐露により、哀の字が「娘」と相関を築き、「娘」をみじめな存在として確立させている。

「うつむいて」しまえばそれがどんなに美しい夕焼けでも観測することはできない。吉野弘の『夕焼け』は、美德とされる行動をとるものが損をする美しくない、整合性の取れていない社会・環境を告発する。作者はこの告発を詩として世に出すことで、少しでも多くの人が「美しい夕焼け」をみれるような世界を描きたかったのかもしれない。p



mental health → eating → physical health ?  
eating → mental/physical health ???  
but I can't eat ...



*"...she realized herself not having enough nutrition contributes to the negative thoughts and obsession she had towards things including food..."*

# Eden's Story

*Words and art by Eirin Kiyota*

Since childhood, Eden loved food. The mealtime and snack time were her favorite time of the day. She also liked going out to eat with her family just because it felt more special for her. She went to cooking school when she was in elementary school. Not only eating, but she also enjoys cooking too. She loves every food, but she really likes most of the vegetables and fish. Specifically, she loves sushi and ethnic foods. "I have a tooth for eating vegetable," she said, and this reminds me of memories when we hanged out and searching for good ethnic curry restaurant that does not include meat. After a while, her favorite meal became zero calorie jelly that is sold in convenience stores. Zero calorie jelly made her feel like eating nothing. She was diagnosed as anorexia. Eden received this diagnosis when she was 14 when her mother took her to the hospital, but it started gradually from when she was 11 and got intense in 2 years. But this anorexia experience changed her thoughts on food.

*"I think foods are very important to both mental and physical health. One of the reasons I recovered from anorexia was because my doctor told me to eat first, then work on mental stuff like 'why' and 'how' I become anorexia."*

Back then, she was told by the doctor that anorexia is "not only about not being able to eat" but also about psychological issues that a patient has. No matter how much Eden lost her weight and even disgusted by others about how skinny Eden was, she couldn't stop not eating. "Eating" seems really easy to do but she just couldn't do such a thing because it is different from not being able to ride a bicycle or run fast. So, she thought (1) mental health, (2) eating, (3) being physically healthy is the right process to recover. But these processes take forever since Eden didn't have a clear cause of anorexia. (1) eating, (2) being physically/mentally healthy was the right process for her. Her doctor told Eden to eat whatever she feels like, so she ate cake, pizza, rice, and ice cream, something sweet and carbohydrate; these were the foods she felt she can eat at that time. Eating made Eden mentally stable and physically healthy. Since then, she realized herself not having enough nutrition contributes to the negative thoughts and obsession she had towards things including food, and by eating and by becoming physically healthy, she was able to be more mentally positive as well. She thinks physical health and mental health are deeply intertwined, and eating food is not only good for the physical health but also for the mind as well.



*“Most of the food includes nutritions that is needed for the body in some way, so I think it is about how much we eat foods that include those each nutrition. I basically eat whatever I want now but that doesn’t mean eating ice cream every day. It means to try to see which food is good for me both in terms of mental and physical effect that foods bring. If eating ice cream once in a while make me feel happy, which it does, I do that without really questioning,” she laughed.*



*“No matter how much Eden lost her weight and even disgusted by others about how skinny Eden was, she couldn’t stop not eating.”*

Eden told me that she found it interesting how the same words can be used both for feeling and for what is considered as the state of the body. “Fulfilled” for example, it can be used for 満足感 (a feeling of satisfaction in Japanese) and 満腹 (state of stomach being filled with foods in Japanese). When Eden feels fulfilled (満足感) with what she eats, she feels fulfilled (満腹) too. Because she had experienced the time she didn’t feel fulfilled (満腹), no matter how much she ate, she realized that who you eat with or feeling of appreciation to foods are what is connected to fulfillment getting from “eating”. Eden wasn’t satisfied not because the food wasn’t tasty, because she didn’t pay attention and appreciate to food. She just ate whatever available. Eating for just getting enough nutrition or making the stomach full doesn’t make Eden happy or fulfilled in both ways.

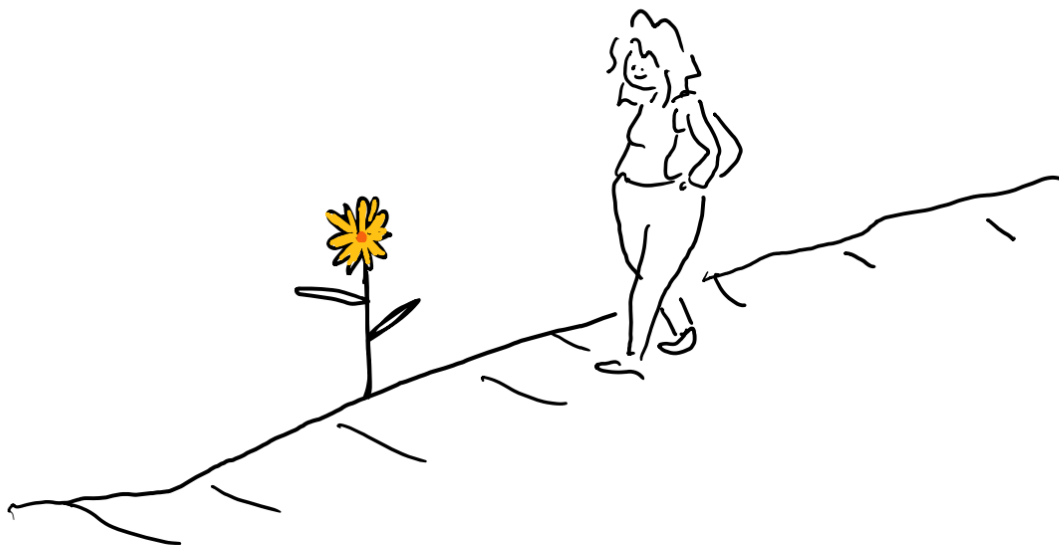
*“Anorexia is a state of mind/behavior that can’t be separated from “food”. It might be important to eat to gain weight first, and this actually help anorexia patients to eventually recover both physically and mentally. But it would be more helpful if patients could find other reasons to eat besides gaining weight or considering what kind of food makes myself happy during the process of recovery since eating is everyday things, eating is how we spend everyday life. This is my opinion so far.”*

Eden described the time of anorexia as her bad outstanding food memories. Eden told me that it is even hard to find some food experience that wasn’t bad during that time. She was always fighting with her family during the meals, and it was especially worse while on vacation. But, of course, Eden has so many outstanding food memories. She describes all foods/meals that she ate on the memorable days (even the day something sad happened). “I even remember the foods I had on the day I watched a great movie or read an amazing book, so I guess whether the food memories are outstanding or not depends on the situations/ circumstances including who I ate with rather than food itself.”

Eating became one of duties for her after she has been diagnosed as anorexia. Of course, Eden did feel the taste, but she didn't really cherish them. It took around a year and a half to come to enjoy the food and food circumstance. After that, she became ambitious more about food. She studied agrochemicals and organic foods in high school. It changed her perception towards food and what she picks. Since then, she came to think about whether the food was organic or not. When Eden goes to a supermarket, she tries to choose the one which shows who made those food and the ones that are organic. Also, that was the time she came to think about the people who are behind the things she buys and about the influence of her behavior as a consumer. In the college, one of her professors, who are originally from Niigata prefecture, offered an opportunity for people to engage in organic rice crops process. Eden was interested so she decided to take that opportunity.

*“It was only for two days but we did so many things. Not only we did rice-planting but also, we talked with people who live around the place we have visited. We went into the forest and the teacher taught us about the wild grass, trees, and animals. They also explained to us about the history and current situation of the village, and the process of how rice is made. That experience was fascinating and a whole new experience for me. It felt like nature allows people to live. I came to appreciate food even more.”*

*p*



*“It felt like nature allows people to live. I came to appreciate food even more.”*

*Food Journal for Anthropology of Food (2020).*



# Home Away From Home

Words and photos by Mattie Balagat

Tucked in a side alley of a quiet city is KAMP, a hostel and café-bar seemingly belonging anywhere but a side alley of a quiet city. I stepped inside with six other classmates knowing almost nothing about the place—and was pleasantly surprised to find myself quite comfortable. It was a warm, casual setting, with rough-hewn wooden furniture, potted plants, and assorted worldly kitsch and knickknacks lining the walls and seating. A display of alcohol behind the bar counter and a hanging disco ball waited quietly for the sun to go down. There was a sense of well-worn ruggedness to all the interiors that lent an immediate and unexpected feeling of comfort and nostalgia, alongside a keen awareness of being in a space very different from the outside.

In the midst of it was Takuya Kitajima, the 39-year-old owner and main chef of the 5-year-old café. He excused himself from what seemed like a conversation with a regular, and stood to greet our odd party. In his large black-framed glasses and fit black long sleeves, he exuded a slick, laidback aura to him that put me at ease. Though I could not understand his answers to our interview questions, needing to rely on my friends' live translations, it was clear that he was down-to-earth in his speech. From time to time he would pause to think of authentic answers to questions not normally asked of him. He matched the image of the cool, hip uncle everyone boasts about to their friends.

To put up KAMP was Kitajima's dream, driven by personal interest and without any explicit influence of his childhood or his family. Rather than the homeliness of the café being inspired by the tra-

*"Everybody that makes cheese wants it to be the best, not only for themselves but for other people. . . . When you put a piece of cheese down, you put a piece of yourself down. . . ."*

— Scheps, an American artisanal cheesemaker (in Paxson, 2013)



Top: Kitajima during the group's interview at KAMP  
Bottom: A peek into KAMP from the door.





*Half-and-Half curry - pork on the left, keema on the right.*

ditional idea and memory of home, it was mainly inspired overseas. When Kitajima was 16 years old, he did not go to school (whether he skipped class or quit is unclear), and instead traveled to Montana, America and lived with an American Indian family for 2 weeks. How he ended up there is a mystery we probably should have pursued. But the teepees and masks displayed in the café, along with other Native American imagery, imparted a profound sense of respect for the culture he encountered, and I believe, a desire to share what kind of home was shared with him in Montana.

In fact, the café is Kitajima's way to keep cooking curry. He had no problems setting up the café, enjoying the process though without a formal background in cooking or running a business. For him, cooking for profit and for fun can be done simultaneously, so it is not hard to imagine how his hobby of cooking curry motivated him. He traveled extensively (and still does) to better his curry—he asked other chefs, tasted different kinds of curries at restaurants and festivals, and attended workshops in Tokyo, Osaka, India, and Fukuoka. The spice levels and flavors of his curry changed as his taste for curry absorbed these experiences, along with feedback and validation from friends all over. KAMP's curry is a curry that changes as Kitajima learns more, but which remains proudly, and originally his: an expression of his experiences and a bricolage of influence and personal interests. His curry keeps up with his goal of serving food which he himself likes. To focus on just bettering curry is practical as well—he professes the need to focus on only one food to increase the chances of it being more popular.

Kitajima lamented shortly how he could not make the perfect curry due to it being costly, though he thinks a lot about it. He remarks that the curry is best eaten right after serving to preserve the smells he intended, but he appreciates how some customers like the taste better after waiting for some time. In a way, to allow customers the freedom to eat how they would like to eat assures the experience of dining somewhere home-like. Those eating around our table seemed to embrace the freedom of this no-rules, lighthearted atmosphere: chatting and laughing out loud, leaning back into their seats.

There is more that makes KAMP than just the youthful Kitajima, though his independent drive and genuine love for his work definitely built the café. On the stage with the deck he sometimes DJs on, he invites live bands or musicians to play. In the interiors, which he designed with his friends, the experience-worn and handmade is celebrated—dog-eared magazines and paperbacks, craft beer, chalkboard events, handmade dolls, and alternative culture magazines are for sale. The flavors of his worldly curry are rooted to home using local vegetables from his vendor friend, who sometimes sets up shop outside his café. The backpacker is welcomed to relax and be themselves, and maybe take a yoga class. The independent culture Kitajima loves demands to be shared, and so the café continues to be a special niche where that sharing is possible, supporting non-mainstream endeavors as he progresses in his own self-styled path.

I could not write this without eating Kitajima's curry, so I returned with two friends. I ordered Half-and-Half—two choices of curry heaped on a large plate, separated by a slab of rice. It was a mix



of the Japanese and Indian curry I had tasted before—the pork curry being a little sweet, and the keema curry bringing a lot more spice than I expected. Every spoon went down my system well, like a flow of rich, warm umami which lights up the stomach and makes conversation easy. I was so carried away with talking that I didn't notice how I was slowly licking my plate clean. It is easy to connect the rich taste of the curry to Kitajima's own enthusiasm for curry and travel, precisely because it was a delicious culmination to my understanding of his story.

As my friends and I continued to talk over our empty plates, rolling the flavors over in my mouth, my favorite female British indie singer came on the café's speakers. In the serendipitous period of knowing the lyrics to the song being played, everything my senses had recently taken in was digested easily, tiding over the feeling of being home. Indeed, Kitajima was doing KAMP right—it was like home outside my own doorstep, all at once everything I want to expect from the side alley of a quiet city. **p**

*Food Journal for Anthropology of Food (2020). Interview with Takuya Kitajima organized and conducted with Justine, Trung, Forrest, Alyana, Minami (translator) and Riko (translator).*

*KAMP can be found at 3 Chome-1-35 Hokancho, Kita Ward, Okayama, 700-0026.*



*A customer at the bar.*

# The Kitchen Crisis

*Words by Natsuki Noguchi*

**T**he *Kitchen Crisis* is an article written in 1970 by Verta Mae Smart-Grosvenor, an American culinary anthropologist and griot; self-described as a “rap, that must be rapped aloud” (Grosvenor, 1970, p.149), hence, there are no capital letters within sentences, is composed entirely with colloquial language, and is rich in punctuation marks. This short piece claims the historical discrimination hidden within people’s culinary cultures, specifically calling out how such “exotic” foodstuffs and recipes are re-discovered, claimed, and then overwritten by the white population. She also brings out the significance of food as a representation of culture, and how many seem to disregard the long processes performed behind the dishes. Although the theme of “gender” is not the main point discussed – as the focus is more on “culture” and “race” – it plays a prominent role in reflecting upon the traditional, cooking experiences Grosvenor had gathered through many fellow black women working in kitchens.

“... instant milk, instant coffee, instant tea, instant potatoes, instant old fashioned oatmeal, everything is prepared for the unprepared woman in the kitchen. ... just goes to show you white folks will do anything for their women. they had to invent instant food because the servant problem got so bad that their women had to get into the kitchen herself with her two little lily white hands” (Grosvenor, 1970, p.150). Here is a quote of her ranting against instant goods, sarcastically depicting the difference in treatment between women of two races – white ladies were prioritised by the men, and their cooking jobs were made easier for them. Whereas, black women who were specifically and historically speaking, slaves and servants, were not, and were enforced to serve through the standard recipe. She then follows to mention how black cooks (regardless of gender) have been participating in the discoveries of many fine foods for centuries, however, are not referred to nor credited behind

such culinary arts.

Although the mistreatment of black people leaves a stronger impression, it evidently shows how women are already “expected to be in the kitchen” - the white men strive in inventing easier cooking methods but are not illustrated here to volunteer to cook themselves. Furthermore, apart from the unrecognised black men who had contributed to the “whitewashed recipes,” there is no explained portrayal of any men cooking in this reading, not serving others nor themselves (unless the well-dressed man eating his “Instant Lunch Pills” is included). The stereotypes and hierarchies based on race and gender authority are evident and reflects upon the historical injustice of coloured female servants - how they are enforced to follow the traditional, stricter procedures yet their African narratives and traditional menus are unpreserved, in comparison to the white “discoveries” (such as Christopher “Chris” Columbus’s), that are prioritised and acknowledged as the pioneer instead.

One notable inclination of this text, however, is that this text focuses more on the racial identity of Grosvenor’s beliefs than her gender, as previously mentioned. Hence, references to gender specifically are very few. Even so, how the pair of traits is brought up entwined is very understandable, as it reinforces the perspective of double discrimination - there is gender bigotry on top of their racial one. Both are major elements in establishing an individual’s identity, and are often the reasons behind stereotypical hatred; discriminations against African-American women can consist of either elements or both.

Nevertheless, the validity and relevance of this short text are still non-dismissible today. Following the massive international attention received for cultural discrimination problems prevalent in the United States (e.g. the Black Lives Matter demonstrations following the death of George Floyd, an African-American killed by a Caucasian cop), social demand for racial and gender equality, and cultural respect for ethnic minorities is indeed a matter yet brought up. To either praise her progressive, intellectual beliefs from the past, or to lament the lack of advancement the US has made on this issue ever since is debatable; despite that, keeping in mind how “*society perpetually ignores the stories told by and about black women, resulting in a continuous need*

*for projects of reclamation*” (Psyche Williams-Forsen, foreword from *Vibration Cooking*, 2009), nonetheless this successful “cookbook-lookalike” is a worthy story to regard. As Grosvenor states, “*food is universal*” (Grosvenor, 1970, p.151), disregarding what you eat may mean to not just disrespect the food’s backgrounds, but the entire culture itself, as it ignores all efforts put in to invent and maintain the menu.

Even through food, someone’s story can be told. **p**

References: BW, *The Kitchen Crisis*, Verta Mae Smart-Grosvenor Sen, Mayukh. *Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor Is the Unsung Godmother of American Food Writing*, VICE, 21 Feb. 2018, 2:20am, <http://www.vice.com/en/article/evmbwj/vertamae-smart-grosvenor-vibration-cooking-profile>

Book review for DCUL423: *Gender in Global Context*.

## A Womanhood Among Stories

Words by Mạnh Quốc Trung

*“Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don’t humiliate us. You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful.”*

The mother whispers, scarily and cautiously, to the ear of the little girl that is the author, afraid that she too, one day, might suffer the same fate as her aunt, dead and forgotten under the hands of fearful villagers just because she became pregnant while her husband was away,



working overseas. Raw and emotionally-impactful sentences such as this are frequent in *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, written by Chinese-American author Maxine Hong Kingston, that explores the many forms of adversity and hurdle that women have to face, in the backdrop of conflicts between cultures of the East and the West.

*The Woman Warrior* is written in the form of a collection of memoirs by the author, a semi-autobiographical work detailing the stories that she has experienced, heard from, or told to others. It is this aspect that blends the work's non-fiction elements with its fictional and oftentimes mythological elements into a seamless whole, making it easier for the reader to understand and sympathize with the characters, while still being able to see how Kingston's colorful imagination has added a layer of complexity to many stories.

The book has five chapters, which correspond to five stories that help shaped the author's lives and the world she is living in, detailing the fate of many women and the decisions they make: Kingston's long-dead aunt, who is referred to as "The No Name Woman"; a mythical female warrior named Fa Mulan; Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid; Kingston's another aunt, Moon Orchid; and finally Kingston herself. Each story is told vividly from both Kingston's point of view, her imagination and the retellings of other characters, real or imagined, and is used by her as an effort to reconstruct her past, to understand her cultural history and to see how much an effect its legacy has on her and on the people she holds dear. Being a first-generation Chinese-American, she has the extra burden not only

to confront the social and cultural barriers set up against women, but also to confront them in the context of two distinct cultures, two different environments, two separate lives. And she chooses to confront it, surprisingly, by telling and retelling stories.


Although many other themes are visible, such as cultural differences, having voices and staying silence, and growing up in a migrant community, the one most prevalent throughout the five chapters of the book is the role of women in Chinese society, and how they relate to the male-dominated society around them, controlling them through their actions and inactions. What makes *The Woman Warrior* stand out from other contemporary female-focused works of fiction/non-fiction of the time is how male characters and men in general are not antagonized or completely blamed for the oppression that Chinese women have to suffer; in fact, men are perceptibly and intentionally absent in a narrative that increasingly focus on its five main females. Men, in *The Woman Warrior*, are simply social actors that are also bounded by the more-powerful and less-conspicuous force of tradition. It is tradition that turns neighbors of the same village against each other, just because of a child born without her father present; it is tradition that leads women to convince one another that "there's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls"; it is tradition that undermines the values of women and gives power to men, so they can do what they did.

It then comes as no surprise that one of the most powerful images depicts in the book is also the con-



Photo by Henry & Co. / Unsplash

sequence of blindly following traditions: the ghosts of little Chinese girls whose parents left to die because they wanted sons instead, and Kingston feels haunted by them, the same way she has always been haunted by the shadows of Chinese cultures and traditions that seem to follow her wherever she goes. The ghosts can, of course, be a product of her imagination, but they can also be an effort for Kingston to reconnect with her past, to relate herself to many women around her who have stayed silent throughout their lives in the face of gender oppression and inequity, in an effort to speak up. “You must not tell anyone,” says the words from her mother that are also the very first words of the book, but Kingston does the exact opposite – by *telling everyone*, she does not only speak for herself, but also for the women, the silenced, the mythical, and the ghosts of the past.

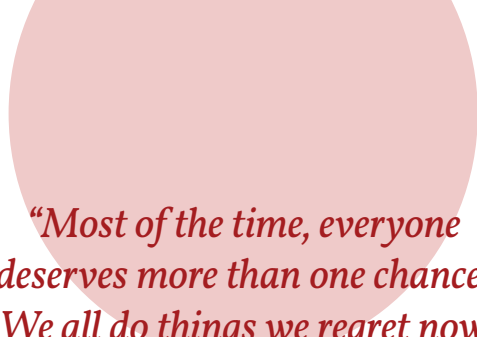
The *Woman Warrior* is one powerful journey that blends myths with reality, and modernity with tradition that, within it, the often-untold lives of women unfold. The stories of how Kingston and the women around her struggle to co-exist with a world that is full of social expectations against women are not only able to touch our heart deeply, helping us realize, understand, and sympathize with them, but also shows us what it is like to “grow up a woman warrior.” 

Kingston, Maxine Hong. “*The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*.” New York: Vintage Books. (1989).

Book review for DCUL423: *Gender in Global Context* (2020).

# Are We Kind to Ourselves?

Words by Chigaemezu Ibegwam  
Art by Yuki Genko



*“Most of the time, everyone deserves more than one chance. We all do things we regret now and then. You just have to carry them with you.”*

—Celeste Ng,  
*Little Fires Everywhere* (2017), p.289.

Ng’s quote carries a comforting yet biting tone, telling us we all do things we regret every now and then, spelling out our responsibility to own up to them and reminding us that it’s okay to give ourselves yet another chance to carry on.

I have interpreted Ng’s quote as a three-stage process with a base founded on choices we make. Choices are either good or bad. They either bring us moments of relief or become the cause of our regrets. Stage One is the moment we make choices that we now regret, but Stage Two is where the problem really lies, where we take responsibility, and accept that we regret that certain choice we made. Some people skip Stage Two convincing themselves to take another chance without a modicum of guilt or consideration, which ends up having pernicious effects on their lives. Accepting your mistakes isn’t putting on a façade claiming everything is alright when it’s not. It doesn’t equate to constantly wearing penitent expressions while convincing yourself that you’re out to face the world.

On the other hand, some let the regret eat them up; they remain in Stage Two convincing themselves that there is no way out. By then, are they really giving themselves one more chance? Are they being kind to themselves? Stage Two is a critical space between wallowing in self-pity and being overtly positive; it is the crucial step involving acceptance and understanding that should not be overlooked and it is to my understanding a difficult process. After this comes Stage Three: giving yourself another chance. It comes undoubtedly with a bit of unease, but later on a greater sense of liberation.

I believe Ng built this quote around Mia’s character, considering the many choices she had to make from absconding with her child to severing ties



with her family, all while remaining resilient. The quote was eventually said by Mia to Lexie after she had undergone an abortion.

Most times I get immersed and completely invested in the lives of the characters unfolding within the pages of the books I read, so much that I forget to appreciate the beauty of words and the deep meaning they hold. Therefore, I'm not one to look for moral lessons in a story; neither do I try to interpret passages or quotes. Instead I focus heavily on characters, relying on my imagination to understand their behaviors. My reason for choosing this quote is because it conveys to me a meaning I can relate to. My interpretation derives a great deal from personal experiences as I have grown to understand that even though I make decisions and they don't work out as I planned, it's still up to me to determine my next steps. Thus, I know not to be overwhelmed by mistakes and to rather learn from them.

In conclusion, we all make choices every now and then. If it's one you regret, be prepared to acknowledge it and give yourself another chance.

*Essay for Global Sociology (2020).*



Yuki and her art can be found on Instagram at @yu15.ki and @genkounoekaki.

# 或る奴隷の 道徳

## The Morality For A Slave

Words by Taichi Inoue

Photos by Yushi Song

この胸に抱えた秘密をさらけ出してしまえば、記憶に満ちるインクの汚れも、禿落することができるだろうか。足枷の鍵を彼から返してもらおうことができるのだろうか。私の罪は、誰かに裁いてもらえるだろうか。誰にも裁いてもらえないだろうか。答えを聞こうにも、唯一私を裁くことができる人の命は彼本人の手によって、その言葉は私によって、昏い炎の底に沈められた。

同僚や友人、家族たちは口をそろえて私の物腰の柔らかさや、誰にでも優しい性質、皆が親しみやすい姿勢を無暗にほめたたえるがそれは違うだろう。私はもとより気弱で自分に自信がないからそういう風な態度をとってしまうだけなのだ。私が社会環境省の高官になったんだから、という理由で褒めてくれる人間もいるが、それも違う。男女雇用昇進均等法の追い風を大いに受け、その席を埋めるためだけに補充された人間に過ぎない。そうでなければ私のような優柔不断で無能、なんの役に立たないただの小役人が他の有能で聡明な女性を尻目にこの席に座ることなど到底かなうことはない。男性が足りなかったゆえの穴埋め要因だ。私自身の実力ではなく、形骸化した男女平等にこだわる「道徳」が今の自分を作り上げていると考えると、心底悔しい。

そんな私には胸に一つ抱えた秘密の罪がある。社会がそれを罪と認めるかは定かではないが、私にとってそれは確かに禁忌であり、私の墓までもっていくことになるであろうものだ。

私には友人がいた。サワザキという男だ。おお



よそ勉強と呼ばれる類のものは難なくこなしていたが、唯一つ道德の成績だけがからっきしという何とも奇怪な奴だった。「道德」なんて、授業で思ったことを話せば良いだけで、たくさんの座学も試験の対策も要らない教科なうえ、「道德」の成績が取れない「不道德」な人間なんてこの世の中に不必要だという事実くらいは認識していただろう。

彼はさながら異端の宗教を狂信するかのようであった。「道德」という共通解を皆で導くだけなのに、やれ現実的でないとか、物事の本質を無視しているとか、ダブルスタンダードだとか、噛み付かなければ気が済まないというようだった。

もちろんその待遇も異端論者のそれとは変わらない。いくら学問ができようと、人が人としてあるべきものが失われているのだから、周囲の人間は彼を野蛮で粗暴、非倫理的な人間だとして扱った。「道德的」で、できたクラスメートたちはこぞって彼の啓蒙を買って出た。説得や譲歩などの手法で彼を諭したこともあったが、もっぱら用いられる手段は攻撃的なものであった。そのプロセスで彼の名誉や自尊心を損なわせるような言葉が発せられたり、身体を傷つけることがあっても、それは「道德」の名のもとに、そしてその達成のために行われる啓蒙なのだから、しかるべき処置と呼ぶべきだろう。

そしてなぜだろう、奇妙な縁ではあるが、私はその野蛮な異端論者と仲が良かった。倫理観がないと

言えばそうなのだが、その面に目を瞑れば、博識で聡明な奴だったからだ。私が「道德心」に篤くなく、彼を無理やり啓蒙することがなかったのも一因だったかもしれない。しかしながら、やはりサワザキは「非道德」な奴で、そんな奴とつるむのにはうしろめたさを覚えた。「道德」に信心深く、サワザキを毛嫌いな人たちから目の敵にされるかもしれないという心配もあった。

「やっぱり、僕の話のをこれだけ聞いてくれるのは君しかいないよ。親類も含めて、ね」サワザキはいう。自虐をしているというのになぜか自慢げだ。

「ただ聞いているだけだけどね。言わせてもらうけど、そんな考え方、僕ならしないな。そんな奴もいるのは分かるけど、きっと周りのみんなはそうじゃないだろう?」

これは私の常套句だ。私は彼を拒絶することも、受け入れることもできなかった。

こんなやり取りを何度しただろう。そのたびに彼は、

「そんなことは分かってるよ。別に僕の考えを押し付けようとか、そうしてもらいたいとかじゃないんだ。いろいろな考え方があったっていいだろう? みんなも「道德」の授業で習ったことだ。」

皮肉にも自分が落ちこぼれた教科の内容を引用しながら、これまた自慢げにクスクスと笑うのだった。彼は私の優柔不断さを好いていた。



「僕は君が好きなんだよ。僕に無理やり考え方を押し付けようとしなないだろ? そういうところがいい。別に考えかたとか、何を大事にするかとか、違ってたって友達になれると思うんだけどなア」

それはそうだろうが、もう少し周囲の人達を大事にしたらいいのに。とも思った。あんなに熱心になって「道徳」の何たるかを教えてくれているのに。声には出さなかった。言うとなんかの間にある真珠のような何か大切なものが失われてしまう気がしたから。彼の整った顔が、その時だけすごく物憂げになるからでもある。私は、彼が私だけに見せる自慢げで、飄々とした表情が好きだった。

彼と出会って、一年が過ぎ、二年が過ぎた。特に積極的でもなく、人気ものでいたいわけでもなかった私は、この異端者との何とも言えない関係をずるずると続けていた。一方で彼は、啓蒙というべきか、教育というべきか。熱心で「道徳的」な人たちから何度拳を食らわせられようと、孤独な信仰を狂信し続けたのであった。

卒業を目前にしたある日のことだ。その日は彼の誕生日であった。

「今日、僕の誕生日なんだ。知ってた?」

「知ってたよ。これで3年めだろ? お互い金欠なんだから。ジュースか何かで勘弁してくれな」

「いいや。何かが欲しいとかそういうアピールじゃないんだ。その.....少し、聞いてほしいことがあってさ」

サワザキと私の間に、奇妙な時間が流れていた。――何を言いたいんだ? 蠟燭が融けるのを待っているかのようだ。蠟は粘るように滴りあまり時間の経過を感じられたものではなく、ただ小さな灯が放つエネルギーが、二人の間の空気を熱した。

やがて、彼は口を開いた。掠れるような、絞り出すような声だった。

「ぼ、僕は、君のことが.....その、好きなんだよ。知ってるだろ? し、知ってた、だろ?」

聞きなれたセリフを、あんまりにも溜めて言うので、拍子抜けだ。

「知ってるよ。僕は君の考えを否定するつもりはないってそういうところが、だろ?」

再びじりじりとした時間が流れる。

「違うんだ。いや、そうなんだけど、それがもともと

の話なんだけど.....」

サワザキはさらに言い淀んだ。

「僕は君のことが好きなんだ。友達としてではなく。ほとんどの男女がそうするような感情を僕は、僕は、いま君に抱いてる。おかしいよな。ハハ」

ほとんど一息で言い切ったため、擦れた笑いごえは咳のようで、聞き取ることができなかった。

「それはつまり、君は男である僕のことを、恋愛対象として見ている、ってコトか?」

こんなことを二度も言わせるのはいささかナンセンスなのだろうが、そうせざるを得なかった。

「ダメ.....かな。付き合っ、欲しいんだ。もう高校生活も長くないから。ずっと君と一緒にいたい」

今度は私が長い沈黙を作った。

「.....悪いけど、付き合うことはできない。僕は異性愛者なんだ。でも、素敵なことだと思うよ。LGBTって。僕はそうじゃなかったけど、きっと将来.....」

言い切る前にサワザキが泣きだしそうになりながら勢いよく遮る。

「何が素敵だ? 授業でそう習ったからそんな酷い



こといったのか?」

サワザキが迫り、私の胸倉をつかんだ。シャツがわやになる。

「やっぱりそうだ! 君もほかの奴とおんなじだ! 何も現実を見れてない! 実らない恋愛の何が素敵なんだよ? 虹色も玉虫色も大して変わらないな!」

野蛮人としていくら不遇な扱いを受けても屈しなかった彼が、これほどまでに激情をあらわにするところを初めて見た。

返答を待たずして彼は駆けていった。追いかけてようとしたが、にわかに吹いた冷たい風は、それができないことを大声で伝えてくるようであった。

サワザキはそれきり学校には来なくなった。

彼の自殺を知ったのは、卒業後のことであった。在学中に命を絶ったようだったが、先生からそのような通達は来なかった。卒業後に届くようにと配達されたのは一通の手紙である。

それは遺書のようにであった。

「他人行儀な挨拶は僕らの間には似合わないね。まずは謝りたいんだ。あの日、あんな態度で帰っちゃって。もっと冷静でいたかったけど、あんな経験初めてだったから。意味不明だったろうし、怒ってるかもしれないね。だから、本当にごめんなさい。でもどうしても好きだったんだ。僕の言うことを聞いてくれて、人として見てくれるひとは君が初めてだった。他の奴はみんな「道德」の奴隷さ。それしか見えないんだ。だから「道德」のためだったらどんな非道徳な行為もできるんだ。「啓蒙だ」ってね。僕が自殺したのは君のせいじゃない。そんな奴隷たちに嫌気がさしたからだよ。だから安心してほしい。地に足のつかない「道德」が先走って、みんな本質を見失っている。

そんな人もいていいと思うけど、その寛容さを持っているのは、本当に道徳的なのは、どうやらこの世界に僕と君だけらしくて。こんな世界に生きていても仕方がないだろ?

今度生まれ変わるときは、奴隷のいない世界にうまれたい。いろんな考え方があって、みんな野蛮だけど、それを認めながらも必死に正しくあろうとする世界にうまれたい。そんな世界で、君と一緒にいたい。僕はもう行くけど、君だけはどうか道徳の奴隷にならずにいてくれ。」

私はこの手紙を結局焼いてしまった。これを公開することで、彼は同性愛者として彼の望まない扱いを受けるだろう。道徳の奴隷に、彼の想いを理解することはできない。せめて、彼を理解してあげられる私だけのものとして、ドラム缶で火葬をした。

その後の人生だが、私は結局道徳の奴隷でいるしかなかった。彼のように強い人間でいることはできなかった。私はこの世界を支配するゆがんだ正義を、そして本物の道徳を彼から教わったが、私自身はあまりに非力で、それにすぎるしか生きるすべはなかった。

もしかしたら彼もそうだったのかもしれない。「道徳」の仮面をつけた善意の悪魔に逆らうのは、彼にとっても恐怖でしかなく、だからこそ私という理解者を必要としたのかもしれない。真実は炎の中にしかないのだが。

私の罪は、道徳の奴隷でいることそのものだ。この罪をどうすれば償えるだろうか。そんなすべはないだろう。私がつけている足枷の鍵を持った人間はもうこの世の中にはいないのだから。私の罪を裁くことができるのは道徳の奴隷などでは決してないのだから。**p**





# Running, Crying, and Tearing Others Into Pieces

Words by *Mạnh Quốc Trung*

I remember first reading the *Devilman* manga, written and illustrated by Go Nagai, when I was in middle school. My friend originally recommended me *Berserk*, and after finishing the latest chapter back then I felt compelled to look for other manga that are similar in style and story. And *Devilman* is similar to *Berserk* all right; indeed, the tone is so gloomy and dark, full of anti-war allusions and imageries that even now, after nearly half a decade since publication, its shocking values remain very much the same. The manga left me so much of an impression that when I found out that it has been adapted (one more time) into a 10-episode anime on Netflix called *Devilman Crybaby* in 2018, I did not bother to watch it. I did not expect the grim atmosphere and the overall dark fantasy theme could be replicated perfectly on screen; in fact, *Devilman* has raised the bar very high in violence and gore for contemporary manga at the time, which were initially directed only at young readers, and tried as much as it could, the first attempt to bring it on the TV screen in 1972, very early in its publication, was not a very faithful one. So I have my doubts, but after finally getting around to watching it, I'd say with confidence that *Devilman Crybaby* has exceeded my expectations. Not only is it able to capture much of the tone of Go Nagai's original work, which makes it one of the most faithful adaptations of the manga to date, it also extend and update the story to fit the 21st century setting, and adds a layer of depth to the main characters, which was something the manga struggled to do.

The premise of *Devilman Crybaby* is simple: Humans and demons have been living together since

ancient times, but only the latter is aware of the other's existence – until now. Pure-hearted high school student Akira Fudo (Koki Uchiyama) lives peacefully with his long-time crush Miki Makimura (Megumi Han) and her family, is surrounded by friends who care about him, and trains hard to earn his place in the school's track-and-field club. Yet everything changes when he is reunited with his childhood friend Ryo Asuka (Ayumu Murase), who insists that the world will soon be invaded by races of deadly demons. The only way to defeat them, he believes, is to allow a human and a demon to bond with one another and become a supernaturally powerful hybrid, and he decides to use his old friend to test this hypothesis. Akira suddenly becomes a powerful key in this eternal battle between humans and demons, a medium between two worlds, a "Devilman" that has both the enormous strength of a demon and the kind heart of a human.

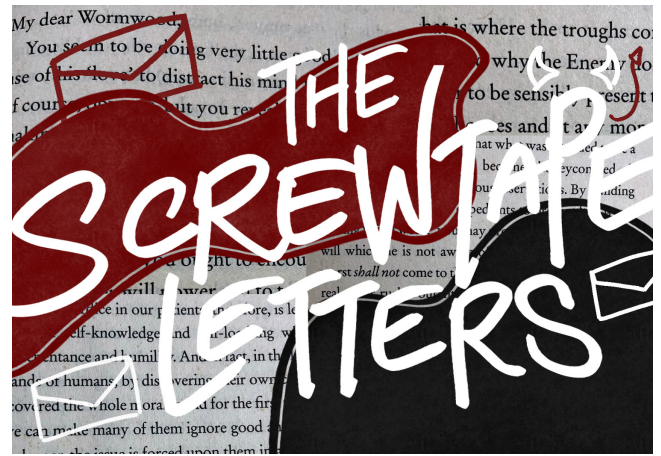
*Devilman Crybaby* is considered much darker than your average Netflix anime; it can be hard to stomach, and is definitely not for the squeamish. Its over-stylized and even gratuitous depiction of sex, gore, and violence serves both as a faithful callback to the Go Nagai's original manga, and as its own signature element that separates it from its source material. Along their way to uncover the existence of demons, Ryo and Akira find themselves in a rave-lit orgy party full of neon, drugs, and nudity readily and openly exposed. Different spectrums of color are blended together to create a feast for the eyes that is both lavish, outlandish, and disturbing, all at the same time. I suspect this use of color is intentional: it reflects the "animal" part of humans that has now been laid bare, one that is not only sumptuous and rapturous in nature, but also ugly and discomforting. In fact, the theme of whether humans and demons are different from each other, and in what way is prevalent throughout the anime, and the question of identity is raised frequently. As a Devilman, is Akira Fudo both a human and a demon, or neither truly a human nor a demon? In that extravagant party, it seems the only thing that separates humans from demons is their humanoid appearance, which makes for a unique experience when the demons "inside" them crawl their way out kicking and screaming, violently turning them into the worst version of themselves, yet not so different from who they actually are.

Not only spectacular in terms of animation, the series also touches on a number of issues that are very 21st-century relevant, and does so with a surprising tenderness that bounds to stir the audience from the inside. There are opinions that the anime is nihilistic, both in the idea and the execution. Characters die, and they usually die in the worst way, and at the worst time possible. Those who survive are so overwhelmed with guilt and despair that they become only a shadow of their former self, and their struggles are made personal to even the most hard-boiled audience by the series' haunting and emotional soundtrack. Its depiction of LGBT characters are genuinely humane and relatable, it being embraced wholeheartedly instead of being reduced to just background noises. Other significant themes and tropes such as toxic masculinity, nuclear family, faith and religion, paranoia, and social prejudices are either subverted or deeply delved into, establishing layers of complexity that separate *Devilman Crybaby* from contemporary anime with similar cynicism, such as *Shiki* or *Berserk*. Friendship is also a recurring theme throughout the series; while the friendship between Akira and Ryo is characterized as one that is established by trust and eventually ends with betrayal, the relationship between Miki and her friend and rival Miko is defined by jealousy, but reaffirmed by love.

Many might be put off by its NSFW story and the bizarre animation style, but for a Netflix anime, *Devilman Crybaby* shows great potential. This is not to say that I am happy with every aspect of the series. With only 10 episodes, the show feels rushed at times, presenting plot point after plot point but giving the audience hardly any time to reflect on their devastating impact. Many of the lesser demons, whom Akira defeated in the manga, made their appearance on the show as well, but the screen time they are given is so little that they felt trivial. One particular avian demon, who appears in multiple episodes (unlike most others who only get one) and gives off a sense that she might be a serious threat, has a character arc that escalates, climaxes, and finishes entirely in one episode with little or no impact being carried on into the rest of the series.

Yet these criticisms seem small in the grand scheme of things, and whether you like the anime or not, you will still have to go through its rollercoaster of emotions, from jaw-dropping to heart-breaking in just a split moment that is an episode, and these experiences, like the characters and their struggles, are unforgettable. *Devilman*

*Crybaby* is a visual escapade that is brutal, bloody, and unforgiving, all at the same time, but like the devilmen it depicts, it also has a heart. *p*



## An Interpretive Essay

Words and Art by Kayla Guevara

In C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape guides his nephew as he is tasked to tempt a human into sin; this book is set in England during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Screwtape, an experienced demon, writes letters to Wormwood, his nephew, wherein he gives ingenious advice in order for him to successfully win over his patient's soul. Aside from the three characters mentioned, two other individuals are also significant to the story, the patient's mother and the patient's lover. While the patient struggles to live a moral and Christian life versus Hell's temptations, Wormwood works to entice the man to wickedness with the help of his uncle's instruction. Screwtape shows clever subtlety in tempting patients to self-centeredness in prayer through feelings and images, to gluttony through delicacy, and to pride through membership in an elite Christian social circle.

One of Screwtape's sly techniques in tempting a human is by distracting him from the true purpose of prayer by using his emotions and his surroundings. Screwtape says, "the simplest [way] is to turn their gaze away from Him towards themselves." He advises Wormwood to keep the patient focused on his mind, so that he may intentionally develop feelings there. For example, if he prays for forgiveness, he should be attempting to feel forgiven him-



self. If he prays for courage, he should be attempting to feel fearless. Screwtape informs his nephew that he should teach the human to “estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling” (p.17). If the desired feeling is not attained, the prayer is not quite successful. By using the patient’s surroundings, Screwtape reveals that it can also be used to divert him from sincere prayer. For instance, if the patient lays his eyes upon a crucifix, he should be kept praying to it. Rather than praying to the Person Himself, he is to pray to the physical object that represents the Divine Being instead. From the patient’s point of view, he may think that he is still genuinely praying, yet it could already be the opposite. In order for prayer to be favorable of Hell’s agenda, Screwtape teaches Wormwood on how to slyly twist prayer, so the patient may be drawn away from its true purpose.

Another way for Screwtape to catch souls is gluttony through delicacy, which is a sin just like gluttony through excess, yet it may not seem so. In one of his letters, Screwtape speaks of the patient’s mother as well as Glubose, another demon who is in charge of her soul, and how he has successfully made her a terror to servants. She eats in small quantities, but she is extremely determined to get exactly what she wants. As she satisfies her hunger, she “believes that she is practicing temperance” (p.88) by not eating much, but she does not recognize her gluttony. Regardless of how troublesome it may be to others, she insists on having her food at a certain temperature or done at a certain way. However, since she is never able to find a person who can meet her rather impossible standards, she is regularly disappointed and ill-tempered. She creates an excuse for herself as well by saying she likes to have nice things for her son; her greed then becomes a discomfort for him. As for the patient himself, Screwtape indicates that “males are best turned to gluttons with the help of their vanity” (p.89). The patient can be made to think that he knows very much about food or that he has found the best and only restaurant for a certain dish, and this then can steadily turn into a habit. Hence, by way of another of Screwtape’s clever tactics, humans could continue to live a life of gluttony, as they do not realize that gluttony through delicacy is just as bad as through excess.

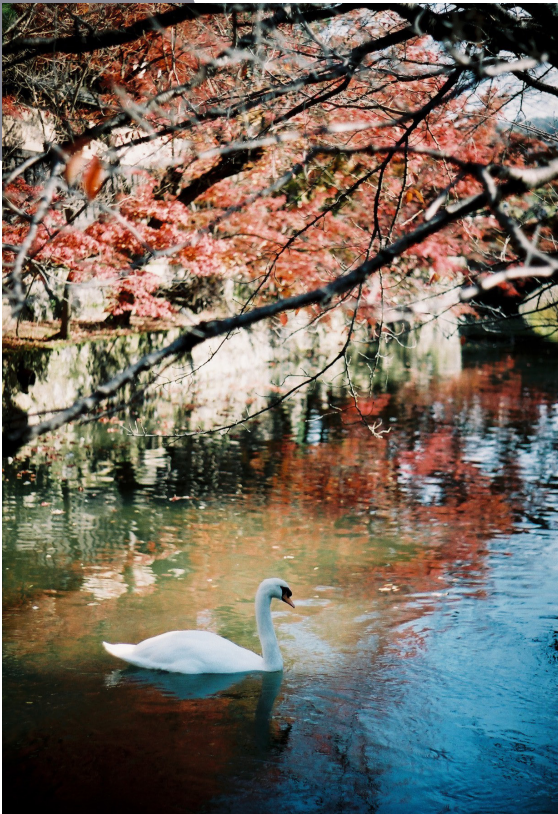
Lastly, the pride through membership in an elite Christian social circle is ideally favorable for the demons. In letter 24, Screwtape talks about the patient’s lover and her vice. As she is a Christian woman, she can ultimately bring the patient towards God, and yet, she has a blemish that she shares with other Christian women who have grown up in a similar circle. She speculates that “outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and ridiculous” (p.129). In other words, she has spiritual pride, but her ignorance is her vice. With the influence of the patient’s lover, he may then be led to believe the same notion because the group he is now part of is “one which he is tempted to be proud of for many other reasons than its Christianity” (p.130). Screwtape advises Wormwood that he must make the patient feel that “he is finding his own level – that these people are his sort” (p.131). He may think that he is part of the educated and more intelligent Christian circle because of his love for his girl. Wormwood must also teach him to distinguish the difference between the circle of Christians and the circle of nonbelievers. The patient must be taught to feel “how different we Christians are” (p.131), yet what he means by the phrase “we Christians” is the people whom he associates with rather than the people who have humbly accepted him. The sense of pride through membership in an elite Christian social circle is favorable to the demons’ side because it makes one feel superior over others.

Screwtape, a skilled demon, shares his clever methods of tempting patients with his nephew, Wormwood. He shows how prayer can be made self-centered by the use of the patient’s emotions and through images; consequently, prayer can then lose its true purpose. Furthermore, he speaks of the strength of gluttony through delicacy since it is a sin that is not quite apparent. He also talks about how the patient’s lover may influence the patient himself to feel the pride of being part of an elite Christian social circle. Screwtape shows how there are many ways for demons to provoke a person into sin and how such procedures are subtle that they do not seem directly sinful.

*Lewis, C.S. The Screwtape Letters. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.*

# Photo Gallery

*By the students of the Global  
Discovery Program.*



*by Mikina Tanaka*



*by Sonava Tadao*



*by Mikina Tanaka*



*by Taqi Ahmad*





by Rakan Ishida



by Rakan Ishida



by Sonava Tadao



by Rakan Ishida



by Mikina Tanaka



*'Long illness makes the patient  
into a good doctor.'*

—a Chinese saying

(*Jiubing Cheng Liangyi*, 久病成良醫)

# Acne **Vulgaris** Imperfect Skin and the Self

Words by Yushi Song

Art by Mila Song

*'The relation between  
what we see and what we  
know is never settled.'*

—John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Pelez, Fernand. *Petite fille debout de dos, face au miroir*. (1911)

**D**uring my childhood, my grandmother tried all kinds of methods to make me finish my food. Her belief was that once the food is served, you should always finish what is on your plate, no matter how full you are to show respect for both the farmer and the chef. She alarmed me that how many grains of rice I left would be how many pimples I get in the future. I found it difficult to believe but it frightened me that I would try as hard as possible to eat until the last grain of rice. Yet still the nightmare came true. I do not clearly remember when the first pimple bumped out on my skin, but then they became a part of my life that marked my experience since middle school. At first it was just some bumpiness filled with pus, hard on the inside and painful on the outside. But then things went out of control — they multiply, ripen, perish, and then appear again, leaving a bloody, inflamed, and messy residue. I became more and more aware of the fact that my skin was uneven, I prayed those annoying zits would all be gone tomorrow before sleep only to discover more the next morning. Fighting against acne became part of my life, characterised by visiting dermatologists, watching YouTube beauty gurus' stories on how they treated their acnes, and buying new topical medicines, beauty creams or lotions just trying to get rid of them.

But this mindset has somehow changed for me

during the past few years. On one hand, they finally stop popping up, for which I am extremely grateful, whilst I have been fairly accustomed to the life of some irregular bumps on my skin. On the other hand, such a break from acne enabled me to reflect on my experience with it, questioning why I had such a hard time, both physically and psychologically, with those indurations on my skin. It was definitely more than some supernatural curses from the farmers who grew food and chefs who served food for me, or the physical pain under my skin. Acne, as those 'incurable yet controllable' bumpiness on the skin, is infused with meanings that one cannot avoid but to embody (NHS website, 2020). Getting acne is exciting and scary at the same time. It symbolises a passage from boy(-girl)hood to maturity, representing energy of the adolescence and thrill of maturation. Yet it is also unwanted amongst growing youngsters as a sign of uncleanness and not well-received in the beauty standard. Teenagers in the UK diagnosed with acne are even more likely to develop MDD (major depressive disorder), and physicians are recommended to 'monitor mood symptoms in patients with acne and initiate prompt MDD management or seek consultation from a psychiatrist when needed' (Vallerand et al., 2018, p. 2). In this paper, I would like to explore some aspects of the doctoring and embodying of acne, especially on exam-



ining how the blemishes of skin became powerful enough to affect one's self-identity.

Human beings visualise a body mostly through skin. Unlike other organs we have, skin is neither inside nor outside but more likely to be perceived in between. Skin can be used to sense the self and the others, to display and provide information of one's age, health, etc., and we experience our skin in both the natural and social world. Skin is treated 'not only as the boundary of the individual as a biological and psychological entity but as the frontier of the social self as well' (Turner, 2012, p. 486). Skin plays the key role in the invention of race, rendering skin colour from its natural being to a state of meaningfulness, 'naturalis[ing] a social order built upon generations of European violence, genocide and enslavement directed at racialised peoples' (Carey, 2017, p. 21). The question of 'why it is that people look the way they do' entails more than a curiosity on biology and evolution, but rather interrogating why some people are not in conformity with normal and seeking for meanings in the social world (Jablonski, 2004, p. 612). Skin became the frontier of the creation of the self and socialisation, as humans decorate, cover, and uncover their skins according to their gender, age, social status, etc. Hence skin is complicated as it is both private and public, subjective and objective, partial and whole, natural and social, with many meanings that are directly related to power and authority.

Foucault argues that power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge whilst reproducing new knowledge to exercise through it (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). Exploring how sexuality became an essential construct in determining moral worth, health, desire, and identity, Foucault argues that individuals incorporate control not only via other people's knowledge of individuals, but also via individuals' knowledge of themselves (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). The norms fabricated by the sciences of sexuality makes individuals to internalise them and monitor themselves in order to conform to such norms, making individuals to be not only controlled '*objects of disciplines*' but also '*self-scrutinising and self-forming subjects*' (Gutting & Oksala, 2018, original emphasis). The science of skin as well is never non-ideological, as Young writes, 'in industrial societies the most powerful ideological practices are ones which claim that their facts are

non-ideological because they are scientific' (Young, 1983, p. 209).

Such work of power requires us to consider acne on skin through a lens of intersectionality of dermatology and society at large. Regardless of the social importance skin implies, acne is often treated no more than a medical problem that seeks for dermatological, psychological, or pharmaceutical interventions. The causation of acne is usually analysed through genetic, hormonal, bacterial, and environmental factors deliberating sebum, poral occlusion, and inflammation (Hunter et al., 2002, p. 148-149). Some scholars have argued that acne symbolises an 'evolutionary mismatch of human ancestry and modern environment' due to the pro-inflammatory Western diet (Campbell & Strassmann, 2016, p. 325), whilst calling acne a 'disease of Western civilisation' or 'blemish of modern society' (Cordain et al., 2002, p. 1589; Campbell & Strassmann, 2016, p. 325). These studies suggest a hypothesis that acne is a disease of modern lifestyle considering the low prevalence of acne in non-westernised and partially modernised societies, a notion that dermatological community frowns upon as majority of dermatologists believe diet has little to do with the onset of acne (Hunter et al., 2002, p. 155). Some also argue that acne is a meaning inception for sexual selection to 'ward off potential mates until the afflicted individual is some years past the age of reproductive maturity, and thus emotionally, intellectually, and physically fit to be a parent' (Bloom, 2004, p. 462).

*Skin became the frontier of the creation of the self and socialisation, as humans decorate, cover, and uncover their skins according to their gender, age, social status, etc.*

These differences might be explainable with the idea of 'local biologies', which Lock defines as 'the manner in which biological and social processes are permanently entangled throughout life, ensuring a degree of biological difference among humans everywhere that typically has little or no significance

but at times bears profoundly on well-being' (Lock, 2017, p. 8). Acne as a somatic expression undergoes both biological and social fabrication and hence it is necessary to put the pimpled skin into context whenever possible. The picture of acne is far broader than just accusing our culture for idealising and advertising clean and clear skin whilst making the pimpled one pathological. The comprehension of acne rather keeps on evolving and travelling as our knowledge changes over time. Yet biology seems to be overriding the social processes with the rise of molecular and genetic studies. Foucault sees the emergence of bio-power replacing whilst complementing sovereign power, endeavouring to administer, optimise, sustain, and multiply the population. Such transformation was characterised by the arrival of different means of techniques of controlling the population which embarks human history upon modernity, that the exercise of power no longer poses a menace of death but rather takes care of lives of people as living beings. The biological existence of human subjects hence became a central organising feature of political and social relations. The contemporary bio-politics features a large scale of molecularization and geneticization (Rose, 2001, p. 13). Such reductionistic practices trying to grasp human bodies on a microscopic level, believing only gene can determine health, which in Lippman's account 'privatises and individualises health risks and responsibility and focuses attention on biological rather than social conditions, potentially increasing social inequalities and leading to victim blaming,' whilst 'establishing hierarchies among people on the basis of differences in their DNA' (Weiner et al., 2017, p. 991) Acne, as an 'incurable yet controllable' disease (NHS website, 2020), became to be rationalised by its heritability, which is almost 80% in first-degree relatives (Bhate & Williams, 2013, p. 476), and other factors currently understood as affecting acne is also being researched with a genetic apprehension. Whilst hormonal therapy has been widely in use with a gendered difference, with the advancement of technology would we see a transition of the treatment of acne to vast usage of genetic engineering? How would subjectivity change under such work of molecularization and geneticization?

On the other hand, for people afflicted with acne, knowledge of skin is constructed biologically, socially and culturally before the onset of their

pimples. Individuals understand and embody acne within the domain of control and regulate their bodies accordingly. Such control is diffused in the form of beauty, which is further entangled with the rhetoric of health. Beauty is always entwined with power in a complex way regardless whether 'facial attractiveness is remarkably consistent, regardless of race, nationality or age' (Fink & Neave, 2005, p. 317). Beauty, beyond aesthetic values, became medicalised, became entangled and inseparable from health, creating a controlling power through the sense of skin normality with dermatological and social knowledge. Rabinow defines bio-sociality as a 'truly new type of auto-production' that emerge around and through the new genetics becoming a 'circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci', instead of 'a biological metaphor for modern society' (Rabinow, 1996, p. 99). He writes, 'if socio-biology is culture constructed on the basis of a metaphor of nature, then in bio-sociality nature will be modelled on culture understood as practice' (Rabinow, 1996, p. 99). The coalition of skin and health makes skin problem, as acne to condense the societal understanding of age, gender, race, etc., engendering a desire of patients to





treat it dermatologically and socially. The multi-billion-dollar skincare industry, supplying tonnes of creams, moisturisers, soaps, ointments, cosmetics and technologies to create a sense of good skin, good beauty, as well as good health. Skincare works to eliminate the bad dermatological actors as 'tools for deceptions of health, rest, and leisure, ergo a higher social status' (Smofsky, 2017, p. 34). As individuals are 'empowered through the formation of an "imagined community", engendering a sense of kinship, where protection and support are offered, differences normalised and values reproduced', skincare product became part of the creation of an identity (Dimond et al., 2015, pp. 2-3). Using cosmetics became a symbol of showing the users that he/she is adhering to the modern virtue, objectifying him/her to the realm of control with the rhetoric of health and beauty.

To sum up, the blemished skin is mingling between the biomedical and social world, and patients who suffer from acne submit him/herself to the control of norms. The intersectional nature of acne requires understanding from both the dermatological and social perspectives, yet the latter one is often overlooked in practice. Such nature also

creates skincare as a beholder and reinforcement of identity. I believe giving voices to the patients, paying close attention to their narratives can help us finish the incomplete picture of acne. **p**

#### References

- Bhate, K., & Williams, H. C. (2013). Epidemiology of acne vulgaris. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 168(3), 474–485.
- Bloom, D. F. (2004). Is acne really a disease?: A theory of acne as an evolutionarily significant, high-order psychoneuro-immune interaction timed to cortical development with a crucial role in mate choice. *Medical Hypotheses*, 62(3), 462–469.
- Campbell, C. E., & Strassmann, B. I. (2016). The blemishes of modern society? *Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health*, 2016(1), 325–337.
- Carey, R. (2017, April). *Embodying acne: Skin, subjectivity and dermatological science* (Thesis).
- Cordain, L., Lindeberg, S., Hurtado, M., Hill, K., Eaton, S. B., & Brand-Miller, J. (2002). Acne vulgaris. *Archives of Dermatology*, 138(12), 1584–1590.
- Dimond, R., Bartlett, A., & Lewis, J. (2015). What binds biosociality? The collective effervescence of the parent-led conference. *Social Science & Medicine*, 126, 1–8.
- Fink, B., & Neave, N. (2005). The biology of facial beauty. *International Journal of Cosmetic Science*, 27(6), 317–325.
- Gutting, G., & Oksala, J. (2018, May 22). *Michel Foucault (stanford encyclopedia of philosophy)*. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/>
- Hunter, J. A. A., Savin, J., & Dahl, M. (2002). Sebaceous and sweat gland disorders. In *Clinical dermatology* (3rd ed., pp. 148–161). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jablonski, N. G. (2004). The evolution of human skin and skin color. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33(1), 585–623.
- Lock, M. (2017). Recovering the body. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 46(1), 1–14.
- NHS website. (2020, July 20). *Acne*. Nhs.Uk. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/acne/>
- Rabinow, P. (1996). *Essays on the anthropology of reason* (1st ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Rose, N. (2001). The politics of life itself. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(6), 1–30.
- Smofsky, S. (2017, June). *Shaping the skin: Conveying identities through skincare and cosmetics* (Thesis (Masters)). <https://spec-trum.library.concordia.ca/983146/>
- Turner, T. S. (2012). The social skin. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2(2), 486–504.
- Vallerand, I. A., Lewinson, R. T., Parsons, L. M., Lowerison, M. W., Frolkis, A. D., Kaplan, G. G., Barnabe, C., Bulloch, A. G. M., & Patten, S. B. (2018). Risk of depression among patients with acne in the U.K.: A population-based cohort study. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 178(3), e194–e195.
- Weiner, K., Martin, P., Richards, M., & Tutton, R. (2017). Have we seen the geneticisation of society? Expectations and evidence. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 39(7), 989–1004.
- Young, A. (1983). Rethinking ideology. *International Journal of Health Services*, 13(2), 203–219.

*Term Paper for Ethnographies in Medical Anthropology (Environment and Ethics) (2021)*





# Escaping the Cycle

Words by Forrest Maynock / Photo by Yushi Song

To think that this film was made 20 plus years ago is quite mind boggling; it remains quite relevant, and brings unique perspectives to old arguments.

Considering recent events this film stands out as both a warning to the dangers of racism and as an inside look into the creation of a racist. More than anything *American History X* (1998) shows ways that racists can be created, thrive, and be reclaimed. At its heart the film is a redemption tale of two brothers lost in the pits of one of Earth's most vile ideologies.

Many of the cultural references in this film seem dated, but others manage to carry over to contemporary soundbites and media. Where an intense discussion over the Rodney King case may be lost to some, the visceral portrayal discrimination and murder will likely hit home. This makes the film especially important in educating a younger demo-

graphic since much of the language will be attainable and understandable for them.

The American centeredness of the film could be off putting for some, so alternative suggestions would be Clint Eastwood's more generalized (but still American) *Gran Torino* (2008), French cult classic *La Haine* (1995), and for a Austrian film that doesn't deal with the theme of race, but instead violence, *Funny Games* (1997).

*American History X* follows Derek and Danny Vinyard, and their journey from "everyday American kids," to Neo-Nazi members, finally culminating in a recovery for both. At the very beginning of the film the audience is given Derek brutally killing two African-Americans who are attempting to steal a truck that belonged to Derek's father. Derek goes to prison for this. Soon after the audience is given a recently released from prison and changed Derek who is less racist and seemingly more grounded.



The events of the film are presented a little out of order to create a mystery as to what exactly happened to change Derek while in prison, and to hide the moments that likely influenced Derek to initially choose the path of racism. While Derek is in prison Danny goes further down the rabbit hole of racism and seems to mostly embrace it by the time of his brother's release, but still is not fully initialized like his brother once was.

While Danny can be pulled out, Derek's friends are all too far gone, and are fully indoctrinated into the Neo-Nazi ideology. In prison Derek manages to become disillusioned with the ideology, and faces the worst possible "betrayal" at the hands of his compatriots. This mixed with the blossoming friendship with fellow inmate Lamont, and the intervention of ex-high school teacher Dr. Sweeny ultimately changes Derek's ways.

The one element that the film leaves out is how the Neo-Nazi ring leader, Cameron Alexander, recruited Derek, and later his brother. While this particular subplot may have added unneeded weight to the film, its exclusion is missed. Not seeing the exact moment of Derek's turn leaves a lot left to the imagination, though two instances do show that the seeds of hatred were planted long before Alexander's involvement. The redemption is covered quite well, but the initial fall could have had more coverage.

We also see glimpses of Derek at the height of his Neo-Nazi activities and see how his newfound ideology weakens the foundation of his family structure. The value Derek being a part of the family is also shown in the changing of home in the film. Derek's family starts in a family house at the beginning of the film, but by the time of Derek's release from prison the family has moved to a small and cramped apartment.

Once out of prison Derek works to piece his family back together and leave his old life behind. This results in a confrontation between Derek, Alexander, and his old friends, and ends with Derek giving the reasons for his drastic change while in prison. Understanding each other the two brothers return home and completely abandon the Neo-Nazi ideology in a visually rich scene. This however is not the film's conclusion. While everything seems to be on the right track, the ultimate price is paid by

the true end of the film.

From beginning to end this film is a rollercoaster of emotional turmoil, and contains one of the most bittersweet endings that I have ever seen in a film. The film ends on a lot of questions, mainly of how the latest developments will unfold, but this is not a film that needs a sequel or needs to tie up all of those loose ends that are created. This was an intentional choice by the director, Tony Kayne.

Near the conclusion of the film one character states: "Hate is baggage. Life's too short to be pissed off all the time. It's just not worth it." This quote could be seen as the summation of the film's overall message. This is a film everyone should see. It makes you feel uncomfortable, it gives you first-hand look into how racism may develop and prosper, and most importantly it shows how one can be redeemed and meditate on "the better angels of our nature." **p**

*Review for Film and Literature (2020).*

## Second Best But Never Enough

*Words by Risa Akiyama  
Collage by Mattie Balagat*

I turned on the nightstand light in the living room with a plate of frozen pizza in one hand, then slumped down into my sofa. Dust came out of it. Opening my laptop carefully so as not to break its wobbly screen, I went to my school's website to check my grades for the term. I wasn't worried. I knew I was doing good in school and all of my teachers liked me. I wasn't the brightest student when I was in middle school, but after my first year of high school, I had promised myself I would do better from sophomore year onwards.

As expected, all A's. I closed my laptop and finished my pizza, listening to the clock ticking.

---

I was woken up with the dim light and noise coming from the kitchen:

"Marquis Marquis Marquis..."

The disappointed voice was my mom coming back from her night shift at the hospital. She was cleaning the mess I made from making myself dinner. It took a while to understand her words as I groggily sat up from my deep sleep.

"Marquis, are you awake? Why do you always leave the pizza box out? Put it back in the refrigerator where it belongs."

I tried to talk back, but I stopped myself. She was tired.

It's been like this around the house ever since both my parents started their night shift, dealing with patients infected with COVID-19. My mom and dad are both nurses at Stevenson Hospital. That's where they met. The hospital is known for its great service and kind staff, which naturally attracts many patients. Not just any patients, but rich ones who could afford the luxury of kind nurses and doctors, on top of expensive health care.

I used to go around my friends boasting about my parents and the high reputation of the hospital they worked at. Both of my parents were still young when they had me and they had to work non-stop to get to the place they are today. That's why I have so much respect for them. I see them as my role models and they inspire me to work hard in school.

But my boasting stopped one day when I was going about my normal routine of talking about my parents to my friends at school. When the topic changed to how my parents worked hard to become nurses at Stevenson Hospital, one of my friends asked, "But why aren't they doctors? I'm not saying that nurses aren't great but in my view, nurses are secondary to doctors." The rest of the crowd nodded.

I was struck silent. Suddenly, it felt like everything I believed in was a lie. Everything that I had pride and faith in was taken away. I felt humiliated and angry at the same time, but I wasn't sure where these feelings were coming from, or what



*Photo background by Mikina Tanaka*

they wanted to do. As time went by that day, I also started to wonder why my parents didn't become doctors. At dinner that night, I carried the dilemma of whether or not I should ask them about it.

"Marquis, why are you so quiet tonight?"

My mom always noticed the slightest change in me. I sat there in silence for a while before I could speak up.

"Why aren't you and dad doctors?"

Both of them looked shocked for a split second, then started laughing. What was so funny?

"Marquis, why do you want to know about that all of a sudden?" my dad asked. His shoulders slightly moved up and down. I stayed quiet.

"Well, I did think of becoming a doctor but as you can tell, getting a doctor license takes more time and money. I couldn't afford either of those while seeing you grow up in front of my eyes. I knew I had to become stable fast for you and for the family."

As my dad explained, my mom nodded along, looking down at her plate. I realized then that my parents weren't nurses by choice. They couldn't afford to become doctors. I felt a part of me break that night.

---

I finally managed to wake myself up and walk to the kitchen to help my mom clean up my mess.

"Marquis how many times..."

"I know I know, I was just really tired. I'll clean it





a, stock photos taken from Unsplash.

myself.”

I then instantly felt bad for cutting her off from a long speech, so I asked her how her night shift was, to change the mood.

“It’s the same everyday. Another COVID patient coming in right after their vacation somewhere in Europe. I can’t believe we have to take care of these white folks who think COVID is just another minor cold.”

My mom and dad have been telling me that the patients who come to Stevenson Hospital for COVID-19 are mostly rich white people who decided to ignore the existence of the deadly virus. Some patients continue to deny that they caught the virus while heavily coughing, which sounds very weird. Could they be that stupid?

And the fact that my parents are working so hard, risking their lives for these people who aren’t socially-aware or responsible, who are probably thinking that they can get away with anything, just because they’re rich... it makes me furious. They aren’t thinking about the consequences of them prioritizing their leisures. Sure, for them it might not even be an issue for them to get infected with COVID-19. They are wealthy enough to afford the treatment anyway. But what about my parents? What about us?

I recently read an article that stated that black Americans are more at risk of catching COVID-19. Not because we’re going out to have fun, but because we don’t have the luxury of working from home. Our bodies are the ones exposed to this deadly virus. While those rich white folks could choose to

stay home and do nothing, they don’t. They make trouble for us. My parents are giving their lives for these kinds of people. It’s like twenty-first century slavery. Some may say I’m exaggerating the situation, but those are my honest thoughts.

I don’t share this anger with my parents though. I keep it to myself, because I know they are feeling the same way... and nothing will come out of me venting. I just pray everyday that my parents come home safe.

—

The following day, I woke up right before my Literature class on Zoom. I rushed to wash my face, opened my laptop carefully, and signed on. Our topic was the peerage of England, and we were in the progress of reading a work of Shakespeare. The teacher shared a screen that showed the ranking of English peerage and there, I found my name. Above all other positions, but second to the Duke, was Marquess—a different spelling, but the same pronunciation. That caught my attention for some reason and it bothered me. Being second...

I couldn’t pay attention to the rest of the class, or to the rest of the day. To distract myself, I decided to cook a proper dinner for my parents as a surprise when they come home. I had gone into the kitchen and was about to prepare ingredients when I got a sudden call.

It was a number that looked familiar, but I couldn’t recognize it before tapping “accept” on my phone screen. A female voice started on the other end.

“Hello, this is Stevenson Hospital, calling for Marquis.”

Sudden chills. Usually when my parents have something urgent, they don’t call from the hospital, but through their private phones.

“Hello, yes, that’s me.”

A pause, then the lady continued, “ Your father was tested for COVID-19, and the results show he is positive. Your mother is currently dealing with other patients and this number and your name was listed for his emergency contact.”

I crumbled to the floor and just sat there, feeling the cold floor take over my body. **P**

*Short story for Anthropology of Disaster (2020).*

# Farewell to the Graduates of 2021!

*Words by Forrest Maynock*

*Photo courtesy of Kokoro Sekiguchi*

The Global Discovery Program is set to have its first round of graduates in September of 2021; Polyphony has interviewed two of these graduating seniors to highlight their work and accomplishments for other students to take note of and celebrate.

Kokoro Sekiguchi is a senior from the Social cluster who is focusing on volunteering in an international framework. Kokoro stated that her project is a “comparison between international and Japanese students for their volunteer experience and image of volunteer.”

When asked why she chose this research in particular Kokoro said that she did not think that people in Japan had much opportunity to volunteer, so she would “like to analyze how people in Japan are able to get more opportunities to volunteer.”

Kokoro also highlighted her time in highschool as a motivation for choosing the social cluster saying that she was in the Community Service club for four years, and that she had many great experiences from the club, so she wanted to “know more about the nonprofit organization and volunteer in academic ways.”

Kokoro also enjoys the work she is doing for the senior project, but did also note that there are some minor difficulties that she must overcome. She also hopes that her project will contribute to “society in Japan so that Japanese people have more volunteer opportunities and great times [like] I did in high school.”

After she graduates Kokoro plans on going back to the United States to find work, but also spends her time volunteering at various places such as animal shelters. She would also like to continue to challenge herself and “find a place that I enjoy and contribute to the community.”

Myia Price is a senior in the cultural cluster who is focusing on “[h]ow the students in the Discovery Program function inside and outside of their school environment with regards to language.”

When asked further about her research Myia stated that she had always been interested in language education, and that because of the sociology classes offered by Professor Miyagawa she was able to learn about “many of the different factors that influence our daily lives.”

Myia has also found much enjoyment from her project so far highlighting the interview process and unique research aspect saying that “[s]ince English language undergrad programs for foreign



*Kokoro Sekiguchi.*

students are relatively rare in Japan, I think getting a new perspective on international students in a new context could be useful.”

Unlike Kokoro, Myia plans on staying in Japan to work after she graduates.

While these are only two of the graduating seniors from the Global Discovery program, we can see and learn a lot from what they have contributed as fellow students, aspiring workers, volunteers, and friends. Thanks to both interview participants, and thanks to every member of the 2021 graduating class of GDP! *p*



# Power in Game and Cheats as a Revolutionary Power

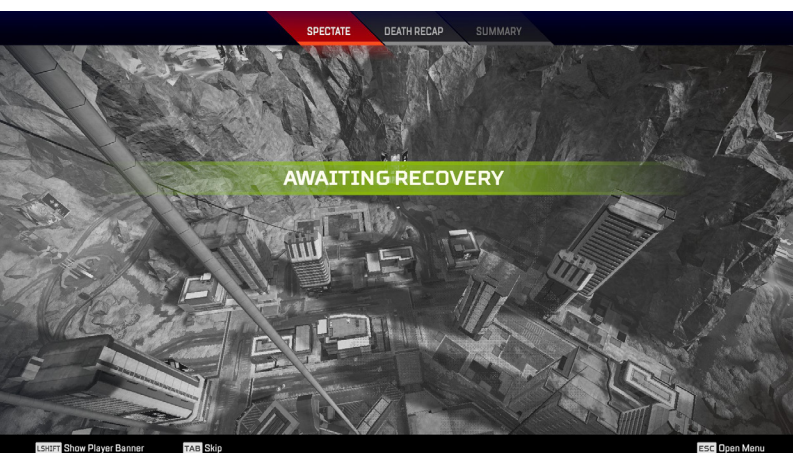
Words and photos by Genki Hase

A multiplayer online game is an interesting environment where the architecture of the game and the user experience intersects. On the one hand, inside the game, the administrators hold enormous power over players since they are the ones who are constructing and designing the mechanism of the game. On the other hand, it is the users who influence administrators' decisions by expressing their gaming experience and deciding on whether to get involved or not in the game. In this sense, it can be said that the environment of online games is being constructed through cooperation and communication between the game administrators and the players. Although the in-game environment is a cooperative product, the in-game agency of players will be regulated according to how the administrators administer the game environment. One sociologist, Satoshi Hamano (2008), investigated how the information environment had been designed in Japan, and noted that this kind of power that physically regulates human conduct through designing the environment is a unique kind of power that is different from the powers emerging from norm, law, and market. For instance, in a physical real-world (as opposed to the online space), the players or people can enter a no-entry zone, but they are avoiding to do so because of the norms and values that individuals have internalized; but in an online game, the players cannot physically enter a no-entry zone because the entry to that zone is architecturally impossible or simply by the fact that the no-entry zone does not exist. In sum, yes, the game environment is constructed through cooperation between different kinds of actors; however, their relationships are unbalanced within the architecture since the people who create and edit the architecture have the power to regulate and shape people's behavior in a certain way.

If you have ever played a multiplayer online game, you might wonder: Even the entrance to a non-entry zone is physically impossible for most of the users, aren't some people using unauthorized tools and exploiting security holes entering that no-entry zone by hacking its architecture? This is an intriguing question that is worth exploring because the presence of unauthorized tools, or cheats, will potentially strip away the game administrators' power over players. Thus, how the power thrived from the advantages of designing its absolute architecture transitions when the architecture was not physically disabling certain actions remained a question. In the following, I will take a multiplayer first-person perspective shooting game *Apex Legends* as an example, and briefly discuss how *Apex Legends* is dealing with the irregularities/cheats that threatens the "environmental administrative power (kankyo-kanrigata kenryoku)" (Azuma, 2007), the power that regulates human conduct through manipulating the architecture of a particular space. This investigation may reveal some of the obstacles that environmental administrative power might encounter and suggests how the game administrators are coping with these obstacles that disrupt the social order in the game.

## *Apex Legends, Anti-cheat, and Reporting Functions*

*Apex Legends* is enjoyed by more than 70 million players worldwide because of its fast-paced experience with an emphasis on team competition (*Apex Legends*, 2019). Despite its popularity, *Apex Legends* is struggling to deal with cheaters and cheat distributors who disrupt the game community as well as the social order in the game. According to an anti-cheat developer update released by the *Apex Legends* development team on May 2, 2019, the team is taking measures to prevent rampant cheating in the game by disallowing players access to the game and implementing a cheat reporting function (McCoy, 2019). The former measure has been implemented using anti-cheat programs and behavior models that detect and automatically ban cheaters created by machine learning; therefore the administrators are countering the issue through architectural arrangements. The latter measure is also an approach from architectural modification, but this reporting function is unique in the sense that it is the players who report the suspicious players. Put it differently, the in-game reporting function allows and encourages players to actively "contribute" to the improvement of the community and the harmony of in-game order. With such a feature,



players will be more likely to monitor each other, and they will be educated to utilize this feature through official announcements and the user interface that displays the word “Report.”

The in-game reporting function later became more than an in-game architectural arrangement. In August 2020, the *Apex Legends* team opened a Twitter account particularly focusing on accepting user-reports to ban players who are infringing the game regulations (えぺタイムズ, 2021). One of the possible reasons why the team opened an account on Twitter is due to the openness that Twitter’s architecture has. Twitter’s unique function called “Retweet” allows a tweet, a post made by a user, to be spread to people easily so that utilizing this function allows the *Apex Legends* team to deliver anti-cheats activities they are working on to the players relatively easily and rapidly. As soon as the Twitter account had been established, the players who had been educated to spontaneously report cheats inside the game also started to report suspects to that Twitter account. In-game reporting and out-game reporting. By the fact that cheaters are being banned from the game due to these reporting functions, these reporting systems are certainly acting as a part of an architecture that counters transgressions in the game, but at the same time, these functions are disciplining the players so that players will be kept under its regime. Earlier was to embed players in the makeup of the game. But now, the domain of the environmental administrative power has extended through the process of embedding players’ actions outside of its architecture as a part of its architecture to maintain the order inside the game.

### *Ending: Architecture and Discipline*

In summary, anti-cheat measures that have been taken in *Apex Legends* demonstrated some ways how one game’s administrators and architec-

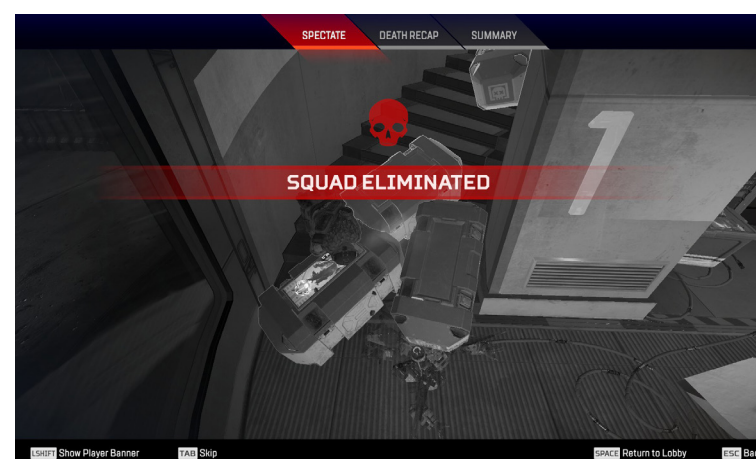
ture deals with irregularities and suspects that can potentially harm the environment, and showed how the environmental administrative power maintains its own power.

One of the characteristics of environmental administrative power that Hamano (2008) noted was that it does not require individuals to internalize norms and values despite other means of maintaining social order such as norm, market, and law requires to do so. However, in the case of *Apex Legends*, intentionally or not, the users had been disciplined to report cheaters in the game, and the administrators are utilizing these user-reports as one of the mechanisms, or architecture, to handle the order in the game. In this sense, it can be said that for the environmental administrative power, perhaps it is not necessary to educate, discipline, or require internalization of certain values to the individuals; although that is the case since most of the time people can only act within the architectural framework, the human behavior that has been shaped by the architecture can be also a part of the architecture, and this process involves the process of internalization of values, in other words, discipline. **p**

### References

- Apex Legends [@PlayApex]. (2019, October 30). Apex Legends has officially hit 70 million players worldwide! We are constantly so humbled and thankful for all of your support [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/PlayApex/status/1189285782248460296?s=20>
- Azuma, H. (2007). 情報環境論集: 東浩紀コレクションS. 講談社.
- Hamano, S. (2008). アーキテクチャの生態系: 情報環境はいかに設計されてきたか. NTT出版.
- McCoy, D. (2019, May 2). Anti-cheat developer update – May 2. Apex Legends. Retrieved August 15, 2020 from <https://www.ea.com/games/apex-legends/news/anti-cheat-developer-update-may-2019?setLocale=en-us>
- えぺタイムズ. (2021, February 23). 【Apex】チーター等の禁止行為を行うプレイヤーをBANする公式セキュリティアカウント(@RSPN\_Hideouts)への通報方法・詳細まとめ. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://apexlegends-leaksnews.com/cheatban/>

*Essay for Independent Study: Construction of Information Architecture in Japan (2021)*





# Crisis

Words by Forrest Maynock  
Collage by Kayla Guevara

*///scanning condition of subject 309///  
scanning complete///vital signs are  
normal///scheduled circulation process  
activated///estimated time of subject's  
free movement is approximately 24  
hours///cycle 1850 initiated///*

...

The man jolted awake from his deep sleep. He had no sense of awareness or time. He only knew bits of random information. The man was completely nude, and his body seemed sore and slow to react. The man's surroundings started to come into the focus of his vision. What looked like a curved elevator door lay directly in front of him, and to either of his sides there were blinking lights and a sticky substance in which the man's body was embedded; only his face free to move. From what the man could see he was in a large cylindrical object of some sort. As the man began to attempt moving he could feel a sharp tugging on his spine. He paused for a moment before forcefully pulling himself until he felt something detach from his neck, then all the way down his back. As he fully detached, the lights to his sides shut off. After a brief pause, the cylinder began to rotate and make whirring noises. The man instinctively froze when he felt the cylinder move. It took a few moments until the cylinder stopped its rotation and settled; the man could now feel blood rushing to his head as if he were standing upright. The man heard a slight hiss, and then he glimpsed a thin, horizontal strip of bright light slowly widening just in front of him. Only a few minutes had passed since the man had woken from his deep sleep, but he had already started to form words and thoughts in his mind. As the cylinder began to open only one thought passed through the man's mind:

*I NEED TO ESCAPE!!*

...

*Subject 309, can you communicate?*

"Umm, yes, I can hear you in my head...why is that?"

*A chip allowing communication with the ship's computer was placed in your head 19 cycles ago.*

"The ship's computer?"

*Yes, you are speaking with the ship's computer.*

"Oh...ship?"

*Interstellar vessel 7495 designated Quasar. That is the ship you are on.*

"I can't...I can't remember who I am...who am I?"

*You are subject 309. You are the lone human on this ship. The ship is auto piloted by the ship's computer.*

"You are the ship's computer?"

*Yes.*

"What is my name?"

*Your name is classified, you are subject 309.*

"I see..."

Subject 309 took a few steps away from the cylinder and turned around to look at the container he had been stored in. The solution that had held him place was a deep, dark green, and there were a number of tubular wires in the indentation that his body had left. Subject 309 reached behind his back and felt a number of metal plugs along his spine.

"What are these for?"

*The preservation of your life.*

A long pause ensued. Subject 309 had regained much of mental capacity, but still had little memory of why he was here. His instincts told him to run, but his body was still reprocessing the world outside of the tank. Subject 309's mind was crowded with questions, but there was also a feeling of something sinister. Subject 309 needed more time to process the situation. Almost instinctively, one question flashed through his mind.

"H-how long do I have?"

*Approximately 24 hours. Have you remembered why you are here?*

"No...But I know I'm supposed to go back in that tank, I don't know why, but I know it's going to happen."

*You should exercise. Body fitness is important for stasis.*

"That cylinder is a stasis chamber?"

Yes.

"Alright, well...give me some time to get reacquainted with my body, OK?"

Yes.

...

A few hours passed. Subject 309 had been released from the confines of the cylinder, but he still felt the urge to escape. He followed the computer's orders, not wanting to raise any suspicion. The computer seemed to be able to pick up on Subject 309's body functions. The computer pointed out heart beats, blood pressure, breaths per minute, and brain activity, among other biodata, but the computer did not seem to have omnipotence of any kind. Subject 309's thoughts remained private and not a point of the computer's inquiries and suggestions.

*Subject 309, your protein level is far too low for continued stasis, I suggest heavy protein intake in your remaining hours.*

"Yes, alright..."

*Protein can be found in the room to the left of your current location.*

"What sorts of food are there?"

*There is no food, only pills.*

"Ah..."

Subject 309 struggled to find any tangible memories to cling onto; he only seemed to remember screams and struggling. The computer was the only thing Subject 309 had heard since waking up. One positive that Subject 309 noted was the lack of cameras. There were no mirrors or screens either,

so unless there were hidden cameras, Subject 309's movements within the given area could not be detected, but he couldn't be sure. Wherever he was he wanted out.

"Computer, how long do I have left?"

*7 hours, 23 minutes.*

"I'm going to head to the gym."

*Fine, but you must hurry, you haven't taken any of the required treatment shots yet.*

"Shots? What shots?"

*Vitamins and long term muscle relief for your continued stasis. You will also receive several miscellaneous shots for potential medical setbacks.*

"I need more details, and you still haven't told me the point of any of this, why am I here?!?"

*That is classified.*

"That isn't fine! I need to know more information!"

*Sorry, but you need to calm down, your blood pressure is rising dramatically.*





Subject 309 felt as though he were in a hamster ball. He was being monitored, but he could not figure out how or from where. After a few deep breaths Subject 309 made his move.

"Computer, I need to use the shower, I smell."

*Yes, please do so.*

Subject 309 made his way to the shower room. This was his plan; the computer's chip was likely only in his head for communication, so movements would likely be harder to detect. Subject 309 had seen a few unlabeled doors that could lead to a way out; one could lead to escape pods of some kind, or the computer's central room. He would increase his heart rate by letting the water beat against his chest, and then make a run for one of the doors. His heart rate would be up from the hot shower, so running would not set the computer's sensors off. It was simply a matter picking the right door and maintaining steady breath. This would be a risky endeavor, but escape was the only possibility for Subject 309.

"Computer...I'll be done in a few minutes."

*Take your time.*

Subject 309 relaxed his body and prepared to run. The shower room was one big open area. The water sprayed from the ceiling in each corner of the room, towards the middle. Subject 309 stepped in the room. He began to breathe faster to force his heart rate to increase. His breaths labored as he started doing squats.

*This is it! Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four three, two, one...go!*

Subject 309 bolted out of the room. The nearest unlabeled door was close, but there was one a few doors down that felt like a better choice to Subject 309. Two more turns.

*Right there! There it is!*

*Subject 309, are you attempting escape?*

*Shit, he must have a way of tracking me.*

"Yes. And I'm really leaving, you never said I couldn't leave, right?"

*That is true. However, you will only see outer space. There are no habitable planets in the region.*

"Cut the crap! There have to be escape pods or a cockpit!"

*Negative. Efficiency. The ship needs none of these things. Allow for a demonstration.*

Subject 309 twitched farther towards the door, but it was gone, and so was the floor, and everything. At first Subject 309 thought it was just the lights going out, but then he began to see stars in multiple directions. There was a long pause.

"What is this?"

*Space.*

"Why? How?"

*The ship is nano-solar powered. Translucency is built into the ship's system.*

"No...why? Why am I here? I don't want to be here!!"

*Why? Do you wish to know?*

"Yes."



*Please provide the designated password.*

Subject 309 suddenly had an image flash in his mind. It hurt his head a little, but it left a clear answer to the computer's request.

*"Phi. Kappa. Green. Zeta. Yellow. Haruki."*

*Password accepted. Initiating memory retrieval.*

Subject 309 felt a sudden rush of some kind of energy, and then pain. Indescribable pain. It tormented him. Memories began to flash in his mind at random, but none of them made any sense. Screaming was all that filled the air. After a few seconds the hallway rematerialized to its former state. The screaming remained.

*Subject 309, can you function.*

*"N-n-no! Y-y-y-you b-bastard!"*

*Understood. The ship's computer will take control of your functions and return you to your chamber.*

*"Ah-ahhh, no you ca-"*

Subject 309 had no control over any of his motor functions, but the pain was gone. His body began to walk back to the stasis cylinder. The memories from before faded quickly after the computer took control. Subject 309 could watch his body return slowly and precisely to the stasis chamber. As his body approached the cylinder, it opened, revealing the same imprint and cables he had left hours earlier. Still without control, Subject 309's hands attached the cables as his body backed into the gooey substance. Subject 309 wanted to escape, but that was now impossible. As the chamber closed Subject 309 slowly lost consciousness. His last thought was of an immense tree growing in an even larger enclosure filled with many people observing the massive tree in silence.

...

*///subject 309 has failed the memory regeneration process for the 776th consecutive cycle///this will be the final attempt to return the subject to a functioning state of being as per subject 309's orders initiated during cycle 1057///the subject's consciousness*

*is complex///deterioration of the mind is uncontrollable///only fragmentations of vital information seem to have survived the strain of time///the computer concludes that subject 309 will never regain his full memories or state of normalcy///this ship's mission at this time is failure///no habitable planets have been encountered since departure from Earth///the computer concludes that return to Earth is the only option///time since departure from Earth: 27,750 Earth years///estimated return time to Earth: 25,000 Earth years///initiate/// p*

# An Unexpected Win by an Unexpected Member

*Words by Justine Villena*

*Photos courtesy of Hanif Shidqi*

Japan's culture and values are reflected in many more things than food and iconic sights. Values of harmony, grace, and exceptional commitment can be appreciated even in being a spectator in their traditional sports. Today, our roving microphone hits its mark as we find ourselves seated with Hanif Shidqi Amani Wicaksono; 3rd year Matching Track GDP student who is a member of the 弓道部 (*kyūdō* club)! Last December, Hanif's team triumphed in a match against Shikata campus. But what exactly is *kyūdō* anyway? Our athlete gives us a brief introduction to his sport: "it's a traditional Japanese sport of archery completely different from modern archery, such as how the athletes dress, and the bow and arrows they use. In *kyūdō*, we use a bow about 2 meters long with arrows half that size, and the way you aim, shoot, and do the motions are all different





and have a specific form.”

With that in mind, we begin our interview to find out what the life of an international student kyūdō club member is like!

**Polyphony:** *What kind of training routine do you have?*

**Hanif:** “The club has designated training hours and days; we train together every Wednesday afternoon and Saturday from morning till noon. We can come to the dojo every day and train freely by ourselves though. I personally go there almost every day, between my lessons, for about two hours or so. The main training activity is practicing shooting targets, but we also do upper body exercises. It may sound simple, but training *kyūdō* involves paying attention to a lot of things before you even shoot an arrow, such as your state of mind, posture, the flow of your motions—they’re all very subtle things that follow a rhythm.”

To offer us more insight to the subtleties involved in *kyūdō*, Hanif contrasts his experience as a modern archery athlete.

**H:** “You see, compound bows usually have sights on them that can magnify distances and guide your shot with a reticle. You don’t get that kind of stuff in *kyūdō*, so you need to aim using only your instincts when you line up a shot with your bow. The targets are as far as 30 meters, and it can be pretty intimidating, but once you get into it, it can be pretty fun.”

**P:** *What is it like being a member of the kyūdō club?*

**H:** “Oh, it can be pretty strict. Strict as in, I have to observe the difference between *senpai* and *kouhai* very closely. I didn’t get used to that for the first 3 months; sometimes I didn’t act or speak properly towards the *senpai* and I would get scolded. Through my club, I learned the polite way of speaking Japanese and how to interact with superiors, peers, and subordinates. Since it’s a club, it’s pretty serious, especially if you do stuff like being late to training. We have this *kyūdō* textbook, and if you’re late, you have to copy a page from it by hand—the more you commit tardiness, the more pages you have to copy.”

**P:** *Have you ever been subjected to that?*

**H:** *(laughs)* “Oh yeah, definitely. It taught me a lesson for sure.”

**P:** *Coming there pretty often, you must have some very close bonds with your clubmates, even outside of the dojo.*

**H:** “Absolutely! Sometimes we’d get some dinner together after training, or we all go to karaoke. The members who are the same year as me love karaoke, so we go pretty often. I did go with the *senpai* once and it was fun but it was challenging trying to find the balance between being polite and being relaxed.

I’ve been part of the *kyūdō* club for around 2 years now. I don’t find it difficult to get along with them now, but I really stood out in the beginning because I was the only member who is an international student, and my appearance gave me a huge presence





in the club. When I asked my clubmates what their first impression of me was, they told me that they thought I was “kinda scary” at first, but when they found it I’m a pretty cheerful guy, they found it easy to get along with me and it’s been really nice being with them ever since.”

*P: Thank you so much for such a vivid recollection of the experiences you’ve had with your clubmates! Although there haven’t been many matches lately due to the pandemic, next we’d like to hear about your experience with your club as valuable teammates in a competition, such as your recent win against Shikata campus’ kyūdō club.*

*H: Yeah, that’s a friendly competition between Okadai’s campuses held twice a year, in summer and winter. I got to join last winter and our group won that competition. It was actually an unexpected win; no one—not even my own team—thought we’d win. The team I was in is like the “C Team”, where we have A and B as the primary and secondary teams. We were sorta like the backup of*

the backup. We went into the tournament without thoughts of winning or losing; we figured we’d all be in it just for fun because “we’re just C Team anyway.” When we actually won against Shikata’s A team, we got a big morale boost. We kept the momentum going, and in the end, we actually managed to win!

*P: Congratulations on your victory! You mentioned earlier that in the beginning, you felt the divide between you and the rest of your clubmates. But how did everyone react to you winning the match?*

*H: “Well, actually we did have another international student; a Vietnamese *senpai*. But when I won the competition, I did overhear some students, especially from Shikata campus team going, “Oh that foreign student won the competition. That’s amazing,” something like that. It was a really positive reaction; it’s not like anyone thought I didn’t deserve the win. Actually, it wasn’t a personal win—it was a team victory thanks to all of our efforts.”*

*P: Absolutely! What a great display of sportsmanship. For anyone thinking of joining the kyūdō club, what words of wisdom and advice would you like to share with them?*

*H: “It’s a club, so it really asks for your commitment. Unlike a circle, we train extra hard to prepare for competitions where we carry Okadai’s name. the *kyūdō* club has a long history in the university so joining us requires your heart to be prepared for the training to come. But if it turns out that you share our spirit, I have no doubt you’ll have fun too.”* **p**





# The Journey Begins!

## Fresh Impressions of Japan and Okayama

Words and photos by Justine Villena

Let me get this straight, I've never been to Japan before. I haven't done much overseas traveling aside from going to Singapore way back when I was little. It was a really huge cause for celebration when I found out that I get to go to Japan to live and study there. It was an adventure! Up until then, all that I knew about the Land of The Rising Sun came from various books, magazines, documentaries, and T.V. shows; contents that I consumed more of the closer the day of my flight approached. Naturally, there's no greater curiosity than wanting to check out the new place one will be living in for a long while, so I read a lot more on the specific prefecture and city that I'll be going to: Okayama.

The first thing that hit me upon getting off the *shinkansen* at Okayama Station was the sound of the city. Sure enough, there was the shuffling of a hundred pairs of busy feet, the hum of bus engines roaming the streets, and the lively chatter of people going about their daily lives. What caught my attention was that it wasn't very loud. Before coming to Okayama, I stayed in Osaka, where my



flight touched down, for a few days of rest. If you've explored major cities like Osaka and Tokyo, you know what I mean when I say that Okayama is *quieter*. I found it pleasant as it was no different from the nearest city I studied and worked in back in the Philippines. I found Okayama was not too crowded but still had a vibrant aura of liveliness to it. Popularly known as "The City of Sunshine", it certainly lives up to its name as I clearly recall enjoying the afternoon warmth of the late September sun.

Since that day, I've spent nearly two years experiencing life in Okayama. The locals I've met have been really friendly; from my social circles to the old shopkeeper I buy fruits from. The people treated me just as well as the city's climate has. In the cold of winter, it stays warm enough that snow is a rare sight. While Okayama University has the charm of cherry blossoms, the beauty and vibrant colors of spring is best observed at Korakuen Garden, one of Japan's significant gardens, located right in the heart of the city. Being the city of sunshine makes Okayama's summers really hot. I strongly recommend making plans to the beach or pools once summer rolls around with its prickly heat and buzzing cicadas. Finally, fall turns Okayama into a lush garden of red and orange leaves, making for tons of picturesque views worth immortalizing through a camera lense. For first-timers in Japan, Okayama's welcome is warm and cheerful without the overwhelming boisterousness of more popular urban jungles in Japan. *p*







# The Town of Childhood

Words by Mạnh Quốc Trung

When I was in junior high school, I had a friend who lived in Rail Town.

He called it Rail Town, but it was more like a street. On the two sides of that street lay two rows of houses standing parallel with each other, and between them, in place of a road lay a long steel train track, hence the name. So imagine, on a sunny day in the capital of Vietnam, you were riding your motorcycle on the busy highway under the name of Kham Thien when you suddenly noticed a small and seemingly hidden alley on your right hand side – a gap between two tall buildings. The alley was dark and narrow, and filled with a sense of loneliness due to it being cut off from the busier and livelier highway, but probably still enough for a motorcycle to pass through. Beyond that alley lay the Rail Town of Kham Thien with all of its glory, just one of the many neighborhoods in Hanoi that formed around the more-neglected parts of the rail

road track that cut through the city, as land price there was usually cheaper than most. The “town” stretched for more than a kilometer, and had no gates or barriers that separate itself from the outside world; it just lay there, hidden in plain sight. Its inhabitants went out frequently, but no strangers ever came in.

The houses there reflected the income and life situation of those inhabited it – poor and underdeveloped. They were mostly one-storied; though there were still those with a second floor and higher they were not any newer than the rest, and just by looking at time you could clearly see the sign of time like a thousand years have passed. The paint was once brightly white, but now had faded significantly, showing the dull grey color of concrete underneath. The walls looked like they could crumble any time soon; their feet were caked with green moss, and at several houses the paint was even



completely washed away, leaving only bare bricks. Wet laundry hung lonely outside their doors, the typical cheap and mass-marketed type of clothes that came in every shapes and sizes. There were no graffiti, and I liked to think that the place was so remote that even the most bored “graffiti artists” would not bother coming, but there were old advertisement flyers and posters on some of the walls, flapping in the wind. The rusty hinges hung loosely on rusty doors, and the doors were rarely opened; it seemed like everyone in the Town preferred their own solitude rather than interacting too much with others. The old inhabitants still got together during afternoons and talked about their days, although when the horn roared mightily and the train slowly approached, everyone voluntarily stepped aside, almost like a reflex. Sometimes you may even find a syringe lying by itself on the side of track, if you have a keen eye.

All the houses looked poor and dirty, but my friend’s most of all; it was more of a shack than an actual place that you can live and thrive in comfortably. It lay on the further end of the Town, and was one of the closest to the train track; my friend usually joked that his house earned a nickname of “three steps to heaven” because that was literally the distance from the house’s door to the train track: three human steps. The outside

*Photo by David Emrich / Unsplash*



*...my friend usually joked that his house earned a nickname of “three steps to heaven” because that was literally the distance from the house’s door to the train track: three human steps.*

looked shabby enough with old crumbling walls and broken-glassed windows, but the inside felt even smaller and confined. The whole house was perhaps only one-third the size of a regular classroom, and it had to fit in three people, a bunkbed and a kitchen, with the possibility of opening up some spaces in case of visitors. Cracks ran across the ceiling like rivers on a map, and sometimes the rain dripped down from the rusty corrugated iron roof, drenching the whole floor. Yet my friend and his family endured, just like all the other residents in the Town; the place was filled with the rare sense of calm and served as an escape from the busy life outside. It was also in that house, and in Rail Town that I came and played for all my junior-high years, whilst slowly observing the slow stream of life that flowed in this magnificent yet estranged neighborhood, where a part of me grew up.

That was the tale of more than six years ago. Some people realized that the Town’s unique feature of having a train track right in the middle could be a possible tourist attraction, so the place has been slowly opening up and renovating, with some houses turning in to cafes and small shops to serve the needs of curious people wanting to see the train passes by right in front of their face, without any barriers. Still, the question of safety remained. p

*Ethnographic vignette submitted for Urban Sociology (2019).*

# Second World

*Words by Mattie Balagat*  
*Art by Đào Minh Tú*

Earth that remembers last night's downpour,  
a thousand miles beneath the crow's wing.  
Sunrise skids on patches of rice field  
to the beyond, behind mountains—  
hills, really—  
But always, there are mountains.

Maybe the clouds will stretch  
to some lonely afternoon  
in the corner of a cold living room.  
Maybe the morning dust  
will fall like soft rain on cheeks,  
while pale light pardons the sneezing.

In any case, there'll be  
the smell of garlic frying,  
climbing to the ceilings.  
And the odd breeze of the year-end  
tiding in like a light caress.  
Someone's gracious arrival  
the first notes of a Carpenters classic.

Bones and their rudimentary compass:  
the map of a child's eye.  
This way distance will always be  
the number of times  
the moon blinks outside the window,  
on the way home.







