Polyphony

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Polyphony

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

How have you been?

Your Answer: _

It has always been hard to answer such a simple question sincerely, but it seems to be so much more difficult to answer in these precarious times. We could deceive ourselves by how we have learned to live with the upheavals of the pandemic, or climate change, or political affairs over the past two years, but the latest news would still throw us off guard. Maybe one of the only constants these days is *polyphony*, originally defined as a type of musical composition with multiple voices or lines of music playing at the same time. *Polyphony* is an apt word to get us to think of how to navigate our times, and this third issue of the *Polyphony Student Journal* confronts this challenge of making sense of both others' voices and our own.

Our student-run literary journal was named *Polyphony* to reflect the diversity in perspectives and backgrounds of the students who make up Okayama University's Discovery Program for Global Learners. Each year, this name is more of a challenge to the journal's editorial team than a simple title. With the great talents and efforts of our editors, writers, designers, and contributors, we have tried to listen in a little more for this issue. We have features that celebrate the program's diversity beyond our usual cultural commentaries, alongside intriguing academic papers that dig deeper into issues of poverty, immigration, and self. Personal essays and creative contributions, especially those by our "trapped students"[1], speak to the struggle of *being* amidst multiple voices, places… *everythings*.

The highlights of this issue are the conversations that invite you in. In an amazing first for both of our publications, the editorial teams of *Polyphony* and *The Komaba Times*—the University of Tokyo's English-language student publication—collaborated on a joint article based on our roundtable discussion earlier this year. We talked about our work as English-language publications in Japanese universities, in which we amusingly touched on our double role as international-student-PR. Another conversation covers the self as it interacts with illness, and one other explores its entanglement in the realities of social science research.

This print issue would not have come together without the collective brains and sanities of a special team: Genki Hase, our ever-reliable assistant editor-in-chief; Kayla Guevara, our layout editor; Alyana Reina Q. Morales, Jia Xuan Chok, and Junayeed Matin, our editors-writers-managers-and more in between; and the rest of the editorial team who have worked on articles or the blog. Thank you for bringing the *Polyphony* to life!
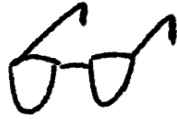
In reading the pieces within this issue, I hope you can take some time to reflect on the *Polyphony of our Times* (as the collaboration article is aptly titled). Maybe you can find your voice in how it resounds with, or rebounds off others. Maybe you'll hear your own answer as to how you've been.

Mattie Balagat
Polyphony Editor-in-Chief

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[1] A common label for the group of international students who could not enter Japan on time because of COVID-19 visa and border restrictions.

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The Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Mattie Balagat
Assistant Editor-in-Chief: Genki Hase
Layout Editor: Kayla Guevara

General Editors for the Issue:
Jia Xuan Chok
Olaedo Ibegwam Chigaemezu
Alyana Reina Q. Morales
Junayeed Matin

Polyphony Writers:
Forrest Maynock
Mạnh Quốc Trung
Yushi Song
Yuna Maejima
Kei Fukushima

Instagram Managers and Artists:
Kayla Guevara
Alyana Reina Q. Morales

Photos on the cover by Mattie Balagat, Alyana Morales, Jia Xuan Chok, and Sonava Tadao
Doodle illustrations by Kayla Guevara

Special thanks to this issue's contributors:

Articles:
Le Ngan Ha Dieu
Liu Qian
Ayari Tanimoto
Li Chuang, Minkyung Jeong, Jeffrey Nguyen & Sukma Nuraga
Taichi Inoue
Jnifar Gillur Yumi
Haruna Miyagawa
Yuki Genko, Rosina Mothapo, & Hiina Shiota

Photos:
Sonava Tadao
Susan Li

Art:
Eirin Kiyota

Special thanks as well to our collaborators, the team of The Komaba Times, especially editor-in-chief Charisia Ong.

The **Polyphony Student Journal** is the first student-run literary platform at Okayama University's liberal arts program, the Discovery Program for Global Learners (GDP).

Check out more content from us on our blog and Instagram account:

🌐 **discoverypolyphony.com**

⬜ **@polyphony_gdp**

If you are a student of GDP or Okayama University, feel free to submit your work to be considered for publication at ***polyphonygdp@gmail.com***.

Blog

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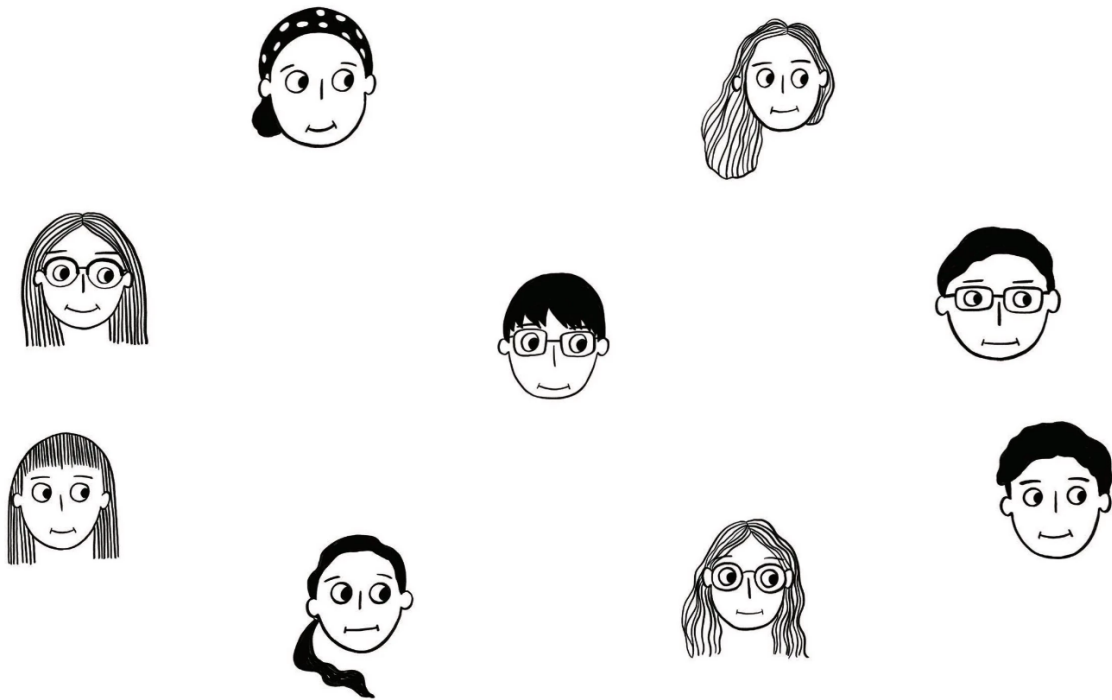
A Polyphony of Our Times

Words by The Komaba Times & Polyphony
Illustrations by Yasha Lai & Kayla Guevara

The Polyphony and The Komaba Times get together to talk about their work at their English-language Japanese university publications, and their relationships with writing.

The Komaba Times is an English-language magazine at the University of Tokyo, which aims to give students a space to freely express their voices, opinions and experiences. The Komaba Times' editorial team comprises of the following members:

Charisia Ong | General Editor
Vedant Agrawal | General Editor & Social Media Manager
Yasha Lai | Design Editor (Graphics)
Zefan Sramek | Design Editor (Layout)

The following Polyphony editorial staff members joined the roundtable conversation:

Mattie Balagat | Editor-in-Chief
Genki Hase | Assistant Editor-in-Chief
Kayla Guevara | Layout Editor & Instagram Manager
Nguyen Manh Quoc Trung (Trung) | General Editor
Olaedo Ibegwam Chigaemezu (Chige) | General Editor

What is it like working for an English-language publication in a Japanese university during the pandemic?

Genki: It's difficult to reach out to potential readers. Before, for *Polyphony*, we placed the issue in a place called "D Lounge", where students gather, talk, do their assignments and eat lunch together. We placed the issue in there so we can see people picking up the issues, which made it easy to imagine who the potential readers are and what they are thinking; it got me motivated. It also allowed us to reach out to more potential readers, unlike now.

Zefan: I guess it's interesting to think about how some of these programmes like the Discovery Program, or like the PEAK Program at *Todai* – on the one hand, they're trying to internationalise the university, but on the other hand, you create this enclave within the university community that ends up being totally separate. But I don't know how you can navigate that, because the language issue itself is already a big question. Since you can't expect people from all over the world to necessarily already know how to speak Japanese, I suppose.

Charisia: Yet, I feel like there is an unsaid expectation that people who choose to come to Japanese universities are somehow interested in Japanese culture and therefore learning the Japanese language. So there's this expectation that you will just assimilate and make whatever efforts necessary to assimilate. And that is something that you come to feel; no one really tells you but you realise that there is the weight of this expectation placed on you without even being told.

Mattie: I think I can relate to the expectation of assimilation – on one hand, we're here, I don't know, to be the diversity token, but then you don't know if they want your unique identity or want you to assimilate more. I guess we're caught in this liminality, to use that term.

What role do you see yourself playing in your publication? What is the role of the publication?

Yasha: In thinking about the role of an English language publication… I guess the very cynical answer is that it's for the university's PR, to show that, hey, there are international students that can speak English. I know one of the ways *The Komaba Times* is distributed is because *Todai* brings them overseas, but I guess the issue is that it's not fully representative of the student body, right? Because I think ultimately the people who create these… As an editorial team, we are quite small. But in a less cynical way, I guess for students, it's for them to also know that there's an international student community, and to know what people are thinking about and what it's like to be a student at *Todai*. And just to know that there are people out there who are also sharing the international experience.

Zefan: Yeah, that's true. I think, if nothing else, it sort of serves as a record of our existence, so to speak.

Mattie: I think *Polyphony* is also distributed in the same way when there are fairs abroad. I remember our advisor reserving copies for that purpose? On the role of our publication, I also had this idea coming into the team, similar to the idea of a record of our existence, to give students a platform for their voices or opinions to be heard and ensure that each issue is representative of the student body. But I think my challenge with that is… I wonder if it's actually needed or if it is, is it the culture to actually have that kind of student representation? So it feels like it's breaking into new ground sometimes.

Yasha: Yeah, I guess there are other channels right for student voices, but maybe what makes our publications more interesting is the kind of work that goes into it, like the creative work. I was looking at your last issue and I really like the poems and insights. So I found that very interesting. Not just students voicing their opinions, but doing it in different, creative ways like art pieces, photographs, or poems and prose too.

Charisia: On this point... It is a bit sad that our legitimacy is based on the work of a few. I mean, the legitimacy of international students and our existence and the way we are viewed hinges upon just 40 pages of text or drawings or photographs or graphics...

Mattie: Suddenly, it feels like a really big responsibility. Although it really is, I think it's our responsibility as a publication to recognise that we're a student publication of our universities and programmes.

What drives or inspires our work and our creativity?

Mattie: Personal ego. Because I like to say I'm a writer, so I have to write.

Chige: I think for me, it's basically to keep in touch with the creative side of myself. I used to write so much when I was in high school and junior high. So I see *Polyphony* as a channel to keep up with my creative side. I really don't want to lose touch with my creative side, as it's one of the things that make me who I am.

Zefan: Well, for me, I guess there's a lot of personal reasons, like having something to express that's hard to express in other ways. I think one of the motivations for me working on a project like this is also being able to connect with other people; when you're collaborating, you're always going to end up coming up with ideas that you never would have thought about on your own. I think that's always a really interesting way to grow as an individual.

Trung: My reason to write is quite simple. I just want to share my thoughts with the world. I think a lot and sometimes to make sense of my thinking, I just write them down into paragraphs, or passages. On the *Polyphony* website, many of my posts are movie reviews, because when I watch a movie and have a lot to think about, I don't know what to do with my thoughts so I just write them down and store them away somewhere. So in a way, *Polyphony* kind of fulfills this purpose for me – to serve as a platform for expressing myself in a way that I know there will be readers and people who are interested.

Genki: I think, for me, there are two things that drive my motivation. One is the reason I'm now interested in cultural anthropology – I read one article in a book, and then I entirely changed my interest from computer science to this field. So that small piece of work, well, not small for me, changed my entire life and worldview. I don't think I'm confident enough to say that I can change people's worldviews, but perhaps I can first bring some small shocks to people, to let them realise that this exists and that people who think in this way exist. So I want to create this "shock" that I experienced, for others. My second motivation is, the thoughts and opinions I have now are only of the contemporary Me, so I think it's important to keep a record of my thoughts as a publication.

Kayla: I create to keep myself sane, and also to challenge myself, and these kind of go against each other. But I really want to also keep in touch with my creative side, because if I focus too much on academics, I tend to get really stressed. So the reason why I create is also to have that avenue to exercise my right brain, just to make sure that there's something else other than school that I can do. And another thing is to challenge myself because I only got into this kind of design and creating visual stuff this year. I really enjoy it so I want to push myself a little further to see what other fields I can go into and what other skills or talents I can utilise as I grow older.

If you had 48 hours in a day only you what, what else would you create?
What else would you write about?

Charisia: Ever since my daughter was born, I've been keeping a daily kind of record of her growth, what she does, the new things that she learns and the developments that she makes every day. But sometimes, I mean, I just tell myself that even if I write one sentence, it's better than writing nothing. But if I had 48 hours a day, I'd want to write her a letter every day of her life, because I think that when she grows up and

she's able to read all of this, I hope that it will have a profound impact on her. I'm not doing it because I don't have the time. But it's something that I would like to do because I think that when people especially close to us write to us and create works for us, those are the things that make the most impact on us. Sometimes you're just so tired of writing that even one sentence seems so difficult. And I guess the days will just pass – I mean, for me, it's like, okay, today, I'm going to skip my one sentence and another day comes and again, I skip my one sentence. And before I know it, it's been a year, and then two years and then five.

Mattie: Have you guys heard of the commonplace notebook? I think I read an article about it, where artists and writers have this little book which they just carry with them everyday and everywhere. And if they have sudden ideas or things they want to record, they just write it down in this one notebook. I've had something like that for like, more than two years now. And it's actually a really good practice to have as a creative. Because, for example, when I finally get down and say, okay, I can actually write for myself now, I can just go back to my notebook. And then pick up the pieces of the random ideas and fragments of writing that I have, and then piece them together. For someone who forgets a lot of things, this is really helpful. I also put stamps and stuff like that; stickers also, things I just doodle... It's something I recommend.

Charisia: Actually Zefan, I have a question for you about music making... For musicians, when some motif comes to their head, do they kind of just write it down, because it seems you might just forget if you let it go? So how do you, I don't know, keep a record of the inspiration that you get?

Zefan: It's more like... feelings or images, or like, places or words. So I also have a notebook where I'll just jot random stuff like that down, if it gives me some sort of feeling. My music-making process itself is very improvisational. Maybe then, those feelings or thoughts or whatever, can just sort of serve as a back-drop to that process, when it comes down to actually making music. But I guess, to tie that in with what we're discussing about time or doing things regularly, I do find that it's important to actually put in the effort to do something. Because this process is less recordable. I can't necessarily exactly write down the feeling that I have at the time in a musical way; if I don't actually make any music; there's no record of those feelings necessarily.

What are your hopes and aspirations for the upcoming publication?

Zefan: One thing I want to be able to do is create a very cohesive design language for the publication that is both interesting but also readable, since this will be the first time I'd be doing something that's not just a personal project where I can do absolutely anything I want.

Yasha: I guess it's similar for me. For the design, I really want it to be something that I like and something that I would pick up from a shelf and buy, and not a random magazine that you get for free and you throw away after a while. I hope it's something people might want to keep, and even use for reference for inspiration. I also want to push myself with regards to experimenting with different styles, like layouts, which isn't something that I've done a lot. And also illustrating in different styles and thinking about other people's pieces and what kind of drawings or illustrations fit them.

Mattie: Kayla and I had the same idea, like, how can we make this into something people want to get and keep?

Genki: Many of the articles in the current issue or the previous issue have been written by members of the editorial team. So I want to try to publish someone who is yet to be a part of this; someone who hasn't presented their opinion. There are so many people with interesting opinions, but they're not expressing it because of the many hurdles they might face. So I want to break that hurdle.

Mattie: I want to allow students, whether in the GDP or not, to own *Polyphony*. And when I say "own *Polyphony*", it means thinking about it as a space where people can express themselves or relate to the things

that are published on this platform, or share it, or be part of it. One thing we tried to do was to have a creative writing workshop. Personally, it's something I really want to do, not just to write, but to encourage people to use writing as a medium of expression. But I feel like it was too advanced. There's still a lot of steps to be taken before a creative writing workshop is successful and we'll try again in another format.

Chige: Aside from wanting them to take ownership of *Polyphony* as a platform, it's also our responsibility to establish *Polyphony* as something that will have longevity. I feel like it's our responsibility to market it or establish it as something that we hope to continue in the future, and make it so that people will take us seriously.

Charisia: I would like to create a *Komaba Times* that serves as a natural form of recruitment for the next editorial team – when they read it, they want to be part of it. I guess it's related to the ownership point that Mattie made as well. But yeah, I hope that reading our version of *The Komaba Times* will inspire others to want to take that baton and run with it for the next year.

Vedant: One way to do that is also making people see themselves in the issue. Once you can resonate with it, or really feel yourself there, you're going to be motivated to take over for the next term. And I think one more important thing in this is learning on the go. At least for me, personally, it's a very different project from what I'm generally involved in. So I think it's about experiencing something new.

Kayla: Mattie and I talked about how it's kind of difficult to get creative pieces, art works and visual elements. And I want to help make *Polyphony* a space where that's very much welcome. I think that sometimes people are just shy to put out their work because their work has a lot of emotion in it. I want to help make a kind of space where expressing emotion and being vulnerable through art is fine.

Trung: For me, I guess, I want *Polyphony* to be a bridge between culture and students, especially the Japanese students and international students. Right now, we have predominantly international students, but I have some Japanese friends in the GDP – I remember especially, some said that although they are more interested in Japanese content, they are more motivated to read English content if it's written by international students in the GDP. So, in a way there is a gap between April-entry and October-entry students; they don't really interact with each other that much so I hope that *Polyphony* can be a space for them to interact, read each other's work, and bridge the gap between the English-speaking and Japanese-speaking cultures. *p*

This article was also published in The Komaba Times Issue 11 (April '22).
Check out The Komaba Times' blog at https://www.komabatimes.com/

SCAN HERE!

Walking from Keage Incline to Kyoto City Zoo

Words and Visuals by Genki Hase & Liu Qian

March 30th was a perfect day to walk out and see the beautifully bloomed sakura. The weather was nice and the temperature spoke of the arrival of spring. This travelogue describes our one day experience in Kyoto when we randomly walked around—sometimes even deciding which path to go by flipping a coin—to see the sakura. What we got by sacrificing our feet was a colorful and fulfilling life experience.

1. Keage Incline (蹴上インクライン)

Keage Incline is famous for its sakura-namiki (cherry-tree-lined path). Many people visit here to see the numerous sakura that paint the world pink. This incline was built in 1891 as a transportation route that connects Biwako Lake and Yodogawa River, aiming to recover Kyoto's declining economy. Although Keage Incline played a huge role in reconstructing Kyoto, it stopped its operation in 1951 due to the emergence of alternative transportation routes. Now this location is registered as an industrial heritage site.

The day before we came here, we visited the Kyoto Municipal Museum of School History. The thing we found in common is that the city of Kyoto we are seeing right now—at least the tourist sites we have visited—is the product of social/cultural reconstruction that occurred during the Meiji era when Edo changed its name to Tokyo. Industrial heritage sites not only witness the past but also shape the image of lives in the past, at the present.

For more details, visit:
https://biwakososui.city.kyoto.lg.jp/place/detail/23
http://kyo-gakurehaku.jp/

2. Ikkyu-tei (一休亭)

When it comes to Kyoto, what food comes to your mind? This city with its rich tradition may suggest traditional Japanese cuisines such as soba, sushi, and tofu cuisine, or you may think of snacks like yatsuhashi and warabimochi. Compared to our first trip to Kyoto, we chose to slow down and enjoy the scenery. So this time, we were not obligated to stick with the schedule. Instead of choosing a place to go, we let the city take us somewhere. On such a warm day in March, we walked to Nanzenji Temple with empty stomachs, expecting to eat something special. The long road in front of Nanzenji Temple was full of restaurants. Since we already had the best tofu cuisine the day before, we set out to look for a different option, and this led us to Ikkyu-tei.

Even though the location of this restaurant is not easy to find from the main road, Ikkyu-tei was still very busy and there were many people
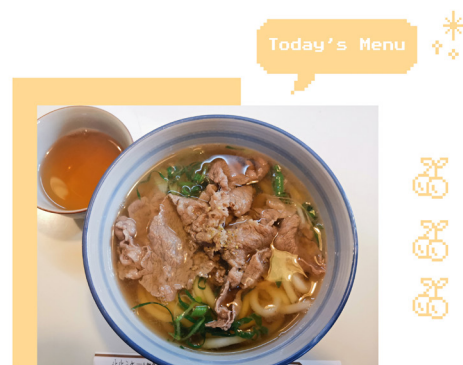
lining up. The interior of this small restaurant is traditionally decorated, as the seating is configured with the traditional tatami-style flooring. We chose to sit at the counter which was close to the entrance where we could see the ojiisan and obasan preparing the chopsticks and food. We ordered Yamakake soba and Niku udon. Qian is not a big fan of noodles, but she was deeply impressed by the Niku udon. Both the noodles and soup were both tasty and not greasy. Until now, we can still remember the taste and the Kyoto dialect "おおきに" they spoke when saying farewell to customers. We are waiting to hear it again one day.

http://kyo19.com/

3. Nanzenji Temple & Aqueduct

What makes the Nanzenji Temple stand out is the Nanzenji Aqueduct constructed during the Meiji Period. This Western-style architecture of masonry transporting water from Lake Biwa Canal for multiple purposes such as drinking, irrigation, and hydroelectric power generation played a significant role in the prosperity of Kyoto City. As we walked along the Aqueduct, the wind blew on our faces and we were surrounded by trees on both sides—natural scenery blurred the image of this architecture with modernity. At this moment, this century-old architecture evoked nostalgia and pulled us to the past. Time passes slowly here, and we were able to snatch a little leisure from our busy life.

4. Kyoto City Zoo (京都市立動物園)

Initially, we were planning to walk through Tetsugaku no michi (哲学の道), but because we were flipping coins to decide which direction to go, we ended up strolling along a narrow street that carried us to Kyoto City Zoo.

Kyoto City Zoo is a progressive zoo that actively practices and promotes animal welfare. Instead of using the species name, this zoo uses the personalized name of the animal (e.g. Momotaro) for the caption board and provides a brief description of the animal's life story. Visiting Kyoto

City Zoo was thought provoking as it allowed us to think of the zoo animals' living environment, human-nature relationships, and the existence of the zoo. If you are interested in animal welfare and museum studies, this place is a must-see. 🐾

Visuals and Society:
The mind thinks what the eyes see

Words by Le Ngan Ha Dieu
Photo by Genki Hase

Long gone are the days when pictures were taken with the purpose of being hung on one's wall for personal viewing, and occasional appreciation from guests/visitors. The ever-evolving boom of commercial businesses has put in place numerous platforms where pictures can be exhibited. Newspapers, as one of the first to feature photographs, have also seen a rise in visual aid used in the process of marketing and advertising; such purposes have only strengthened the importance of photographs in growing businesses, resulting in more demand for visual-based publicity. Such publicity, from the early era of television and newspaper domination to the explosion of social media, has had fundamental effects on the minds of mankind in terms of social consciousness and emotions resulting from the mass socialization of pictures.

Picture publicity, as Berger illustrated, played a big part in how consciousness of social situations is internalized, at least in the Western society. To Berger, publicity in Western countries symbolized "The Free World" (Berger, 2008, p.131), where businesses are free to produce and trade, customers are free to choose and buy, and the best way to liquidize such processes is through pictures. The flow of businesses is then a flood of pictures, of products and services; the more customers see, the more they are influenced by an image of a new, more modern self whom they imagine to be owning such products. Such imagination grows continuously among the sea of publicity because customers are well aware of their freedom of purchase. In this sense, publicity gives people the taste of reality, where it is a free market, hence should also be beneficial for anyone participating in that market. Pictures not only speak for the products, but also for the state of the present; the more they cover and the more people they exhibit themselves to, the stronger this sense of freedom is promoted, which is exactly what people want to believe about society.

Berger also pointed out another effect of publicity, which is envy. Relating to how publicity makes people imagine the self that owns the advertised products, Berger argued that "Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be" (Berger, 2008, p.131). What is this envy that is created by the flood of publicity? When customers imagine themselves owning the products, they envy their imagined selves because they know how products add to their social status, which then drives them to the purchase. The envy for oneself then becomes the need to be the envied/the envy of others. If you are envied, you are standing on higher grounds than those who envy you, and "you are observed with interest" (p.133). The desire to be envied makes people dissatisfied with their present selves and yearn for the products that would presumably fulfill such satisfaction. Hence, "the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product" (p.134). However, such envy does not manifest itself within publicity of the late 20th century. Envy now manifests in the virtual world of publicity, where millions of pictures are circulating/circulated on social media, advertising not only products but also people's lives. Instagram is an example of such media. It is essentially a platform where pictures come first, texts come later; more and more people are publicizing their lives on this platform, making them objects of envy. People are granted the freedom to "follow" anyone on Instagram, choosing how many and what kind of pictures they want to see on their timeline. This freedom comes with the possibility that people are more envious towards the "glamor" they see from those they follow. A

study in 2015 by Katerina Lup et al. suggested that "at higher levels of strangers followed, greater Instagram use was associated with greater depressive symptoms through social comparison as a mediator" (pp. 250-251). Similar to how customers envy the image of themselves owning products of publicity, Instagram users envy the imagined version of themselves that might lead the publicized lives of whom they see on the site. This envy is the "social comparison" that Lup et al. mentioned, where users constantly compare themselves to others due to the excessive amounts of pictures being posted every minute. The effect of such envy now elevates to "depressive symptoms", where people are no longer satisfied with their lives and are surrounded by insecurity created by such online publicity. Now, the publicity still steals people's love for themselves, and possibly their lives, and offers it back in the price of psychological disdain that they have to bear onto themselves. From my personal experience of social media publicity, such mental effects are affirmative. However, pictures cannot always show every detail of whatever is publicized. Sometimes, there are things that are not clearly shown. For example, no one would have known my own life problems from seeing my colorful traveling pictures. This notion means that publicity now is sometimes only what we aspire/dream of, not entirely representing our reality. *p*

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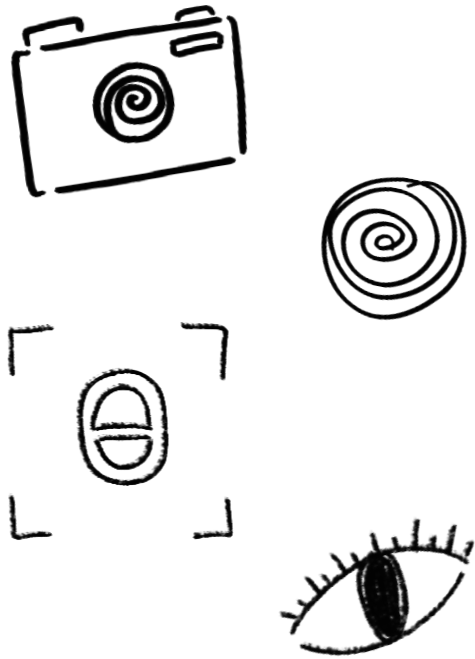
Fermented Cultural Anthropology

Words by Ayari Tanimoto

Natto is one notable food within Japanese cuisine. The characteristics of natto are its "rotten" smell and its stickiness; some people dislike Natto because of these characteristics, and my father is not an exception. Personally, I love Natto, and I eat at least one package every day. Moreover, my "Japaneseness" feels stimulated when I eat it. Here, I would like to investigate how Natto and the Japanese identity are related to each other by using the knowledge I accumulated through the course *Anthropology of Food*. I will start by reviewing the history and recipe of Natto and will connect it to my findings. As for the definition of "Japanese," it will be a complex and lengthy discussion if I go through it seriously, so here I will define it as "those who regard themselves as Japanese or have a Japanese passport."

It is believed that the first Natto was produced during the mid-Muromachi period (1335-1573), although there are still some arguments. In the present day, annual production is approximately 0.23 million tons (Koizumi, 2012). Natto has various types of styles and flavors, and the "regular" ones we see at the supermarkets are called Itohiki-Natto (糸引き納豆). Itohiki-Natto first clearly appeared in the story of "Shoujingyorui-monogatari (精進魚類物語)" (1470). In the Edo period, Natto was called "Edo-Natto," or "Wara-Natto," and people enjoyed eating them. At that period, there were numerous articles mentioning the Natto, such as a cooking book "Okusake-ryorisho (大草家料理書)" (approximately 1600), a joke book "Seisuishou (醒睡笑)" (1623), and an encyclopedia compiled in Edo period "Wakan-sansai-zue (和漢三才図絵)" (1722) (Umeda, 1954). Behind the rise of Natto, there is a deep connection with Buddhism (Yokoyama, 2014). Buddhists dislike killing animals—Sashou (殺傷), or "killing"—so the Japanese cuisine gradually avoided using meat and replaced it with soybeans and other proteins. To maintain the consumption of such proteins during winter, people developed

fermentation and created not only Natto but also Miso, soy sauce, and Tofu. To make Wara-Natto, people needed "tacit knowledge" (Kan 勘, "intuition") to get "synesthetic reason" (Kotsu こつ, "tips"), fruitful experience, and practice (Umeda, 1954). After the 1920s, thanks to biological research, Jun Hanzawa succeeded in cultivating the Bacillus Natto, allowing the mass production of Natto (Yokoyama, 2014).

Natto is categorized into: straw-packaged (Wara-Natto) and plastic-packaged (Pura-Natto). I have never eaten Wara-Natto, but according to the internet, Wara-Natto is stickier but less pungent than Pura-Natto. To see the reason behind these differences, I will briefly explain the recipe for making Wara-Natto and Pura-Natto. The first step is to select the soybeans - good soybeans can make fabulous Natto, so selecting the soybeans is essential. There are three criterias for checking the quality of the beans. One of them is that the beans are delicious even after steaming; Natto made from this kind of beans is better. Another one is the skin of the beans: soybeans with thin skins are considered better. Finally when it comes to the size, beans around the medium size are ideal. After selecting the soybeans, the next step is to wash and soak them in water. By soaking, the tissue in the soybeans gets softened, making steaming easy and more stable. This step is influenced by the temperature, time, water temperature, hardness of the water, and the size of the soybeans, so producers have to consider those elements when they soak them. The washed beans are then ready to be steamed. After steaming, it is time to attach the Bacillus Natto to the soybeans. These processes above are done in making both Pura-Natto and Wara-Natto. Afterwards, in the case of Wara-Natto, clean up the straw first and wrap the soybeans. The theory is to use more straws and fewer soybeans. After that, put the Natto in a wooden box for warmth and fermentation. Surprisingly, you can use Kotatsu for this

Photo from Pexels

process. After 20 hours, the fermentation is completed. When the fermentation happens, the ideal temperature is 43 degrees Celsius and the wooden boxes can maintain the best humidity and ventilation. Finally, the Natto is left to cool down, after which it can be eaten. When it comes to Pura-Natto, instead of straws, a culture solution of Bacillus Natto is used. The culture solution is watered down and is injected into the soybeans. In comparison to Wara-Natto, the injected Bacillus Natto has less risk of ruining the natto. Apart from the "package" in which they warm the beans up, the differences in processes make the natto's taste and smell different despite their similarity.

As we see, Pura-Natto is the result of industrialization. I will first examine the dimensions of the unfinished commodity and finished commodity to investigate industrialization. As I said, Wara-Natto relies on the Bacillus Natto attached to the straw to ferment. So, the result of fermentation depends on how this Bacillus Natto works. Furthermore, it also depends on how much straw is used, as the process before wrapping affects its taste and smell. Indeed, people will make decisions and prepare for the fermentation, impacting the results. However, the natural elements of the Bacillus Natto make the soybeans Wara-Natto. Hence, this Wara-Natto lacks consistency and is unpredictable and unique. Paxson (2013) said that "The unfinished character of artisanal cheese as a commodity calls attention to the instability, and hence open promise, of its heterogeneous forms of value" (p.13). On the other hand, Pura-Natto is always under control in its quality. The process before wrapping is the same as Wara-Natto, but the trigger of fermentation is quite different. Wara-Natto uses Bacillus Natto within

the straw; however, for the Pura-Natto, Bacillus Natto is added by human hand or by machines and does not use the natural Bacillus for fermentation. Hence, Pura-Natto (like the name "plastic natto" suggests) is a finished commodity compared to Wara-Natto.

Wara-Natto is mostly preferred by non-Natto lovers since it doesn't have a strong smell. However, the scent of Pura-Natto is fascinating for enthusiastic Natto lovers, including me. In other words, the pungent smell of Pura-Natto makes it more "Natto-ish." Through this theory, I believe that the industrialized Pura-Natto has different values from Wara-Natto. A friend of mine told me that "the scent of Natto reminds me of Japan. I know it is stinky for some people, but for me, this is certainly one scent that defines my homeland."

Counihan (2013) succeeds in investigating the relationship between this person and the society by conducting interviews on their food-centered life histories, so I want to use this method to understand the connection between my friend and Natto regarding her homeland. This friend had spent 15 years outside of Japan. Her parents are both Japanese, and her mother tried to make Japanese cuisine by using unfamiliar ingredients and expensive Japanese seasonings and foods. Interestingly, this friend had a bad image of Japanese cuisine at first because Western thinking influenced her: Japanese cuisine eats raw fish while many Western cultures don't. For her, eating raw fish used to be unbelievable, and this suspicion was connected to the awful image of Japanese cuisine. Regarding Natto, she had few opportunities to try them during her 15 years abroad because Natto was expensive, and she could not enjoy the taste and

smell of it at the time. She temporarily returned to Japan when she was in Year 10 and spent one and a half years with her whole family at her grandmother's house in Tokyo, Japan. Her mother loves Natto, so she experienced eating Natto as a daily meal. Her first encounter with Natto was when she was six years old. Her first impression was "ew, this is stinky and sticky!" or in Japanese 「ナニコレ、くっさ! ねばねば!」. So, her first impression of it was terrible, but her encounter in Tokyo was different. She looked back:

> I realized that I ate the part of Natto without the sauce; I technically ate only the beans. I don't think I tasted anything but the odor and slimy texture. So, my first impression of Natto was a nightmare. However, the experience of Natto in Tokyo was quite different. I ate Hikiwari-Natto (chopped-natto). I found it fun to mix everything together, and I didn't have to chew that much, so it was not that bad. Then, I gradually overcame eating Natto! Now I like it!

She got used to eating Natto, as she gained experience eating Natto in Tokyo. She used to have a weak relationship with Japanese culture because she spent her childhood outside Japan. Now that she has a relatively strong relationship, she said: "Natto, the so-called 'disgusting, smelly food of Japan. is now something I can eat. So, I feel like I belong to this society more, and I have blended and "dyed" well into it. Natto was not the only reason behind building my identity as a Japanese, but I'm sure that being able to enjoy Natto is now a part of my Japanese identity."

Natto is a stinky food. I heard that some foreigners gave up eating it because of its strong odor. Then, why are some people able to eat Natto with pleasure? To answer, Bourdieu (1977) insisted on the term "habitus." Lee (2000) introduces Bourdieu's habitus in her article and says: "Habitus is best understood as bi-directional, both affected by external stimuli in the performance of bodily practice and informing the ideology and social values generating human behavior" (Lee, 2000). Applying "habitus" to my friend's case, she received different stimuli from her family's meal in Japan. Then, her tongue reacted to these stimuli and gradually accepted Natto in her eating practice. Habitus includes three systems: physical disposition, sociocultural context, and aesthetic disposition. In other words, the ability to eat, the environmental pressure from the surroundings, and preferences, respectively. She gained the ability to eat it be-

cause her family often served Natto as a meal, and she did not reject eating it. As you can see, three systems coherently work well in her case. This accomplishment inside her contributes to creating her new habitus with Natto. This new appearance in her taste is the opposite flow of what Lee (2000) introduced as "dys-appearing tongue." The term "dys-appearance" is created by Drew Leder (1990) and "[describes] the body as "being away" from its ordinary or desired state" (Lee, 2000). My friend's case resulted in the opposite direction, as her body had the taste"be implemented" to its "ordinary" or desired state as a Japanese.

Natto is a unique smelly food produced in Japan. Some foreigners and even some Japanese still struggle to eat them. Thanks to industrialization, Natto (Pura-Natto) is now mass-produced, and people can enjoy the food with a more pungent scent than the artisanal Wara-Natto. I investigated how this distinctive food affects the identity of Japanese people. According to my friend, her identity, which developed strongly during her stay in Tokyo, was greatly affected by eating Natto, as it contributed to the confirmation and strengthening of her attachment to Japan. Her experience in Japan, including the challenge of eating Natto, caused her identity to change. As a result, the idiosyncratic national dish is able to influence a person to attain a local identity. For the next challenge, I would like to explore the opinions of those who dislike Natto and find their commonalities and differences with fellow Japanese Natto lovers. ℐ

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Selected Straw Natto Recommendations! Why is it in straw? Is there any difference in taste? [わら納豆のおすすめを厳選! わらに入っている理由は? 味に違いはある?]. (n.d.). https://gourmet-note.jp/posts/12862

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Life as Science Matching Track Students

*Feature by Alyana Reina Q. Morales &
Jia Xuan Chok*

*Ever wondered what it's like in
the labs? Let's hear from some
students in the Matching Track!*

Jeffrey Nguyen

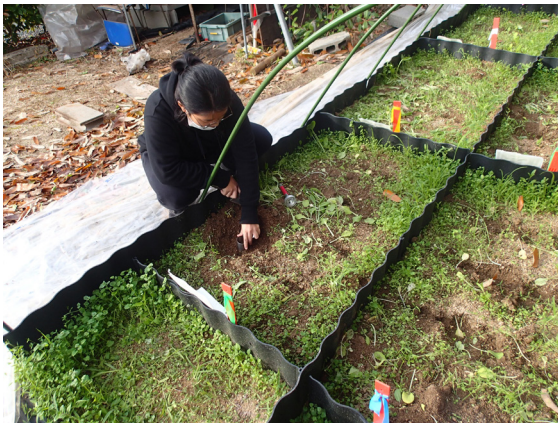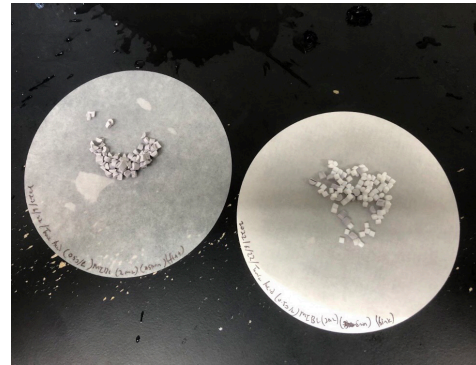*October 2019, 3rd year, MT - Faculty of Agriculture*

If I could describe the Faculty of Agriculture in one word, that word would be '**satisfying**'. Every week, we conduct field work where we spend many hours harvesting, planting, and taking care of various vegetables and fruits all whilst under the hot sun. It's hard work, it really is, but seeing the fruits of your labor (literally) has got to be one of the best feelings there is. Not to mention sharing the bountiful harvest with friends, classmates, and family brings me joy. Experiencing what kind of work is required to produce the vegetables and fruits that we enjoy everyday makes me appreciate things even more.

Minkyung Jeong

October 2019, 3rd year, MT - Faculty of Science

This experiment aims to immunostain various hormones using the pituitary gland of rats to deepen the understanding of immunostaining techniques and hormone production.

Li Chuang

October 2018, 4th year, MT - Faculty of Environmental Science

My experience in the Science Cluster was very challenging and interesting. During my first and second year, it was all about learning the background knowledge on the things I was interested in. However, after my third year, everything changed because I had to concentrate on my research topic and experiments in the lab classes. Yet, I thought talking to students from other clusters had also helped me improve my interest in different fields as well. In my final years of university, it was the time I had to work harder on my research topic hands-on. To me, the best part of doing my research is seeing when my method works out as intended. After all, the GDP Science Cluster may sometimes be boring and difficult, but when you accomplish every class, you will know it is worth it.
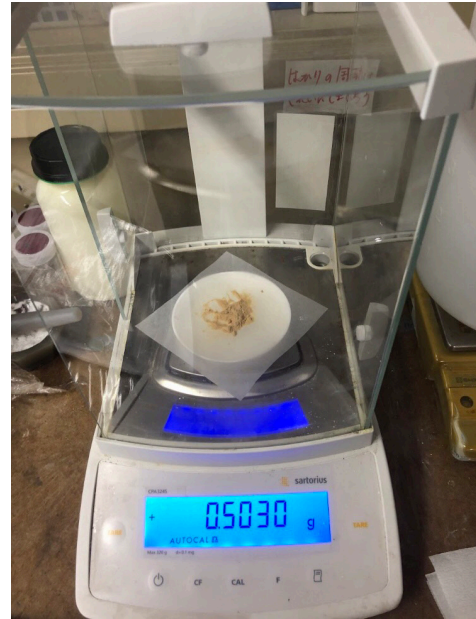
Sukma Nuraga

October 2018, 4th year, MT - Faculty of Agriculture

In my study, I learned about how to use compost effectively: I had to plant this Komatsuna in the green house, taking care of them everyday by giving water, ant & cat repellent, and finally harvesting. After 1 month growing the plant, I continued doing another laboratory experiment for another 1 month. It was a tiring and difficult process but I learned a lot about farming and lab-work.

The Social Wasteland: America's Trailer Parks

Words by Forrest Maynock

What does one imagine life in a trailer park is like? Many people likely have an image in their mind of what life in a trailer park is like based on the type of "trailer park related media" they consume; if they watch the evening news then all they must imagine is a land of meth users and labs in a state of constant turmoil, but on the other hand if they watch a show like *Trailer Park Boys*, a Canadian TV show depicting life in a trailer park, they may imagine a band of likable "white trash" idiots constantly trying to "make it big," but failing each time. Trailer parks in America like any other complex community are filled with characters that encompass a wide variety of roles in the social structure. As Rupert Neate from *The Guardian* points out, the US Census has indicated that "more than 20 million people, or 6% of the population, live in trailer parks" (Rupert, 2015). This is a significant part of the American population that are often being stereotyped as either rampant drug users or "dumb white trash." In this paper I would like to explore trailer parks in the United States using the lens of community and diversity, and find their space in the American urban landscape.

So what exactly is a trailer park? Trailer parks are plots of privately owned land that are then allocated into much smaller plots that are rented and where affordable mobile homes are then parked. The key factor is that living in a trailer park is generally inexpensive even for those without stable employment; one of the prevailing stereotypes in the American experience is that trailer parks are the home of the "white trash" social deviants of society that dwell on the edges (Gary, 2016; Rupert, 2015). As Nina Renata Aaron states in her article titled *Downwardly mobile: how trailer living became an inescapable marker of class*, "trailers became the province of the have-nots, and along the way, the pernicious myth of 'trailer park trash' became core to a set of stereotypes about lower-class white people" (Aaron, 2018). Richard Florida in his book *Rise of the Creative Class* (2004) indicates that the working class has gone from the most dominant class in American society to a shrinking class that is being overtaken by the Creative and Services classes (Florida, 2004, p.167); this shrinking of the working class can be seen in trailer parks. The image of trailer parks has shifted from one of middle/working class, 1950's style communities, to economic wastelands filled with unemployed or low wage workers (Aaron, 2018). In many ways these trailer parks mirror the downward spiral of the inner city neighborhoods; where American ghettos may be heavily affected by "white flight," American trailer

Photo by Maryna Nikolaieva / Unsplash

Photo by Akos Helgert / Pexels

parks seem to act as the receptacle for America's poor, (generally) white, service/working class population, and where ghettos can be affected by the outside forces of gentrification penetrating the community, trailer parks are pushed to the margins to be ignored by all (Gary, 2016).

In popular culture and the eyes of the general public, trailer parks are not very diverse places, and are mostly dominated by white people. This image carries a lot of weight, but depending on the location of the trailer park, the population may vary from being predominantly white to being heavily mixed racially. Trailer parks are also diverse in class, though classes mostly seem to be segregated to their own parks (Aaron, 2018; Gary, 2016; Rupert, 2015). Why does this sort of class segregation exist? When viewing the ghettos of large cities we can see cases of gentrification manifesting and creating problems for the poor residents, so why does this not happen in trailer parks? The short answer is that there are no historical buildings to buy up, and that trailer parks are usually far removed from the city centre. In her book titled *The Cultures of Cities* (1995), Sharon Zukin states that "[t]he symbolic economy recycles real estate as it does designer clothes. Visual display matters in American and European cities today, because the identities of places are established by sites of delectation" (p. 352). Trailer parks, particularly the poorer ones, are not designed to be visually appealing, and in fact they seem to be designed to be efficient in space allotment (Rupert, 2015), so they lack the "symbolic economy" that Zukin discusses. As for the parks inhabited by the middle class retirees, one can usually find a gate blocking outsiders from entering, and trailer spaces or trailers that are much larger and "cleaner" looking than those in the "poor" parks (Gary, 2016). Instead of "omnivores" or "pioneers" from the middle class entering existing parks to gentrify (Tissot, 2015, p.1), the middle class trailer park residents have simply created their own private spaces completely separated from the "others." In her book *Good Neighbors: Gentrifying Diversity in Boston's South End*, Sylvie Tissot addresses this style of "diversity" saying that "[t]he enthusiasm for diversity ultimately translates into a form of power that operates on a particular combination of inclusion and exclusion" (Tissot, 2015, p.149). Here the diversity is not in the physical location, but instead in the "imitation" by the middle class of the denizens of non-middle class trailer parks; so trailer parks are very diverse as a population, but individually are (generally) segregated by class.

Ghettos and trailer parks also share many similarities in terms of community; more specifically there are two strong connections in terms of social capital and a heavy reliance on government aid (Rupert, 2015). In her book *The Hero's Fight: African Americans in West Baltimore and the Shadow of the State*, Patricia Fernández-Kelly addresses how government agencies in the United States infiltrate the daily lives of the poor population, and how that negatively affects those communities (Fernández-Kelly, 2015, p.145). Fernández-Kelly was specifically speaking of West Baltimore where she conducted her study, in her book, but much of this can be applied to trailer parks where many of these same issues apply. Fernández-Kelly goes on to say that government has,

> "[B]ecome a key factor eroding the capacity of inner-city residents to mobilize resources and create alternative means of subsistence or defense. In tandem with capital retrogression and the workings of predatory drug merchants, state programs for the poor exacerbate social fracture and economic stagnation" (Fernández-Kelly, 2015, p. 145).

This is also the case in trailer parks; within trailer parks many residents are put in a position where they cannot afford to live without the aid of government programs such as unemployment, disability, and food stamps to name a few (Rupert, 2015). Trailer parks also have a similar social capital to that of ghettos; trailer parks, like ghettos, are not viewed by the public as a positive aspect of society, and in turn fail to develop "extensive" social networks (Aaron, 2018). This idea is expanded upon more by Fernández-Kelly who discusses Mark Granovetter's idea of strong and weak ties between social actors (Fernández-Kelly, 2015, p.242). In this theory strong ties are those shared with family or close friends, and weak ties are those of the individual to external actors such as a teacher or boss. Fernández-Kelly goes on to say that "[p]oor people tend to have a plurality of strong ties, but they lack weak ties joining them to groups and resources outside their immediate environment" (p.242). Trailer parks on their surface have a very tight knit community with a disdain for "outsiders;" this creates a limited social network that will prioritise the ingroup and create strong ties within that community, and on the other end there is a general lack of weak ties to create opportunities.

Trailer parks in America exist on a strange axis. They share many of the same "issues" that inner city communities face, but lack the same level of public scrutiny. Movies about inner city violence are very dramatic and serious, movies about trailer parks are either nonexistent or filled with stereotypes and belittlement. Even the academic literature seems dismissive:

> "Indeed, the urban black poor of today differ both from their counterparts of earlier years and from the white poor in that they are becoming increasingly concentrated in dilapidated territorial enclaves that epitomize acute social and economic marginalization" (Wacquant and Wilson, p.9).

What are trailer parks but "dilapidated territorial enclaves?" It is almost like trailer parks are phantom communities in the American landscape; too "stupid" to save, too socially isolated to care about, and something for the middle class "pioneers" to imitate, but not "restore" like they do the ghettos that they gentrify. As illustrated in the video titled "Portrait of a Family" from *The Carlos Watson Show* (YouTube channel), this "social exilement" is not lost on the residents of these parks; as John Richmond from the video indicates he and his children are stereotyped because of where they live, so he buys land to escape, but escaping is not always an option. As is the same for many inner city residents, there is no real option for moving or betterment of life by using conventional means. I don't know the answer, but as Nolan Gary suggests: "When we stop treating low-income communities as objects of scorn, to be subjected to top-down, paternalistic planning, we might find that we have a lot to learn from them" (Gary, 2016). *p*

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Essay for Urban Sociology (2021).

Unbecoming

Words by Chigaemezu Ibegwam
Photos by Sonava Tadao

Breathe in, breathe out
His breath came in short bursts of excitement as
he took huge leaps towards the sled
Spasms of laughter shook his whole body
He was up to no good, some mischief that would
probably land him in trouble
Frostbites were nothing then; delight only lasted a
while after all.

His steps faltered and no longer came in leaps
His gait became slower, intentional and not so
carefree
His back straighter as he ought not to be caught in
any mischief
Shaved ice no longer brought excitement
And frostbites had become the enemy; mundane-
ness would last a while after all.

The Remains of the Day:
When A Person Strived To Find His Own Past

Words by Trung Nguyen

*T*he Remains of the Day, by British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, is a book that has left a lasting impression on me, exactly because most of the topics written in it are those I am not familiar with. Indeed, the topic of memory always captured my interest, but this is the third novel of Kazuo Ishiguro that I have read, and reading his works sometimes feels like watching a film; each event and each character keeps unfolding and moving one after another smoothly using only literary words. Reading Ishiguro's novels is the same as imagining a moving picture inside your head, where even the most lifeless and inanimate subjects like a cassette tape or the countryside scenery have their own unique characters and roles in the story, becoming "individuals" that can make the readers think no less than flesh-and-blood characters.

The Remains of the Day tells the story of Stevens, an aging butler, and his journey through the English countryside to visit an old work colleague, the whole trip being a backdrop for his reminiscence of events that happened in Darlington Hall, where he had worked as head butler for the past thirty years. Each sentence in the novel is written in a voice filled with politeness and courtesy, revealing a gentlemanly essence that can only be possessed by a butler who is trained in a manner of utmost nobility, and who has become a truly dignified individual. At the same time, however, Stevens' manner of storytelling also lingers on a very personal sense of humor, with smart and occasionally witty little jokes that, when uttered, can make the opposite person smile while still upholding the respectful and courteous demeanor of a loyal servant.

Truly so, in the novel there is a whole chapter discussing Steven' own opinions about what it means to be a "proper" butler, and what traits, values, and personal qualities are necessary for an individual in the service industry to be seen as having

an outstanding level of integrity and self-respect. At this point, I have to mention Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, a novel in which its science-fiction setting gives ample opportunities to discuss the humanity and human behavior of characters who are people but not yet human. If in *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro writes very candidly about adolescence and childhood nostalgia through the eyes of both a child and an adult, then *The Remains of The Day*, a book that was published for the first time in 1989, features an excellent and in-depth depiction of a man with both a behavior of great decency and a rather philosophical way of making sense of the world and what happens around him.

Despite his age, the way Steven talks and acts, although might strike others around him as somewhat cold and cautious, has a very unique charm, making the novel a page-turner and the readers eager to find out how he will react to the unfolding events. Most characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels are rather distinctive in such ways; not only can they stand on their own feet to create their own idiosyncratic features, they also act as a mirror for others to look at and reflect on. As a person who strongly dislikes the way some authors use their characters in the story only as a tool to express their own personal views on things, it is of my humble opinion that the characters in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are some of the most "human" characters in all of the novels I have read until now. The human-to-human interaction in *The Remains of the Day* feels very natural and completely unrestrained, with the use of first-person narrative sounding so intimate that sometimes I feel that it is Steven himself that had written the novel, instead of an author with almost zero background in the service industry, as Ishiguro himself had confessed. Because of its distinctive writing style, reading *The Remains of the Day* will require a great

deal of knowledge of the English language from readers, especially formal English, and I am very curious as to whether the novel's translation into other languages can really capture the exact essence of the original.

On the way to visit his old colleague, Stevens was reminded of many episodes in his life, with topics ranging from the nature of dignity, loyalty, and decency, to politics, class, love, and relationships. But the most important and most noticeable theme of *The Remains of the Day*, and one that is featured in many other novels of Ishiguro, is still memory, and in particular how to approach memory and how memories of the past can change the person of the present. The whole structure of the novel is built on Stevens' recollection of his many years working as a butler in a single mansion, and although the readers get access to his memories through his own words, those are memories that are very fragmented and subjective in nature, creating a past so patched-up that even Stevens himself wondered if he could be considered a reliable narrator. The readers therefore get to experience not only the stories on his work as a butler, but also his life firsthand, and the man he has now become.

Stevens drove his car up the English countryside but at the same time underwent a trip back to the past, to the source of his personal virtues, to the memories and the people that have profoundly influenced his life. Stevens, who has been raised as and has always worked as a butler, always prioritized dignity, with devotion and loyalty to his master invariably placed at the forefront, to the point that all personal feelings, if not helpful to the job at hand, were all removed. It was only after he had stepped inside his master's car, gripped the steering wheel, and slowly moved through the quiet English countryside, alone with the endless greeneries, that the mask of a famously loyal and dedicated butler cracked, allowing an incessant stream of recollections to flood the mind. It would be of no exaggeration to say that the first roadtrip that Stevens had undertaken in his life, one that he had to take forever to consider back and forth before finally deciding to depart, was actually a journey both to find and to rediscover his sense of self through the endless nooks and crannies of memory, hidden inside the vast but now empty rooms of Darlington Hall. "What is the point of worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took?" Stevens wondered, when looking back at his whole
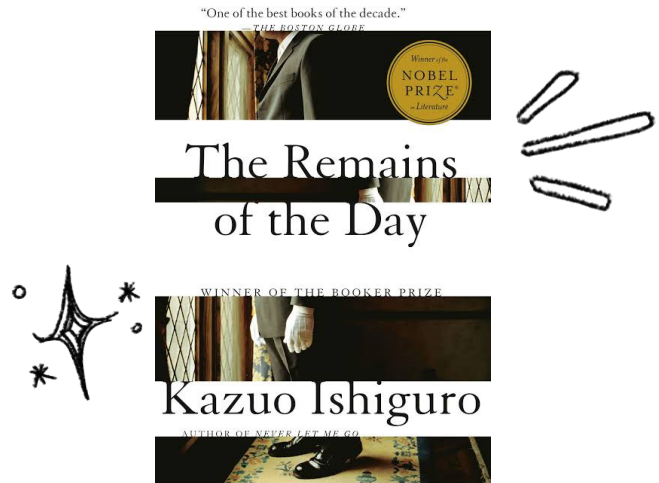
life dedicated to services of the highest standard. "Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least try to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy. And if some of us are prepared to sacrifice much in life in order to pursue such aspirations, surely that in itself, whatever the outcome, cause for pride and contentment."[1]

Kazuo Ishiguro himself has said that both the character of Stevens and the mansion he worked at are a metaphor of a bygone world, a world filled with symbolism and nostalgia that those who have never known or visited England often imagine what it would be like to live in an old English mansion in the English countryside, or how an old English butler would talk and act. "The Remains of the Day is primarily a book about two things: it's about the fear of emotion, and it's also about politically being a butler," he shared in an interview[2]. "Because I think, in a way, most of us politically are butlers. We do our jobs, we serve some corporation, or a cause, or maybe a country. But most of us, we just do our individual jobs, we offer up our little contributions to somebody upstairs and we hope it's going to be used well, and we take our pride from doing our little jobs to the best of our ability." And this I wholeheartedly agree. Perhaps the reason why Stevens, an aging butler, a symbol of the noble life that is reserved for only the likes of Lords and Ladies, can be so relatable, is perhaps because each and everyone of us is also a butler, and is also in service for someone else. Perhaps we are all trapped in our own Darlington Hall somewhere, with rooms so large they are suffocating, trying to hide our true feelings on the way to find the past. 𝑝

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1 Ishiguro, K. (1990). *The remains of the day,* p.177. Vintage Books.
2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pej2sk9oJbA

At Akasaka-Mitsuke

Words and Photos by Yushi Song

Another morning on the Sōbu Main Line with the same rattling and shaking train. Inside, it feels a bit meaningless trying to hold onto anything. Though the aircon is full on, I could still hardly feel any ventilation with hundreds of people squishing onto this cabin. Just a few moments ago, I was dashing to the station to catch the train just to get to the office on time.

This has been the new normal for me for the past few months. Though I believe I am severely inadequate when it comes to exercising, it seems like I do sprint faster now in my derby shoes for trains –as a not-sure-if-I-should-be-proud salaryman. It feels like just yesterday when I was laughing at those pitiful salarymen with my friends biking in Okayama. "*Do they even have a life?*" My friend asked while giggling. "*God knows. I would kill myself if I were one of them*," I answered.

And here we are in a fully packed train rushing underneath Tokyo's center. I would never be too

Tokyo Station. Escalator from B4F (Sōbu Line Platform) to B1F.

outstanding in my all-white shirt – at least ten other salarymen are wearing the same thing. Ignore what I said in the past; I did pick up a new hobby on the train of observing people. Gaming, drowsing away, working on a laptop whilst standing, poring over comics on phones, or just sitting there. All in their own little world.

The train brakes suddenly at Akasaka Mitsuke station. This is one of the business centers in Tokyo, which means many of the salarymen would get off here. This is also where my office is located. I step out of the train, finally able to take a breath, getting out of the station by beeping my iPhone on the ticket gate, all within seconds. The tunnel leading to Exit C of Akasaka Mitsuke station is a long uphill with huge posters on the sides – Robert Walters, new 'high-standard living' real estate listings, and hair loss treatment adverts. I am accustomed to being all, quoting Barney from *How I Met Your Mother,* 'suited up', but it still feels strange to walk in those tight shirt and trousers, so does it for having your own cubicle, your own work ID, work mobile.

I feel as if I were catapulted into a cloud of dust of the 'real world' – misty, surreal, yet somehow smoky, with me barely keeping my eyes open. I recalled those teenage sleepless nights, wondering what kind of person I want to become, what kind of dream I should pursue, and how I would change the world. Those questions remain unanswered, yet all of a sudden, I found myself in a rush to figure out about myself, aka, knowing where the heck I would be after graduating. Like many others, the route to that answer is *shūkatsu*, an institutionalised job-hunting system that is branded in everyone's university experience. I start to keep in mind what are internships, what are SPIs, how to deal with interviews, and more importantly, how to sell myself just like a commodity.

Everything comes with a price. Growing up in a Chinese household, this was one of the credos of my mother's, though many times it seemed to be a tad rhetorical – since I am not sure if she is more into bargains or high fashion brands. But out in the

so-called real world, I reckon that even though my mum may not be a professor in economics, she was not wrong at the end of the day. Everything here comes with a price. From those fancy handbags displayed in the giant show windows, to packaged bean sprouts in supermarkets, everything is merchandised with prices tagged to it. Yet something I overlooked in this formula is that out in the real world, I myself, also have a price. Skills, experiences, personalities, academic performance, or even appearances, come with their own exchange values, and it seems like all I should do is to aim higher. Settling down on this familiar yet distant land, I found myself asking more questions of *how, what*, and more importantly, *why*.

I realised I was standing in the crowd at the Akasaka Mitsuke crossing. Perhaps I was being a 迷惑 (meiwaku, nuisance) with the tide of people moving forward on the ebb. Success, career, money, and all those 大層な (taisouna, thought-to-be-"good") stuff started to appear on my mind, but I don't really know what they mean. The pedestrian traffic signals play an eerie sound of *Tōryanse* all of a sudden, unlike in Okayama with all the electronic chirping sounds of chicken and cuckoo. I started walking again towards my office, just when the signals stopped beeping. 𝑝

テセウス / Theseus

Words by Taichi Inoue · Photo by Susan Li

北の海で船が沈んだ。

わたしたちはみな船のうえ。
波の荒さに耐えかねて、船は形を変えるという。

変わらないのはその旗だけ。
美しくて、懐かしい、愛おしくて、呪いの、旗。

誰が船から降りられようか。
誰が船旗を手放せようか。

みんな知っている。船はもう戻れない。
港にも。あの日にも。

わたしたちはみなテセウスの上。
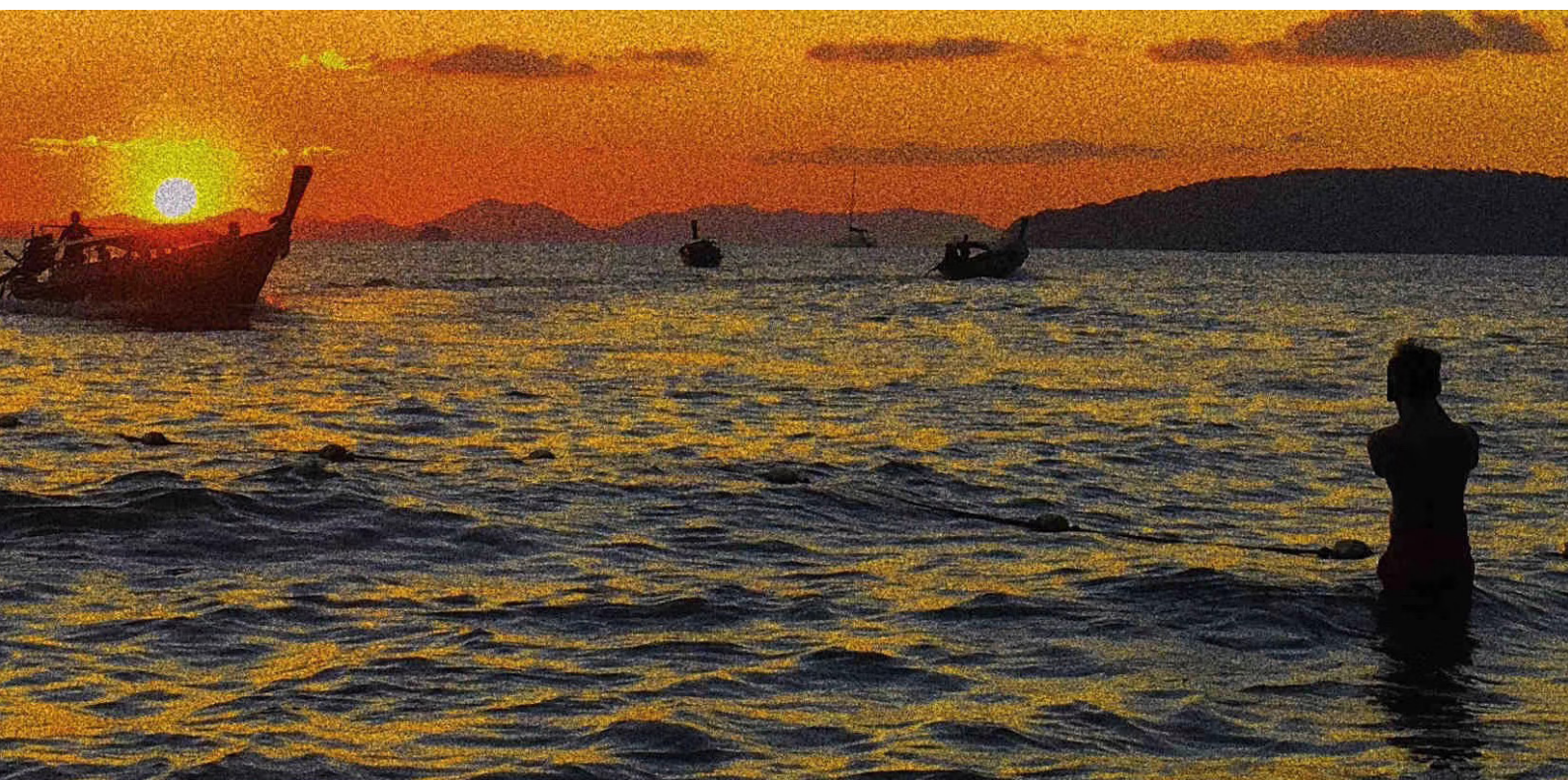冷たい北の海に沈んでいく。
変わらない旗を抱きしめて。
抱きしめられ、沈んでいく。

沈んでいくあなた、テセウスのあなた。

わたしはあなたを見て泣いた。
わたしはわたしを見て泣いた。

沈んでいくわたし、テセウスのあなた。

北の海は冷たいから。その旗できっと暖めてね。

目を閉じた。あぶくが漏れた。
暗い海の底、牙を剥いていたのは。わたし。

"
———————————

Words by Kayla Guevara

It's been more than a year. More than 365 days. More than 525,600 minutes. More than what my restless heart can bear.

More than what my tired shoulders can carry. More than what my words can express. More than what I can accept.

In what feels like a blink of an eye, phases of life have said their warm hello, and swiftly waved goodbye. In the past year, I have excitedly said my greetings to a stranger named Adulthood and her acquaintance College. Yet, in another blink of an eye, my simple dream of becoming their friend is whisked away. My eyes are still set on that dream, but truthfully, it is all a blur. I extend my arms and I stretch my tired legs, excited to head out, but the four walls of a room get in my way—these four walls have never felt ever-so small and ever-so restricting. My bedroom, which has always been my comfort zone and my favorite space, is what I genuinely long to escape from. Each new morning is accompanied by the now familiar feeling of unending repetition. Every day, I am softly touched by the sun, but never has it felt so dreary. I feel the comfort of its warm rays, but never have I felt so numb. Could this be what it feels like to be trapped? Maybe.

Everyday, it is a battle with Frustration and Emotion. There are some days wherein it begins to feel like I am settling into this new lifestyle. I think to myself, "Okay, this doesn't seem so bad." Yet, just as I start to think that I am beginning to be fine... *okay, that was a joke.* To this day, many questions remain unanswered; I wonder why the question marks never turn into periods. I pray to the heavens, and nothing. *Why am I still in the same place I've been? Why does it seem like I am never going to escape? Why do I take deep breaths, yet feel like I'm drowning? Why do I walk on new paths, yet feel like I'm going in circles? What should I do?* Everyday, it is a battle—a battle that seems unending, a battle where Loss is a friend.

One year ago, I had a dream of breathing in the fresh air, with my feet on the campus streets. I did not think I would be living out that dream by watching Youtube videos titled "A week in my life as a college student." I did not think that my experience would consist of conversations through a computer screen. Everything and everyone seems so distant. This reality, crippling and weighty, was unfathomable to me many months ago. I did not think this would be it—I do not want this to be it. I do not want to wait, but that is all I can do—and truthfully, it is exhausting.

And yet, sometimes, I am taken aback by my own strength. There come days where I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to acknowledge my emotions. There come days when I get to recognize the privilege I hold in my hands. In my weary hands, I hold the privilege of learning, of having a roof over my head, of not having to worry about what to eat tomorrow, and of freedom of speech. They are rare, but they come—and I am thankful.

It's been more than a year. More than 365 days. More than 525,600 minutes. More than what my restless heart can bear. More than what my tired shoulders can carry. More than my words can express. More than what I can accept. All I long for is the key to this locked door, and everyday, I am waiting for it to be handed to me.

Cont.

Thirteen months have swiftly passed since I wrote down these words, yet I am all too familiar with them still. Nothing has changed. I continue to wait. I continue to wrestle. I rest in the same bed and wake up under the same window through which the sun's rays say hello to me. The cycle continues. The only difference is that I have started to settle where I am—an emotion that I find to be both of strength and of weakness.

I start to ground my feet where I am because I have recognized that it is beyond my own power to change the course of life. The what-could-have-beens are too far in the distance, so I have decided to focus on what I can touch—because truthfully, that's all I can do. Hope has become unfamiliar. The goals that I set are no longer "goals", but ambitious to-do's to keep myself sane. *Did I give up?* Maybe. *Am I still hoping?* I don't know. What I do know is that the everyday battle where Loss is a friend is ever so real. My hand is still stretched out, waiting for the key to be handed to me, but my head and heart are growing weary. ʄ

Suzu, Her 'Self' and Her Illness

Words by Genki Hase
Illustrations by Eirin Kiyota

"I had a lot going on in high school…."

I recalled this conversation when I started reading *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment,* an ethnography written by João Biehl (2013) that depicts a complex of politics, economics, medicine, biology, and family which results in the abandonment of people. In this ethnography, Biehl attempts to examine the life of Catarina—a woman living in a place where the sick, the homeless, and the mentally ill are being abandoned—and explores Catarina's subjectivity through dialogue and her collections of words stored in what she calls "dictionary." Before reading this book, I had this vague impression that the main subject of anthropological study should be people, not an individual person. However, after reading it, I realized that people are in a person, and the world is observable from holding a dialogue with a person. Thus, I decided to hold a dialogue with Suzu, an interesting person who is brazen but sensitive, to know what happened to her and how she re-narrated her 'self.' After obtaining consent from her, we decided to talk in a nearby park in Tokyo. The approach I took is the mixture of life history and illness narrative. However, this work does not aim to conclude Suzu's narrative. Her life is ongoing. Therefore, I will keep this piece incomplete and open-ended. In addition, since Suzu's interpretation of her past was explicit, I will not attempt to theorize her narrative too much, but will try to underline the role of her illness in the process of construction of her 'self.'

About Suzu

Katherine P. Ewing (1990) argues that "individuals are continuously reconstituting themselves into new selves in response to internal and external stimuli" (p. 258); therefore, 'self' is a collection of context-dependent self-representations. Although this point is made in the context of a dichotomy between the Western self and non-Western self, with this quote in mind, I started the interview by saying: "In order to make it easier to talk, I'm going from the far past to the present, and then future. I assume that when you are talking there might be inconsistencies and flaws, but I don't care about it, so talk about what you want to talk." The interview is done in Japanese, and the translation is mine.

"What kind of person do you consider yourself to be?"

"I'm multidimensional and insensitive, and also I think I have guts. I constitute my 'self' in relation to the existence of others; thus, if others are different, my 'self' is different as well."

"What made you start to see yourself and your 'self' in that way?"

"Being recognized by superiors is what drives me, I guess. Studying for high school entrance exams was exactly the case, and I think I have a strong tendency to seek approval from 'adults.'"

"What is your definition of 'adults?'"

"Father and mother… people who I respect."

What this initial conversation suggests is that Suzu is seeing her 'self' as a flexible subject. This seems to relate with the illusion of the whole 'self' discussed by Ewing (1990). For Suzu, the 'self' is interconnected with context-dependent self-representations so that the 'self' is versatile.

Although Suzu defines herself as "insensitive," I found her sensitivity towards people surrounding her. Then, the emerging question is: How did she come to this representation of the self? As I continued asking about her life history, I found some events that helped narrate her 'self.' One of them is the experience of being surrounded by girls after it was found that Suzu and her childhood friend (who was popular among girls) conducted summer vacation research (*natsuyasumi jiyu kenkyu*) together during elementary school.

"When I was in elementary school, I enjoyed thinking about what the other kids were thinking right now. I was the one who knew what they were thinking."

"What made you realize that?"

"I used to play with four childhood friends, along with their families. We frequently hung out and played together. But one day because of this relationship I was once questioned by girls in the classroom. They asked me why are you having the same research topic as him. I knew he was popular among girls so now I can digest it, but at that time, I got scared of girls. And then I realized that I don't prefer to behave like a 'girl.'"

It was right around this time that Suzu began to be aware of how she would appear to others, and what 'self' should be represented according to who is surrounding her. Suzu's realization that she did not like to be like a 'girl' could be thought of as a recognition of the gap between the projection of "girlishness" and her own projection, which may have been the event that led her to establish her 'self' in the presence of others, as seen in her later narrative. I think this became one of the events

that allowed her to realize that the relationship between herself and others is not limited to herself and others, but extends to third parties.

Diagnosis and social clash

"In high school, I was blessed with good classmates and there are no more girls who said nasty things to me like in elementary and middle school, so my mental load was reduced. But my high school encouraged students to study hard for the university entrance exam (…) then I started to feel like studying was really tough… becoming ill every time I take exams."

"And then?"

"One day, when I was taking the final exam for the second year in the school infirmary, I fainted. I don't have a chronologically ordered memory even when I tried to recall what happened at that time. (…) After I got myself back, one teacher suspected me of cheating on the exam. I was allowed to go to the bathroom during the exam because they knew I wasn't feeling well so I think they thought I cheated in the bathroom, but I don't have the memory. And I don't think I cheated."

"How did you feel at that time?"

"I was completely confused. I was interrogated for a week, suspected of exam cheating, but *I have nothing to do with it (mini oboe ga nai).*"

The Japanese phrase *mini oboe ga nai* is often being translated to English as "have nothing to do with it", but if I directly translate the words used in this phrase, it means "body does not remember anything". These two meanings that the phrase entails well suit the situation that Suzu is describing. For Suzu, she cannot do anything with it because she simply does not have a 'coherent memory'—which others seem to have—that can legitimize her claim of having nothing to do with it.

"After collapsing in the infirmary, my mother took me to see a neurologist, who diagnosed me as having epilepsy. I brought that written diagnosis to the teacher, but the suspicion never cleared… resulting in all zeros for the final exam for second year."

"When did you first recognize your health problem?"

"I didn't know about it until I went to the hospital, so I didn't think it was a big problem."

"Why did you think so?"

"When I was very small, I told my mother that "I have salt in my veins" to tell that my legs were numb, but my mother told me that it is normal. After that I start to think most things happening to me are normal."

"How did you feel when you visited the neurologist and received a diagnosis?"

"I felt relieved."

"Because you received a diagnosis?"

"Actually not because of the diagnosis. What gave me relief is that people in the hospital were very nice to me. The neurologist even wrote what happened in the high school in the written diagnosis, so if I look back, I think I am still respecting 'adults' because the 'adults' in the hospital were nice. If they were not, I might be disappointed because the 'adults' in the school were the worst (saiaku). In terms of the diagnosis, rather than getting a diagnosis and calming down, I was thinking about how I could use this diagnosis to clear the suspicions of cheating. The social issue I was facing was the primary concern."

"If you had to, how would you express your illness?"

"I'm unconscious, I don't remember anything. I feel like I have amnesia, or a hangover and I don't remember anything, but I'm not feeling like I'm ill because I have epilepsy."

"How did your people surrounding you, such as parents and friends, respond to you regarding your health condition?"

"I never told friends, but I think they knew that my body is weak since they frequently care about me when I was severely ill, but they never knew that I have epilepsy. My mother became very sensitive, and told me not to say that I have epilepsy to others."

"I constitute my 'self' in relation to the existence of others; thus, if others are different, my 'self' is different as well."

"Because of the stigma that is attached to epilepsy?"

"Yes. The doctor gave me a pamphlet showing about the stigma attached to epilepsy. Being aware of that, my mother searched a lot about the issues that epilepsy patients might face."

After Suzu introduced her first encounter with her health condition, she introduced two episodes that contrasted the difference between the students and teachers regarding the 'adultness'. The first shocking event for Suzu occurred at a bus stop near the school. The teacher, who may or may not have known Suzu was there, said at the bus stop, "Do you know? There is someone in your grade who was cheating in the last exam," to Suzu's classmates. Although Suzu became afraid, not knowing how much people around her knew the issue she was facing, as she saw the students respond to the teacher's words in an 'adult' way, meaning that they leniently responded to the teacher, she had to be skeptical as to which of them was the 'adult.' Another episode happened during the graduation ski trip. At first, she had no intention of going on a ski trip, but she was being told that she needed to go in order to graduate from high school. At that time, she was feeling obligated to hide epilepsy from others. At the same time, she wanted to end her high school life as soon as possible, so she decided to join the trip. During the trip, she stayed in the resting room most of the time because of her health condition. However, on the last day of the trip, she joined a specially prepared tour for the injured and sick students. Suzu told me that some students who broke their bones before the ski trip were joining that tour as well. According to Suzu, the tour took them to dangerous places such as icy mountain roads, so that Suzu became even more suspicious of the teachers—the 'adults'—who were happy to offer this tour to the injured and sick.

Suzu says that she is insensitive towards others and herself, but her narrative tells the opposite. Suzu was always aware of the 'adults' who see her and people who surround her, and she was trying to adjust her self-representations according to the context she was located in. In this sense, in my view, she is sensitive to situations that surround

her and of course what is happening to herself and her 'self,' but it seems like she is narrating herself as "insensitive" to construct a 'self' that is not context-dependent, which is not a whole 'self', but rather a reference point where she can come back to. Moreover, Suzu often used the phrase "I needed to (…)" and not "I wanted to (…)." This may suggest that she is using others as a guiding light for her narrative, and this connects to the point where she said, "I constitute my 'self' in relation to the existence of others; thus, if others are different, my 'self' is different as well." When I first heard Suzu saying this, first thing that came into my mind was the quote by Frantz Fanon: "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (Fanon, 1967, pp. 82-83). What I imagined from these words is that the so-called "subjectivity" including the 'self' and selfhood does not exist in the first place, but it is something that is created through various dialogues. In this way, perhaps, we can think of her illness as one of the comparative materials and constituent materials for defining her reality, just as she defines her 'self' in relation to others. The fact that she consistently maintains an attitude of thinking and enforcing tags and ideas for her own benefit suggests that she recognizes herself as an aggregate composed of such tags and forms a malleable self.

Epilogue

After listening to the whole story of her high school years, I asked her about the effects of her illness and the changes that had occurred since then.

"How has your illness changed the way you feel and think?"

"I no longer harbor suspicions about people or think consciously about what's going on behind their backs. Through volunteering activities in Greenpeace, I realized that it's more important not to lose sight of what attracts me and what 'I' possibly want to do. I invested my passion in thinking about environmental protection, but at the same time, I started to think of myself. I was able to take a positive view on my abilities."

"You know, there is a French philosopher called Michael Foucault who argued that there are technologies such as diaries, pictures, and confession that cultivate the 'self,' but what do you think are your technologies of the self?"

"Maybe it's the pictures of me that my parents keep in the house… My parents are so cute that they hang my perfect test scores in their room, but I guess I'm more aware of and constituting my 'self' through their actions and my representations in my parents.'"

"How was this experience of talking about yourself and your 'self?'"

"I think I was in a strange place (*tokoro*), and I think I was able to cope with it and form a personality that is compatible with the society I am placed in. Looking back, I feel like I don't need to be with other people, but I also feel like I want to be in step with them. Maybe this is a contradiction, but I would like to continue to cherish the attitude of having such contradictions and ultimately making decisions on my own." *p*

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Struggling Along in Seattle Part 1

Words by Forrest Maynock

## Streetwise Kids Trying to Find Themselves

The Seattle of the 1980's as seen in Martin Bell's *Streetwise* (1984) is quite the colorful and vibrant place. The documentary follows street dwelling kids who traverse the streets trying to make a living, find happiness, and discover themselves. The film itself very much follows a "fly on the wall" documentary style, with the cameras being placed in mostly static positions and simply catching the natural flow of what everyone is saying as they say it. *Streetwise* follows many different adolescent characters as they live their lives on the streets of Seattle, but for this article I will only focus on two: Dwayne and Rat. Two of the more prominent adolescents in the film, their "story" arcs are quite different from one another and/as they show the duality of living life on the streets.

First and foremost, both Rat and Dwayne actually live on the streets as some of the characters in *Streetwise* have government housing or relatives that they spend some time with. Rat is seen living in an abandoned hotel for most of the film, and Dwayne describes his daily routine which includes "finding someone to sleep with for the night". Both of these kids also have a strong knack for street hustling; Rat openly flaunts his different survival skills throughout the film which include a trick for getting free pizzas, and tips for dumpster diving, and Dwayne is seen panhandling extensively. In the Rat's situation, there is a clear case of self cultivation taking place where Rat uses the situa-

tion he is in to make himself stronger to the world around him; in many ways, this connects with Michel Foucault's concept of Technologies of the Self, from his paper of the same name (Foucault, 1988), in that kids like Rat actively use the cultural tools around them to build themselves as individuals. In this case, the cultural tools are the survival skills and dialect of the streets. These sorts of examples of self-reliance are seen throughout the film and while some tactics are clever, others are simply sad; one kid donates blood in order to eat, and many of the female characters in the film (all underage) prostitute themselves to make money.

Life on the streets is not an easy one. As Robert Desjarlais says in his article titled *Struggling Along: The Possibilities for Experience among the Homeless Mentally Ill* (2010), "[g]iven the basic conditions of life on the streets, finding a smooth day where nothing much happens has its value" (Dejarlais, 2010, pp. 170); there are no slow days really shown during Streetwise, almost every frame has some form of action going on, and the streets of 1980's Seattle seem very lively. Yet many of the adolescents presented in the film seem to value moments of quiet and introspection on the lively streets of 1980 Seattle. In these cases of action, the adolescents are engaging in activities that they would normally not be exposed to, and are therefore experiencing things outside of the "normal" scope of understanding for kids their age (early to late
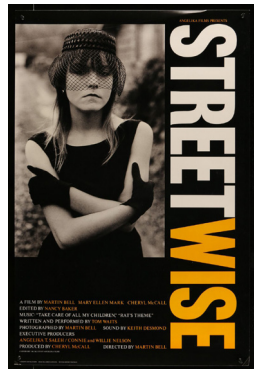
Left: Still from Streetwise (1984). | Right: Theatrical poster

teens). However, the cases of introspection included are often a recalling of their lives with family, or wishes for a "normal" future. This all results in a case of fractured self, where underage children live and act as adults, but are also children who alter themselves to fit in and survive. This idea can be nicely summed up by Katherine Ewing who says in her paper titled *The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency* (1990) that:

> "When we consider the temporal flow of experience, we can observe that individuals are continuously reconstituting themselves into new selves in response to internal and external stimuli. They construct these new selves from their available set of self-representations, which are based on cultural constructs. The particular developmental histories of these self-representations are shaped by the psychological processes of the individual" (Ewing, 1990, p. 258).

This shows how the kids of *Streetwise* may use their existing cultural knowledge to build a new self-representation for themselves that is street savvy and fiercely independent from their "old" lives with family and structure, but also longing for some form of normalcy.

Beyond basic street life comparisons, Rat and Dwayne, like many of the adolescents introduced throughout the film, share what could be described as a broken or dysfunctional home. Dwayne visits his father who is in prison for arson, and after go-

ing over future plans, his father berates him for his life choices and tries to make sure he is "on the right path." It is clear from Dwayne's body language that he feels abandoned and neglected. Rat on the other hand seems to repress whatever feelings he has for his family as indicated in a scene where he describes calling his mother, and essentially hanging up on her after hearing her start to cry. Along with this, Rat tries to blend in with the crowd; Rat does not want to stand out, and he makes this clear at several points through the film. Here we can see two divergent paths: Rat takes the path of independence by simply wanting "to be a man among other men" (Fanon, 1952, p. 85), or a cosmopolitan hiding among other individuals. Dwayne needs a guiding figure as he cannot do everything on his own, and as evidenced by the conversation with his father, he feels alone and dejected. Where Rat rejects the need or want for a family structure and strives to be an independent individual, Dwayne seems lost without some kind of structure to his life which tragically culminates in his death by suicide. While in custody after being detailed by juvenile services, Dwayne takes his own life by hanging; the only attendees to his funeral are his father, some of his father's prison guards, and the social workers who tried to work with Dwayne as best as they could. This tragic end can be contrasted with Joao Biehl's book *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (2013); the book explores Vita, a place for the mentally ill and unwanted to be sent to live out their lives. The book states that "life that no longer has any value for society is hardly synonymous with a life that no longer has any value for the person living it" (Biehl, 2013, p. 366); this sentiment is contrasted by Dwayne who is seemingly in quite the opposite mindset in terms of his life's own value. He is not valued by society, and is essentially abandoned in the care of the state, and he also does not have value for his own life, or rather, he gave up on his life due to the prevailing circumstances of his own case. Dwayne also was in a disciplinary institution that pulled him away from his father's plans; this situation reminds me of Gilles Deleuze who discusses the concept of "disciplinary societies" and "societies of control" in his paper titled *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992). In this instance, Dwayne was in a disciplinary institution that essentially reset and further warped his life from that of a young teenager into a hardened member of the criminal justice system. As his social worker states in the film, "[Dwayne] just wanted to grow up as what he

saw as a normal kid".

The kids shown in this movie have not only been affected by the world around them, but have simultaneously altered their "selves" to fit in the culture of the street. They survive by cultivating themselves to become more accustomed to the way of street life, and altering their "inner self" to become a stronger person. This can be seen with many of the kids who mention the sort of life they would want in the future with many wishing for a more simple and "normal" life, and one not on the streets. They cannot develop as "normal" kids, but instead must adjust their lives to fit within the rules of the street. In the case of Dwayne, the lack of "normal" experiences, and being a victim of "disciplinary society" seem to have been the contributing factors in his self demise. On the other hand, instead of becoming a victim, Rat only used his acquired knowledge of the streets to harden and remake himself from a "helpless child" into another denizen of the streets. These kids are colorful individuals who have a sense of wholeness that is like a fractured mirror or kaleidoscope; some wish to remain kids, and others adapt and mold themselves. They lose their "innocent child self" in the broken home and, like Rat, build and cultivate a new self on the streets, but for some, like Dwayne, this is no substitute for the life lost. As time moves on, so do the residents of the street. The picture of streetlife in 1984 is downright quaint when juxtaposed with life on the streets in 2020. 𝑝

These kids are colorful individuals who have a sense of wholeness that is like a fractured mirror or kaleidoscope; some wish to remain kids, and others adapt and mold themselves.

Still from Streetwise (1984).

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Essay for Anthropology of the Self (2021)

Read Parts 2 and 3 of this essay on the blog.

A Recovering Perfectionist

Words and visuals by Jia Xuan Chok

"First, achievement-striving people hate to fail, so they escalate their commitment, hoping to forestall failure. Second, achievement-striving individuals appear more susceptible to hindsight bias, perhaps because they have a need to justify their actions."

*— from Organizational Behavior Seventeenth Edition
by Stephen P. Robins and Timothy A. Judge*

I was one of those achievement-striving people, always in a race with myself. My parents would say I have always been the only supporter in this one-man race because they have never put pressure on me. "You cry and worry so much because you put too much pressure on yourself," they asserted, time and time again. But it was the seemingly insignificant remarks and comparisons they made that gave me the impression that I needed to excel at everything in order to stand out in each and every comparison they made. Explicit validation protected my fragile self-esteem.

On the other hand, there was also the pressure to make the family proud as the eldest daughter and to be the model student because that was my image—it was part of my role to constantly appear as though I had my shit together. An internal battle raged but I was too hung up on trying to fulfill people's expectations of me to be conscious about it.

I've always kept a journal, and I still do. On top of writing about my crush, I also used it to tally all the mistakes I made, the goals I failed to achieve, and the statuses I failed to maintain, like saying the wrong answer in front of the whole class, not receiving that grade I worked so hard for, not being able to help my parents reconcile after a fight, and a number of other issues that no longer bother me as much. I wanted to be everything and took every problem as my own. I set goals that were too high only to hate myself when I couldn't achieve them. I simply couldn't bear the thought of being bad at anything.

I was obsessed with flawlessness and put too much focus on the result but not enough on the process. Because I was always so easily battered by minor mistakes, I unconsciously formed habits of self-sabotage and negative self-talk. I let one failure define my self-worth and never had the courage to step out of my comfort zone because judgment from people was my greatest fear. I would cry over my mistakes, afraid that the perfect image of myself would be tarnished because I had always been told that blundering equals incompetency. I didn't re-

alize that competency was something you could nurture.

Perfectionism did, in a sense, help me get what I wanted, but every success I achieved became a flimsy disguise of my incompetence because I only cared about how things appeared on the surface. I feared that I would just expose myself as a fraud. I had an ambition of becoming a vet because I adore animals. But when it came time to choose between the natural science and social science clusters as my primary study area for senior high, I opted for the latter because I've always scored higher in history, geography and all the language subjects compared to chemistry, biology, and physics. It wasn't that my grades were bad; I just knew that joining the science cluster meant that my GPA would become highly dependent on all the subjects I wasn't confident in scoring well. I chose the social science cluster just so that I could maintain my outstanding academic record and position as one of the top students in class. Instead of pursuing my dream, I chose to preserve my self-esteem.

"Things outside you are projections of what's inside you, and what's inside you is a projection of what's outside. So when you step into the labyrinth outside you, at the same time you're stepping into the labyrinth inside."

—from Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami (my favorite book since 19)

I can't recall exactly when or how it happened, but I believe that the positive influences in my life—the affirmations on my social media pages, the optimistic people I spent time with, and the numerous self-help books my dad gave me as I entered adulthood—helped me get out of the toxic mindset. Slowly, I became someone who sought to emulate the positive traits of others instead of feeling inadequate for not being as good as them. Those who were unbothered, carefree—those who put themselves out there—were the kids I envied the most in high school. They prioritized their own needs rather than what others thought of them. Those people were the ones who learned the most, and those people made me think differently about perfectionism. Even when they made mistakes, they were never discouraged to try again. That was something I wanted to practice.

Shedding perfectionism made me realize that beating myself up for making mistakes and allow-

ing that negativity to brew doesn't bring me any closer to perfection; it merely saps me of the motivation and mental strength to become better. In truth, there is no place to "arrive to" because you are forever growing into a better version of yourself and you will never be satisfied. The only end place in your life is death. The fear of failure will only reinforce low self-esteem and shut out doors for introspection because every time you turn down an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone, you're reinforcing the idea that you aren't capable of doing what you wanted to do rather than trying to find a way to become capable.

One mistake is not representative of your life as a whole. People don't care if you make mistakes because everyone has their own lives to worry about. If you don't believe it, try to recall one time someone made an insignificant blunder. See, it really doesn't matter.

Toxic perfectionism still gets to me sometimes but it's important to know that healing is not linear. It's a curve.

p/s: You don't have to be everything to everyone. Let the past be the past. ‎𝓅‎
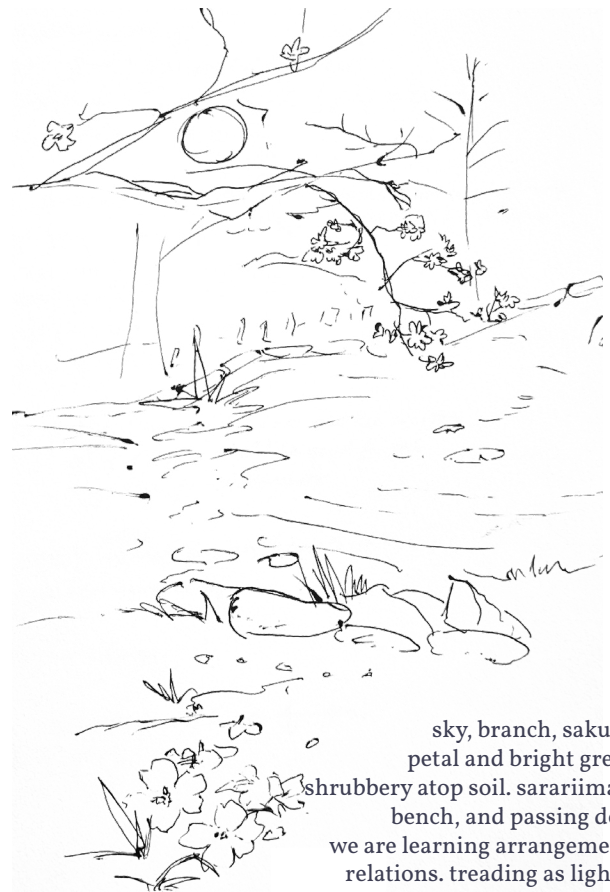
sky, branch, sakura:
petal and bright green
shrubbery atop soil. sarariiman,
bench, and passing dog:
we are learning arrangement,
relations. treading as lightly
as lilypads upon the pond;
still foreign to each other.

7 Days of Hanami

Words and visuals by Mattie Balagat

Day 1

- *March 30, late afternoon to evening*
- *By the pond, Undou-koen (Okayama Prefectural Multipurpose Grounds)*
- *Alone (but chatted with a friend who passed by)*

Day 2

- *March 31, afternoon*
- *Korakuen + Okayama Castle area*
- *With two friends on a "work date"*
- *Rejecting the manicured grove, only assuming "work" as it involves the pleasure of watching dogs, sipping overpriced drinks, imagining strangers' lives*
- *Heron and wind. Inappropriate clothing choices for the weather.*

Day 3

- *April 1, late afternoon, golden hour*
- *By the pond, Undou-koen*
- *First went with a friend, then another friend came by*
- *Wistfulness, womanhood: pains and the yearning for beginnings unfettered*

Day 4

- *April 2, nighttime*
- *Tsuyama Castle*
- *Group of friends and crowds*
- *The rush of festival, an greater rush to own experience. An angle, a frame, a piece of the blossoms against night sky to behold. Feeling a stray ghost. How can these flowers be even more magnificent? It becomes easy to hope.*

## Day 5

- *April 3, late afternoon*
- *Asahigawa + outside Korakuen*
- *With a friend (our 3rd time out)*
- *The thrill of beer and a beautiful world. Involuntary reactions in odd coordination: hiccups, tearing up. The stray song line that keeps being repeated. A Wanting More. Ducks as em dashes.*

Day 6

- *April 4, dusk to early night*
- *By the pond, Undou-koen*
- *Alone*
- *A no-one settling in despite it being a little too chilly. Shadow, petal drawing the night. In silence, you know that you know—but are less sure of what you know.*

Day 7

- *April 7, late afternoon to evening*
- *By the pond, Undou-koen*
- *Picnic with three friends*
- *The last of it, the incongruence of a rainshower and a bright late afternoon. I have imbibed the spring flush, but I am also letting it fade to my edges. To let it get to the head is dangerous. Maybe that is why the sakura only lasts a week.*
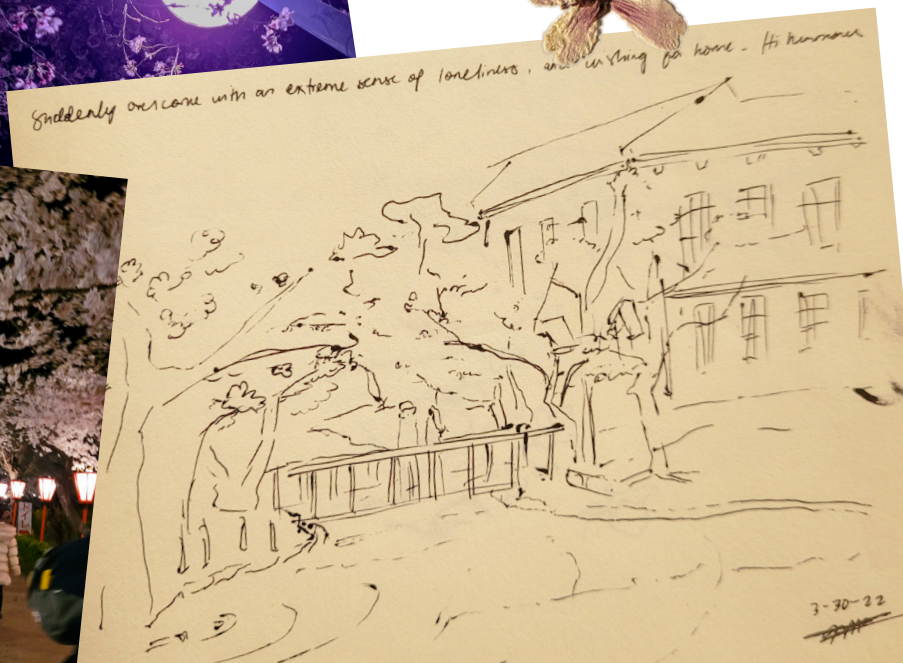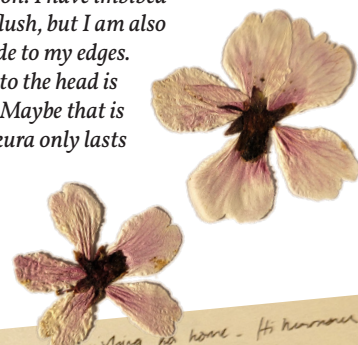
Cheers to Our Graduates!

Words by Mattie Balagat
Photos by Alyana Reina Q. Morales

Early sakura blossoms greeted the 27 new graduates of the Discovery Program for Global Learners on March 25, 2022. Most of the students entered GDP as the program's first domestic admission batch back in April 2018. Many of them completed their studies under the Matching Track, taking major courses with different faculties such as the Faculty of Letters or Faculty of Economics.

Following the university-wide commencement ceremony at noon, a short recognition ceremony for the GDP graduates was held in the D Building, hosted by Professor Eiko Ushida. Director Hitoshi Ueda gave the opening remarks. He imparted high hopes for the students to carry on their learning journeys and to "have confidence, pride, and most of all, responsibility" after graduation.

Awardees among the graduating batch were

also named. Miyu Inoue was awarded with the Kokusho Award, an award given to one student per faculty who has demonstrated excellent academic achievement and personal character. The Director Award, which recognizes significant academic performance and contribution to local communities, was given to four graduates: Masataka Ishida, Akane Tanaka, Misaki Nishimura, and Khaya Tsuyama. Tatsuki Urabe and Jae Eun Shin were awarded with the Language Award for their outstanding achievement in language learning in English and Japanese. Each student also received their diploma and a farewell gift from the faculty.

Pictures were taken after the ceremony in front of the General Education C Building. "How time flies," remarked one graduate. Another student thanked GDP for the opportunity to make many friends from all over the world. All dressed in elegant suits and beautiful kimonos and gowns, the graduates happily wished each other congratulations and took farewell pictures with GDP teachers and kouhai (lower-years). The spring air was electric with both joy and bittersweet sorrow as the graduates celebrated the closing of one chapter and the opening of another.

Some March 2022 graduates gave inspiring messages for kouhai in the younger batches. "I've heard the younger batch are doing great, so just keep it up." "Challenge anything that you want, because you can do everything (*nandemo dekiru*)." "Don't give up, just keep trying."

Congratulations to our graduates, and best wishes for your future endeavors! 𝑝

The Polyphony Team would also like to congratulate the soon-to-be September 2022 graduates! We would especially like to send our well wishes to former staff who set up the foundation of Polyphony and have continued to guide its work: **Forrest Maynock**, the first editor-in-chief; **Trung Nguyen**, the blog manager and prolific writer of book and movie reviews; and **Justine Villena**, an editor and writer. Your humor and talents will be dearly missed, but we know all of you will make waves wherever you go from GDP!

The October 2018 seniors after the Senior Project presentations. Photo courtesy of Ryan Akbar.

The Fight Surrounding Immigration Policies at Home

Words by Jnifar Gillur Yumi

Since 1990, Germany has been a popular destination for immigrants globally, and statistics by Statista (2021) states that Germany granted asylum to the highest number of asylum-seekers in the European Union, especially to Syrian asylum-seekers. A country with the horrifying past of the Holocaust, Germany has now become a country that is a popular station destination for immigrants. This journey of social change has not been easy as one can anticipate. The hurdles that the government, society, and immigrants have faced in efforts of integration via 'integration projects' by the state are a worthwhile research topic.

Current Chancellor Angela Merkel enacted policies to welcome immigrants with open arms and announced her legacy of Willkommenskultur (welcome culture) with the development of an integration policy, and the next Chancellor Olaf Scholz is planning to carry on the legacy. Unfortunately, despite the work of "Integration Projects', which is a project that offers a vocational training program and a language course for immigrants, with a particular focus on the Syrian community (Hindy, 2018), some Germans still fail to accept immigrants wholeheartedly. Later, we will touch upon the topic of the anti-immigrant riots in the city of Bautzen from the story of Abode Targi; and thus the effectiveness of integration projects often comes into question. Nevertheless, even though Syrian refugees have been integrated quite quickly in Germany, social integration continues to be a challenge in the labor market. Social policies that are inclusive

Photo by Markus Spiske | Unsplash

and applicable to all residents, regardless of ethnicity, are essential tools for governments to ease the tension. We will first look into current policies for refugees and asylum seekers in Germany and explore how differential inclusion plays a role in society and it will then provide an overview of the research done on the influence of integration projects alongside some interviews with asylum-seekers. Finally, it will consider which factors might be hindering the goal of integration projects from a sociological viewpoint of both parties.

An Attempt at Social Integration

This piece examines immigration policies from the perspectives of both the host country, Germany, as well as the immigrants and asylum seekers from Syria who now belong to 'two' homes (countries) after migrating to Germany. People in Germany have become more tolerant towards immigrants, but polarization is on the rise (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2021). On the other hand, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers are attempting to fit into German society while trying to maintain their own culture. Studies have shown that Syrian refugees with high psychological strength and cultural capability reported high levels of potential to integrate, as indicated by low levels of distress, and vice versa (Safdar, et al, 2021). So, what is the de-

sired social integration? According to Durkheim, "people's norms, beliefs, and values make up a collective consciousness, or a shared way of understanding and behaving in the world". He believed that society exerted a powerful force on individuals, and the collective consciousness binds individuals together and creates social integration (2020).

Germany is facing a declining population with a shrinking skilled workforce (The Economist, 2021), and sources have stated how Angela Merkel tried to handle this issue under the veil of managing the refugee crisis. However, a lack of German language skills and an untrained labor force were the reasons why many refugees in Germany were unable to earn a position in the labor market (D.W., 2020). That is also precisely why the 'Integration Project' came into existence. However, it seemed that some immigrants were still struggling to enter the labor market—here is where differential inclusion comes into play. The concept of differential inclusion is used to describe the selective inclusion of migrants within the sphere of rights in the receiving state. As Espiritu (2003) stated in her book, refugees are trained to be integrated into society but are severely restricted in the labor market based on their social standing and race. As a result, legal status, social rights, and differential inclusion are all collections of different elements belonging to a single group of study.

Influence of Integration Projects in Society

As mentioned above, the concept of "integrated but marginalized" is evident throughout Espiritu (2003)'s reading—it is seen that immigrants, particularly Syrian immigrants, are trained as integral to the nation's economy, culture, and identity through 'Integration Projects' in Germany, but only as integral because of their "designated subordinate standing" (Espiritu, p. 47). Immigrants often lose their individuality (and sometimes even their lives) as a result of perilous journeys across the sea, and are merely 'resources' for their host country. To look into the influence of this 'Integration Project', we will take a glance into the lives of three asylum-seekers currently residing in Germany.

i) One of the interviews carried out by The Century Foundation (2018) represents the story of a 30-year-old Syrian hijabi who spoke about the challenges female Muslim immigrants have faced concerning their integration into German society due to the country's legal restrictions on head and facial coverings. Even though they are given 'cul-

ture training' in the 'Integration Project' centers, this bias and other factors such as halal food and culture in the Muslim community make it slightly difficult for Muslim immigrants to fit into the German society and cultural norms. Her husband, Abdulrahman, says, "...when the German people think about the man who hits his wife—it's not Islam, it's culture. They think all Muslims do the same. And hijab, it's not culture, it's religion. Not every Muslim woman wears a hijab… the people here think we are all cousins of Osama bin Laden." This misunderstanding of the Muslim culture gives rise to not only xenophobia but Islamophobia as well. Moreover, one cannot possibly give up their individuality in order to integrate into a foreign culture.

> *"As Germans, they do not want you to integrate with them. They do not give you the opportunity to integrate with them. When you walk by a group of people and everyone is looking at you in a way that is unwelcome, would this not impact you psychologically? There was also the issue of the hijab, this is a huge problem. Now, they have acclimated a bit. But before, the way I would be looked at would make me afraid."* —Abdulrahman's Wife

ii) According to an interview by Observer Research Foundation (Vohra, 2021), Tareq Alaows is a Syrian who studied law and international affairs in Damascus and ended up as a refugee in Germany. Alaows became a member of the Green Party in Germany and resolved to run as a candidate in the upcoming elections to represent a voice for their community - but nationwide threats have forced him to withdraw his candidacy. Refugees like Alaows were broadly discriminated against and seen simply as conservative Muslims and even extremists, rather than highly educated professionals with an abundance of knowledge. Alaows was forced to give up as a political candidate as far right-wing Germans claimed to feel 'threatened' by his presence in politics. Thus, the 'Integration Project' tried to integrate Alaows into German society and give him a voice to speak for his community. However, did the community as a whole try to accept him?

> *"The great public interest generated by my candidacy shows what we refugees can do. But unfortunately, our society lacks discrimination-free spaces in many areas of life. It's up to all of us to actively deal with that in our surroundings and to change things."* — Tareq Alaows

iii) Lastly, let us take a look at refugees from

another country, coming from the same 'Integration Project' centers. A short documentary by The New York Times (2017) talked about a young man, Abode Targi, from Libya seeking asylum in Germany. A picture of him holding guns circulated the media, and he was accused of being a riot leader by German news outlets. The leader of the theatre circle he joined insists that he is unguilty and should be allowed into the Integration Project center. However, because he is an undocumented immigrant, he is forbidden to receive training or work in Germany. In Bautzen, there were violent clashes between Germans and immigrants, and Abode was seen during these riots (DW, 2016). The police have started two dozen investigations into Abode; none have led to charges while several have been dropped. Authorities called him a public safety risk, and he is now barred from entering Bautzen, where he is still waiting to be deported. The Integration Project is clearly unable to assist in this case as it does not deal with unauthorized immigrants. So, would they never see the light of social integration in the German society?

> *"[The Nazis] found a picture of me from 2012 with a gun. Then it spread on Facebook and YouTube... the photo is from my neighbor's wedding. We went out to celebrate. Some of us fired guns, some of us had fireworks... nobody can help me. I'm a young man and I don't know much about the world. I'm lost in it - lost."* — Abode Targi

Which Factors might be Hindering Social Integration in Germany?

The Integration Projects are handled and managed by the state, but it is up to the immigrants as well as the German society to help each other blend in for the real social integration. The projects carried out by the government are a systematic approach, and genuine integration into society will only happen when the people themselves can accept one another. As Abdulrahman mentioned in the first interview above, the receiving country should be able to differentiate between culture and religion. Another obstacle to social integration is the prevalent fear stimulated by politicians, the media, and some terrorist attacks, which sowed the seed of fear that there are extremists among the refugees plotting attacks on the Germans. This could help to promote the concept of 'differential inclusion' and keep immigrants marginalized in the society. Events of terrorism have definitely built up Islamophobia in the heart of German society; however, as the idiom goes, not all the fingers of your hand measure the same. As for Abode, it is clear that his life was made miserable through the misleading news broadcasted by the media. Hence, the media also plays a massive role in how immigrants are presented in the host country—it can either help social integration flourish or ruin lives as was in the case of Abode.

Closing remarks

Tareq Assad, who was preparing to apply to the University of the Arts in Berlin, said that problems remain, and he still has a hard time making German friends, but he's optimistic about the future of the Syrian community in Germany.

kein mensch ist illegal = No man is illegal

Photo by Markus Spiske / Unsplash

Photo by Mika Baumeister | Unsplash

He said to The Century Foundation (2018), "Germany presents for us a lot of opportunities in life. Of course it's home for us. The place where you feel safe, and you eat. Arabs say when you eat with people for forty days, you become one of them." One area of research cannot have only negative aspects; it must have a balance of pros and cons. Germany seems to be trapped in a liberal paradox, needing to maintain sufficient supplies of foreign labor (both skilled and unskilled) while struggling to maintain control of its borders, preserve the social contract, as well as protect the rights of immigrants. It has been just a few years since this experiment of the workforce and societal integration in Germany has come into effect, and it is still too early to draw conclusions from this project. However, one thing is clear - the state alone will not be able to successfully implement systematic projects if the society fails to accept one another. They must embrace each other's culture while maintaining their own. 𝑝

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Putting Yourself Out There <u>Part 1</u>

A conversation between Mattie Balagat and Haruna Miyagawa
Illustrations by Mattie Balagat

What could diving deep into ethnographic fieldwork, a key tool of social science research, look like? What to do with the academic pressure of "objectivity", the baggage of bias and emotions, and the responsibilities social science researchers carry in today's world? Mattie Balagat, a clueless GDP student interested in pursuing anthropological research, seeks answers to such questions [which may or may not be answered] through conversations with Professor Haruna Miyagawa, who teaches sociology courses in GDP, including DCUL 331: Logic and Methods of Social Inquiry, a research method course. *The following conversation occurred in September 2021 and it has been cleaned and edited for clarity.*

About us

"Oh, this could be my space."

Mattie Balagat studied in a science high school in the Philippines before coming to GDP, where she thought she would continue studying the environmental sciences. But after jumping between classes and clusters, she is now cultivating an interest in environmental anthropology—a field she never considered, or even knew about back then. Stepping into the social sciences is for her a dizzying but strangely familiar journey, as someone who has always wanted to write about people. She is currently thinking of doing fieldwork with coastal communities in Manila.

"All these things, in hindsight, is sociology."

Professor Haruna Miyagawa teaches sociology in GDP. She holds a PhD in Sociology from Arizona State University. "Sociology" was not a word she knew until her third year of college, but she had been training herself for the field much longer: Her family moved to the southern state of Tennessee in the U.S. when she was in middle school; she went on to spend four years there before returning to Japan. Then, as a young minority plunged into a totally different environment, she not only observed very "black-and-white" racial relations
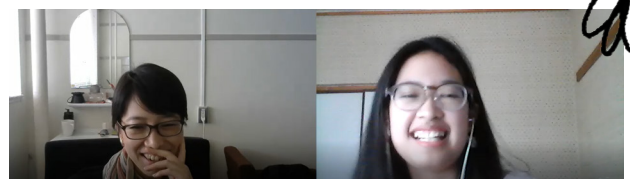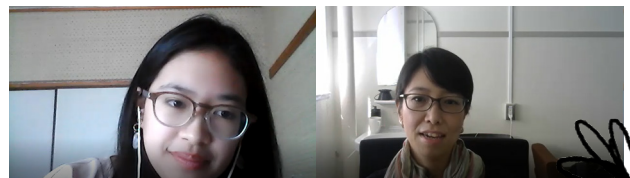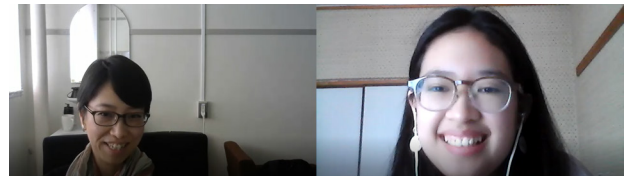
and other social divisions that cut across class and gender, but also experienced an "odd" place as an expat daughter of a middle class family from "the land of raw fish, ninja, and geisha" (sushi hadn't arrived in the Appalachia; *Karate Kid* had a lasting impact; *Teenage Ninja Turtles* was then the new fad; and *Memoirs of a Geisha* was on the horizon). Her peers' interest in her background was often mixed with curiosity on the one hand and contempt on the other. She traces her interest in sociology and migration to such experiences, later on returning to the U.S. to continue her research.

An "instinct" for the social sciences?

Haruna Miyagawa: How I ended up at the Discovery is also a result of the chains of coincidence. I am very happy and I feel very fortunate that I ended up here, for now at least. But I was pursuing things along the way that I felt were interesting for me, and they were often related to my experience in early adolescence. Back then, I was not able to speak English at all. For the very first year, I spoke no word of English—none. I never spoke up and I was always constantly observing, probably, to understand what was going on, trying to pick up people's words, mannerism, their facial expressions, you know, everything that you would do as a researcher, being in the field. Fortunately or unfortunately, I trained myself in that first year in the US, not being able to understand the language, not being able to speak my mind or speak back… That has sort of become… I don't know, what's the word?

Mattie Balagat: Reflex? Instinct?

HM: Yeah, like instinct.

Whether I want to do it or not, I feel like I'm 24/7 fieldworking. *laughs*

MB: Yeah, I mean, that's not a surprising thing. It's really an attitude you kind of… embody. It's not something you can turn off, and be like, okay, I'm not going to pay attention to my surroundings right now… I feel like you get built into it.

HM: Yeah, do you feel like that too?

MB: Yeah. I think another thing that drew me to social sciences— I recalled this when you were basically recounting your experiences of just observing why things are that way, what brings people to treat people differently. I think I also have a kind of similar training. In high school, I was kind of the "writing person". And even before—actually I didn't really want to go to a science high school but the tuition was free— I really wanted to be a writer, that preceded all my other goals for life. Even before high school, [I was saying] "I'm going to publish a book, I'm going to write a lot, that's me, that's my identity." So in the process, I picked up what it really means to be a writer. I remember one of my writing teachers telling me, **"You need**

to learn to live life and to learn how to observe."** And that stuck with me. So for most of high school, I was just basically trying to make the most of what I could achieve there, and what I could experience there. And a lot of my high school experiences, I consistently translated it into writing, and that's how I also fell into poetry.

I feel like the discipline of social sciences is so close to what I really wanted to achieve, even before I learned about all these disciplines—which is to understand people. So actually while I was taking Medical Anthropology[1] — the earlier readings were talking about psychoanalysis, and it became very philosophical and theoretical. I was just like: the process of trying to understand this reading is the process of writing also. And I felt that the way that it connected was so creepy, and I was like: "This is not… that surprising to me. **I've done this before, but also I haven't. So maybe, there's something here."**

On dealing with emotions and "objectivity"

HM: So you have multiple caps you would wear in the field. As a fieldworker, you're taking on various roles in the site. Depending on the time, the place, who you are interacting with, that, perhaps, changes in the course of the fieldwork… **How many caps do you think you would wear in the field? How would you integrate or work with the**

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[1] DCUL 330 Medical Anthropology, taught by Professor Takeshi Uesugi
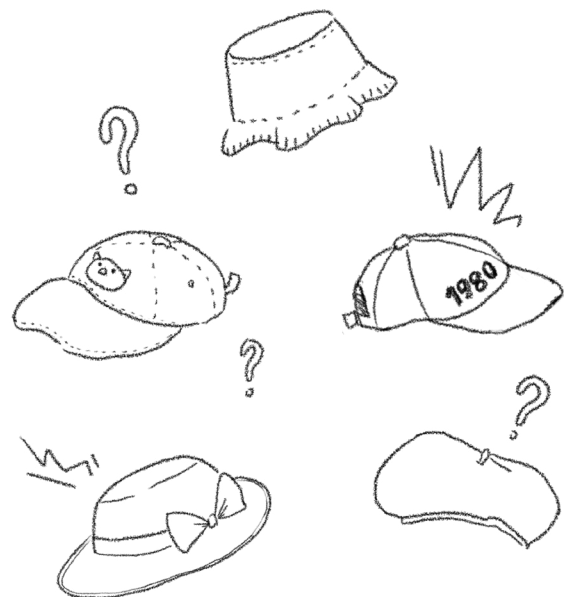
different caps?

MB: Oh, it's so scary. I think this is a very people skills question. Because when I think about multiple caps, for some reason, I always think about my mom. She occupies all these different positions in life, daughter, mother, baker… And she's really good at conversation. Conversation and interacting with different kinds of people. And I always think, I wanna be like that. I wanna be that seamless and try to, you know, open myself up, also talk to people at the very level they are comfortable with. So I feel like it's a very contextual question. How many caps? Depending-on-who-I talk-to kind of deal.

But I'm trying to occupy a lot of spaces, I feel like that's a lot of identities. Student, environmental advocate-slash-activist, NGO worker, youth, Manila city girl, from a very upper-middle-class background, researcher, studies in Japan, probably very "landed"… I know about all of those, but the second question… I don't know! That is the question I wanted to ask you. Like how do you work with all that!

Okay, example, I'm going to interview, of course, I have to introduce myself as a researcher. But I see myself during the interview, I'll jump in and be like… ah, I know about that situation, I'm from this, bla bla. So, [this matter] really messes with my brain, it calls this whole discussion about distance and emotion. Because I know I'm just not able to like… compartmentalize. I can't do that.

HM: Right, but then **do you have to compartmentalize?**—is my question. It seems the way you pose it, you feel like you have to have a distance from the participants, but do you?

MB: I don't know if this is just my assumption, but is it really possible to do this fieldwork about this environmental NGO stuff while I'm in it? I think you have to put distance between what you want to do and the whole position of a researcher. There's also the pressure of "objectivity"—I don't like that word anymore because I don't know what it means.*laughing*

HM: Well, I think anything that has to involve human action, whether it's social science, humanities, or natural science, or creative art, I think it can never be purely objective, because you observe. Of course, the process has to be somewhat systematic, to be somewhat objective. But there is a limit

to objectivity, even in the natural sciences. Because it's in the eyes that you're observing. And then of course, you're testing things, or using measurements, **but who created those measurements, right? Humans, and humans exist in social relations.** Objectivity, in the pure sense, is questionable from my perspective, in any sciences, social sciences or natural sciences.

[On compartmentalizing:] **If you didn't have the passion to begin with, how can you even start?** You may be able to start because your advisor told you to do it, or because there is a grant that will allow you to work on this project. But how can you sustain the interest, and how can you be very interested in the people you talk to, unless you have some sort of passion that drives the research, right? So I don't know about compartmentalizing things. And if there is the need to do so, I don't necessarily agree. I think without passion, without emotion… it won't be fun and interesting to begin with. Let alone to continue it would be torturous, I think.

**MB:** Yeah… that's a good word, torturous.

HM: And if the researcher himself or herself feels torturous, what about the readers, right? It shows.

MB: Even though we acknowledge that there is really no objectivity in a pure sense, there are still standards that your research or your observations will be measured against. **How do you balance that kind of need to seek credibility and**

your personal emotions? Like is it just in the writing? In the fieldwork, you can all be so engaged, and in the writing, you kind of have to withhold…?

HM: Well, depends on the audience, I think. Who would you like to "impress"? Who are you writing for? And for what purpose? That depends on how you write and how you present the same material that you have generated in conducting research. So if you were to be "well-respected" in the academe, you have to present the data in the way that is agreed upon in that community. But that's not the only way to go about in presenting your findings, even if you have the same material. One of the ways is writing about yourself clearly, where you stand, upfront. So that the data that you present, in like the Findings section, is understood with the presumption of that—where you stand politically. Of course, if you do that, people could argue, "okay this data was biased, or it speaks as such, because the scholar or the researcher has a certain perspective to begin with." And that happens all the time. **Everything scholars produce is always infused with their values, including their political position, whether it's obvious or not.** There is some level of subjectivity involved. Whether the readers agree upon it or not, it's good to debate. So long as you make your position clear, you provide your argument with the source that people can debate upon, and if they can refute your position by bringing another perspective and different types of data, then that's okay, right? Because of this, knowledge can continue to grow and expand and be critiqued.
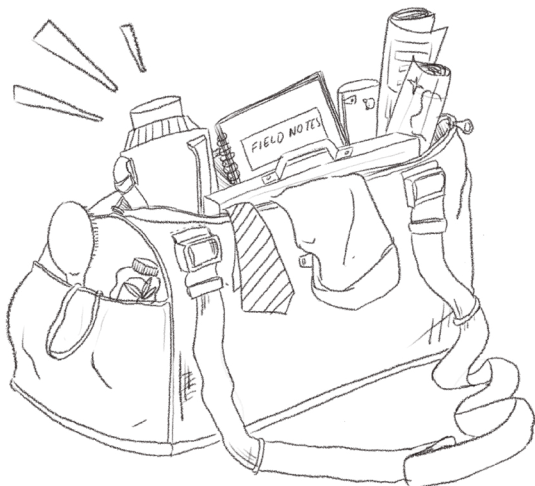
MB: This is more on the writing part. It depends on who you want to write for and how those people would want it presented, but **how do you deal with these concerns of objectivity and bias during your fieldwork**, like what do you consider, what do you have to resolve when you do fieldwork?

HM: Right. **You go in with who you are, and it's a whole baggage that you carry—that's been influenced by your education, previous training, your previous experiences, very much your lifelong history, personal biography—to the field.** And then you interact with the event or the people there. Based on your background, what you observe, or what catches your eyes is unavoidably influenced. In that sense there is a bias, because you are selectively choosing to see something though unconsciously. That's influenced by your biography. But try to make use of everything that you have been exposed to… It's related to your earlier point about being a writer, having experienced everything you can when you are given the situation. **Even then there is a limitation to the experience you can actually bring in. But try to have as much things in your stuffed bag, so that once you're in the field you'll be able to see more or as widely as possible.**

Another important thing I think is **not to make quick judgments.** Because we are biased, or tend to see or pay attention to certain things, we tend to check boxes—once that's observed, we tend to move on, and see something else that's within our scope. Try not to move on that quickly, try not to make quick judgments that you have seen what you have seen or heard what you think you have heard. So I guess, [**have**] **patience with yourself, patience with what you hear from others, patience with what you can see… hmm…yes, patience.** *laughs* 𝑝

Read the continuation of this conversation on the Polyphony blog, where the two talk about entering into fieldwork, dealing with anxieties in building relationships with study participants, and having transformative fieldwork experiences.

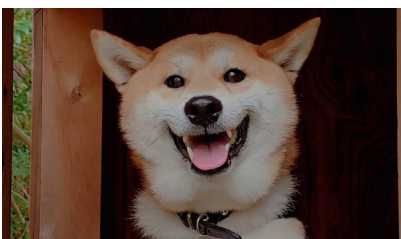*DCUL 331: Logic and Methods of Social Inquiry is taught by Professor Haruna Miyagawa every Term 1 and 2.*
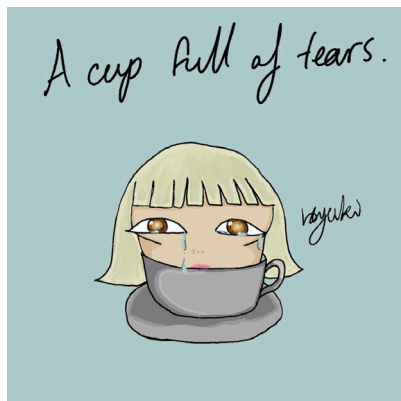
Humans of GDP

Words by Alyana Reina Q. Morales

Humans of GDP is a student-run Instagram account that features GDP students from across all batches. We believe that each student is unique with their own stories to tell. With around 60 new students coming in each year, most of our classmates are still strangers. They are only faces we see around the hallway or names we hear in classes. Through interviewing students, we learn that we are not at all that different from each other despite our cultural differences. We hope that everyone who will read the stories of the students learn something new from each of them.

Hiina Shiota

My dream used to be becoming a veterinarian since I've always loved animals (even now). I have a dog named is Ranmaru (蘭丸). He is a Shiba dog (柴犬). His name was given by my sister. My family decided to adopt him after I graduated from high school. My mother and I saw the flyers about the adoption when we went shopping one day. After a thorough discussion about it, we decided to adopt him around June. I think overall, the time spent with Ranmaru will always be fun and memorable. If I were to choose the most memorable moment with him, perhaps it might be the first time he went to a dog run (a place where dogs can have fun running around and playing). It was fun playing catch with him. We also got to eat at a restaurant afterwards, and took some pictures in the backyard of the restaurant. However, I realized somewhere along the way that I was not good with Chemistry and Mathematics, meaning it would be hard for me to achieve my dream of being a veterinarian, which was why I decided to give up on it.

Yuki Genko

The fact that I'm a 帰国子女 (kikokushijo), someone who grew up and studied abroad, still put me in a place where people treated me differently. I had a lot of anger in me. People didn't understand or even try to understand the difficulties people have when they come from a different country. Through those experiences, I started drawing again to express myself until I developed the idea of turning my illustrations into products. I had a pop-up store last year where I sold pins and other goods that had my illustrations on them. Now, I work part-time jobs to support myself and do the things that I want to do like preparing for another pop-up store.

Rose Mothapo

It [my organization] was mainly inspired by my mother who lived a positive life with HIV. She was a humanitarian and an HIV activist. When she passed on, I wanted to continue her legacy. The organization is an NPO. Its name is Tina Organization. I am constantly disheartened by the news in South Afrca of the high rape cases and gender-based violence in women so I wante to do something to change that, even if it was not going to be overnight. This organization serves to empower, strengthen, enlighten, and bring hope to the young women in South Africa.

Learn more about the Humans of GDP on their Instagram Page, @humansofgdp.

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