



PROJECT + MARCH 2021 ISSUE

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN
LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY

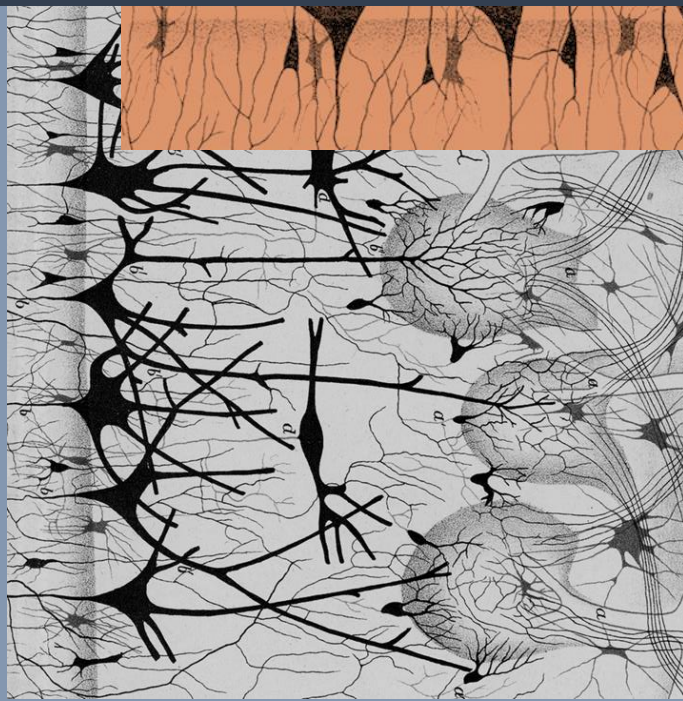
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Editors' Note

Writers: Quorra Lu, Karen Dellinger, Alison Chen, Sonia Chang

Page Design: Quorra Lu

Who are we in the time of crisis?

The 16th issue of *Project +* focuses on the topic of identity, discussing who we are and our relationship with cultures and people around us in this troubling and volatile time. The newsletter includes an interview with Professor George O'Connell, an interview with participants in the online 2021 MLA convention, a film review of *Promising Young Woman* (starring Carey Mulligan), the poem *Dusk till Dawn*, and an interview with Taiwanese students living abroad during the pandemic.

Professor George O'Connell is an American writer, translator, and editor of poetry who taught at NTU as a visiting Fulbright professor in 2018 and 2019. He currently resides in Xindian with his wife and translating partner Diana Shi, and their borzoi Anya. In this interview, he shares his thoughts on and experiences of the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, including the cultural and political factors that shaped the difference between Taiwan's and America's coping abilities. Even more importantly, he points out the perennial and universal role that art, language, and poetry play when human beings are confronted with times of crisis.

The virtual MLA 2021 Convention provided a rare opportunity for researchers and scholars to participate in the conference from across the world. This year's theme, "Persistence," focuses on the precarity and potential of the Humanities today and how academics can and have responded to such conditions. The convention's unique online format lent itself to innovations such as personalized schedules through an app specially designed for this occasion, automated captioning, and full recordings of sessions accessible after the event. In our interview, graduate students from NTU DFLL Chong Yu Xuan, Wu Wan Tsz, and Rebecca Lee share their experience attending this convention.

The film review of *Promising Young Woman* is a reflection on women's identity. The world has left little space for women to breathe freely and to live safely; they are trapped between the glass ceiling and the glass gutter. Women are taught to reach for the stars and their dreams, yet at the same time, they are instructed to be cautious of the shadow of streetlamps at night and to mind the length of their skirts. Women are themselves often blamed, instead of the offenders,

should any misfortune befall them simply for not living up to *the unattainable high standards of a lady or good girl*. “She is asking for it”: a false accusation that is frequently used in real life and pervasive in the film by the predators to excuse their responsibility. *Promising Young Woman*, an ingenious portrayal of reality, tells a compelling story of two ruined lives, a journey of executing the belated justice and the cost too heavy to pay. The film successfully avoids any exaggeration of the incident or sensationalisation of the atmosphere; it addresses the warnings and excuses that we are more than familiar with in daily life. The audience might see parts of themselves in the protagonist Cassie and her situation; after all, “luck” is the only difference that lies between us and the characters in the film.

The poem *Dusk till Dawn* is inspired by university students’ current situation in Europe. The freedom they take for granted has been restricted owing to the surging cases of COVID-19, the nightmare that has been haunting all human beings for more than a year. Who would they be or become without this fundamental human right which they value the most, even more than their own lives? Where would the future lead once everything seems to come to a halt? These students have not been given the chance to step on campus since the first day of school; the student card is issued virtually; all group meetings and exams are completed online; the laptop has been elevated from an optional tool to your best friend and deemed essential for survival. Your plans are never versatile enough to deal with this ever-changing world. Even though you are fortunate enough to enjoy a short holiday, the concerns about the next day hang above you; joy is intertwined with worry; the bitterness of life is mingled with the sweetness of champagne.

This issue ends with “My Name is Not Corona,” an article about Taiwanese university students living abroad during COVID-19, and the perceived racism they face in other countries.

We would like to express our gratitude for the support and advice of our professors and peers. We hope you enjoy Issue 16 and our explorations of identity and culture in these turbulent times.

March 2021

Project+ Professor Interview: Identity, Culture, and Experiences in the Time of COVID-19

喬直 George O'Connell: 2018-19 US Fulbright Senior Scholar

Visiting Professor at Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures /
Graduate Program of Translation and Interpretation

National Taiwan Univ.

Co-Director, Pangolin House

Interview by Karen Dellinger



Q1-1. As a Westerner residing in Taiwan during the outbreak of a global pandemic, what has been the most striking impression you've had of differences or similarities between here or your homeland?

Q1-2. Taiwan has shown itself to be capable of reacting and adapting effectively in the current pandemic crisis, when many nations

projected that we would be one of the most severely affected countries due to our proximity to mainland China. What are your thoughts on Taiwan's ability to maintain a balance between individual welfare and the constructive collectivity (in terms of policy and the public's cooperation etc.) demonstrated by our relative success in curbing the spread of COVID?

A1. I've not visited the states since before the pandemic began, so my sense of US response is based largely on what I've seen in the New York Times and other western journals. I also regularly access Taiwan News Online, the Taipei Times, and Hong Kong Free Press for views from this side of the Pacific. I communicate regularly with friends and family in the US and elsewhere, all of whom have so far avoided infection. Most can work remotely, and two have begun or completed COVID immunization. Taiwan's performance throughout this crisis has been splendid, a lasting example for all, and in sharp contrast to most other nations east or west. In retrospect, some reasons seem clear. From its earlier experience with SARS, Taiwan learned the wisdom of early border restrictions, monitoring and quarantining arrivals, detecting and swiftly stifling outbreaks, maintaining good public hygiene, and immediately hospitalizing the infected. Though it's true such steps might be easier for a smaller island nation than for a vast country like the US, success also demands intelligence and fairness in application, plus an enlightened populace broadly following sound measures. Taiwan has all this.

The crisis highlights further differences between Taiwan and some other democracies. While numerous Western countries place great value on citizens' individual rights, which, as Taiwanese know well, can make for fractious politics, the alternatives to open

democracy have long proved problematic. As Churchill famously observed, “It has been said democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.” (Note “It has been said” might be Churchill’s own slightly disingenuous device. He was a master rhetorician.) If advanced democracies like the US are nowadays multi-ethnic and multicultural, much smaller Taiwan is overwhelmingly Asian, with greater cultural and behavioral unanimity. Its people have long practiced the socially conscious wisdom of masking, even for a common cold. In the pre-covid US, however, beyond medical contexts, masking was rare.

Among the myriad failures of the Trump administration, prompt leadership when the virus arrived may have spared perhaps half the fatalities. Instead, with lethal incompetence, Trump and his crew persistently denied the gravity of the illness, publicly abdicating responsibility for even rudimentary protections such as proper masking. Individual states were left to compete with each other in a mad scramble for equipment and supplies. From the outset, powerful rightwing US media effectively propagandized masses of the benighted and less educated to disdain masks, claiming COVID was a leftwing hoax, or at worse only mild flu. Masking and social distancing, or not doing so, thus became publicly visible political statements. For a huge number of citizens, the consequence was thus inevitable--currently over 500,000 US dead, with uncounted millions’ health compromised, some permanently. The depth of this irrationalism was further demonstrated in the Jan. 6 siege of the Capitol and the continuing Republican denial of November’s election results.

Aside from these crippling political circumstances, US healthcare is a complex bureaucratic behemoth, splintered by varying state and local administrations, corporate greed, and much disinformation. In contrast, Taiwan’s enviable and well- established national health system is far less complex, and simpler to coordinate. Despite fundamental structural and population differences, however, the striking gap in citizen mortality speaks for itself. Under the Biden administration, things have finally begun to improve, including accelerated vaccine production, though distribution remains uneven. At present, with deaths and infections dropping, vaccinations rising, plus growing herd immunity in large cities like New York, it seems the US has begun to recover. Following the 1918 pandemic, which lasted two years and took 675,000 US lives, recovery was fairly swift. There is yet some question of whether COVID mutations might outpace vaccine protection, but I expect science will win. This time.

Q2. Has being a foreigner shaped your experiences here differently despite your sharing an environment here (different treatment from locals or different opinions on things etc.)?

A2. I first saw Taiwan in the fall of 2016, enjoying a week in Taipei. Having spent some time in mainland China, where I'd served as Fulbright professor at Peking Univ., and later living in Hong Kong, I was struck by how friendly and open Taiwanese at all levels seemed. At first I thought this might be a feature of my being lao wai, but they behaved the same to my Chinese-born co-editor who was with me. After arriving as 2018 Fulbright scholar to NTU's Dept. of Foreign Languages, I found such civility practically universal. While some of this may be a cultural inheritance of traditional Japanese politeness, my casual assessment's that Taiwan citizens' freedom of expression, and freedom to vote for the government they choose, confers a broad sense of liberty on all, the belief that one can, to a degree, control one's destiny. How much this invites individual happiness I cannot say, but surely an absence of liberty does not. I'm also aware that full civil rights and freedoms are relatively recent for Taiwan. However they evolved, the results seem evident, and widespread. As the great 19th c. American writer and thinker Henry David Thoreau metaphorically observed, the plant strives upward toward light and air. I believe this truth to be universal.

Q3. In times of medical or financial crisis, the fields and professions deemed most essential are those most related to immediate solutions (medicine, science and technology, etc.). How does your background in humanities (and poetry specifically) impact your experience of crises in general? Do you feel your experience in your field better equips you to make sense of apparent chaos and disaster?

A3. Science and medicine are critical to our life on this planet, especially during a pandemic. They are their own cathedral. But literature and the arts, deepening and broadening human consciousness, always important, are especially so in difficult times. They afford us a redeeming perspective on what it means to be alive, a way to make sense of our beauties and travails, how to value experience, and thus to transcend, or at least not be defeated. It's often in extremis that we turn to poetry, which can serve as a kind of clarifying prayer or invocation, a path to address the fundamental questions, the sublime from which existence and identity arise. Shortly after 9/11, Polish poet Adam Zagajewski's powerful "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" appeared in *The New Yorker*. Its words were both balm and sorrow, read by a far larger audience than usual. During Stalin's Great Purge of 1937-38, an era soaked with terror, countless thousands, including many Russian writers and artists, were jailed or executed. The poet Anna Akhmatova, already well-known, wrote of standing outside a Leningrad prison, waiting to visit someone within:

In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror, I spent seventeen months in the prison lines of

Leningrad. Once, someone “recognized” me. Then a woman with bluish lips standing behind me, who, of course, had never heard me called by name before, woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everyone spoke in whispers there):

“Can you describe this?”

And I answered: “Yes, I can.”

Then something that looked like a smile passed over what had once been her face.

~Requiem, “Instead of a Preface”, trans. Stanley Kunitz & Max Hayward

Having lived a relatively privileged if sometimes precarious literary life, I’ve never been a victim of chaos or disaster. But I have read enough, and lived enough, to know human beings alone or together are capable of any atrocity. History, recent or ancient, is packed with horror. But people are also endowed with the capacity for great love, imagination, and self-sacrifice. Do art and literature afford a perspective from which to weather the worst? Depending on the individual, I believe they do. Many poets, writers, and artists are actually quite practical people, tough and resilient. They have to be.

Q4. Any additional notes or observations based on your time in Taiwan are welcome!

A4. Amid the distress afflicting my native US and most of the world, I count myself fortunate to be in Taiwan, a place I’ve come to love. I’ve enjoyed seeing more of this country on guest lectures at universities in Hualien and Kaohsiung. Part of my NTU teaching engaged work by 30 modern American poets over two terms. With my co-translator Diana Shi, I also conducted a Taida creative writing poetry translation workshop focused on 14 contemporary Taiwan poets such as Yang Mu, Chen Yuhong, Chen Yizhi, Hung Hung, and Hsia Yu. Based on the fruits of this workshop with our students, we’ve since been refining the English translations of around 200 contemporary Taiwan poems. These will appear in a bilingual anthology offered to both the Taiwan and international audience. We believe the value of strong poetry endures, especially in difficult times, not only for those who read or study literature, but for the larger world. In a region where art, free expression, and civil rights are threatened or already crushed, Taiwan’s significance and example as an open democratic republic cannot be overestimated. In addition to Taiwan contemporary poetry’s value as art, and as inheritor of a very long Chinese-language tradition, successful English translation can only enhance Taiwan’s world literary presence, along with its international identity. English is often the gateway to translation in other languages. ♦

On 2021 Modern Language Association Annual Convention

Writer/Interviewer: Alison Chen, Sonia Chang
Page Design: Sonia Chang

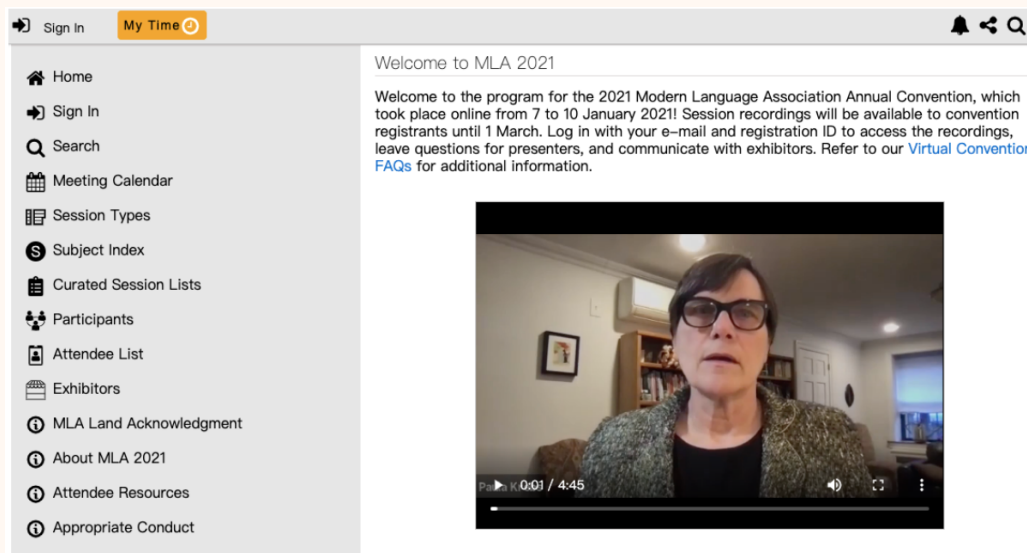


Image: 2021 MLA Convention webpage

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Modern Language Association (MLA) Annual Convention, the largest scholarly meeting in the humanities, took place online in January 2021. The presidential idea this year centered around the future conditions of humanities and its survival in the modern world. Its theme is Persistence, which in, Judith Butler's words, is "a force, figure, and concept bound up with endurance, survival, defiance, willfulness, resistance, and flourishing, but also with dead ends, social death, and extinction." Therefore, the conference aims to explore how humanity studies can persist on a path of contingency in today's ever-transforming academic conditions.

The 2021 MLA conference was unlike its past conventions for it took advantage of technologies available to create an experience never seen before. Firstly, the online program was available through a webpage and an app specially designed for the occasion. Attendees from all across the world met online in real-time, forums accessible at the touch of a button. Furthermore, all sessions thoughtfully provided automated captioning or transcription, and also recordings available to all attendees after the convention. In addition, special session types such as Graduate Student Lounge, Social Events, and Exhibitors, were also added virtually, where attendees can still network with others through their profile.

In the following interview, three graduate students from the Department of Foreign Language and Literature at National Taiwan University share their experiences at the conference:

What do you like most about the conference?

Chong Yu Xuan:

There were few technical issues during the sessions I joined so I think MLA has done a good job preparing the online conference. Participants also made good use of the chat room to share their ideas, ask and answer questions, and upload supporting materials at once.

Rebecca Lee:

I really like the diversity of themes the conference covered. I think the diversity showed how the conference itself invites not only new ideas but also different voices.

Wu Wan Tsz:

The variety of topics discussed. The 2021 MLA Convention not only provided sessions for literary and cultural studies but opened sessions for discussing the post(?)pandemic university, graduate admissions today, and career pathways for students and reflecting on the humanities, the MLA of tomorrow, graduate education, and the need for reforms and new directions. These practical issues, I believe, are equally important for both students and faculty members.

How was this conference different from other conferences you've attended?

Chong Yu Xuan

It's HUGE. I've spent hours looking for sessions I would join on their sites.

Rebecca Lee

As my second virtual conference, the MLA conference was definitely bigger, with hundreds of sessions and international participants. I was especially surprised by the conference's web design, which was very

user-friendly. It not only shows information about each session but also allows participants to organize their own attending plan.

Wu Wan Tsz

One of the recent conferences I attended was the 2020 TACMRS Conference, "Food: Sacrificial, Spiritual, and Secular." Due to the pandemic, the 2020 TACMRS Conference was held as both a physical and virtual event in which local scholars in Taiwan presented papers in person at the conference venue and overseas scholars with pre-recorded videos in the virtual format via Webex. Different from the 2020 TACMRS Conference, the 2021 MLA Convention was a fully live virtual event in which scholars presented papers in real-time via Zoom.

The fully virtual format adopted by the 2021 MLA Convention did not reduce attendees' passion for exchanging and sharing ideas. Participants actively threw out questions to enrich the discussion. In addition, the quality of the virtual sessions of the 2021 MLA Convention was pretty good. During the sessions I attended, there was no technical embarrassment and disruption, which allowed the audience to have a satisfying experience in listening to presentations and discussions.

Which session was most memorable? Why?

Chong Yu Xuan

The Era of "Feminism Reboot" and Korean Women's Literature across the Pacific. The presenters spoke in Korean and luckily they did their slides in English so I could understand them basically.

Rebecca Lee

Fredric Jameson's Political Unconscious—Forty Years On; First of all, it was amazing

to see Jameson giving a small talk in person (virtually though). Also, since some of my research ideas are built upon Jameson's *Political Unconscious*, the session was particularly inspiring where critics present their own contemporary readings on it.

Wu Wan Tsz

“Queer Ecologies” and “Anthropocene Gothic” impressed me with interesting papers which illuminate the ways in which ecological perspectives and concerns can offer new ways of thinking and unlock new approaches to enrich queer studies and gothic studies.

Do you have any other suggestions or experiences you would like to share about your time at the MLA conference?

Chong Yu Xuan

I have to admit that I couldn't join most of the sessions since they were held from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. I could still listen to their record after the whole conference had ended. I appreciate that MLA is considerate of people in different time zone.

Rebecca Lee

I recommend graduate students to participate in the MLA conference, where one can get to hear what's happening in the literary field now. It is also not that price-consuming as MLA provides registration fee discount for graduate students.

Wu Wan Tsz

The MLA Annual Convention is the largest scholarly meeting in the humanities which features hundreds of sessions covering a variety of topics. I highly recommend graduate students to attend the Convention to investigate and engage with the scholarly conversations about new perspectives on and concerns about approaches and subject matters that are your fields of interest.



Citation:

“2021 Presidential Theme: Persistence.” Modern Language Association, www.mla.org/Convention/Convention-History/Past-Conventions/2021-Convention/2021-Presidential-Theme-Persistence.

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“2021 MLA Annual Convention.” MLA, mla.confex.com/mla/2021/meetingapp.cgi/Home/0.

Background:

Canva Stories

Film Review

Promising Young Woman

Writer: Quorra Lu

Page design: Quorra Lu

Be a lady, they said. ---- Camille Rainville

On the dancing floor of the nightclub, men in their thirties and forties are awkwardly twitching their bodies in a suit with the music of oddly sweet lyrics and a relatively slow rhythm. At a bar table, three men, who have no difference in appearance from those dancing, are chatting. Their names are soon revealed to the audience in the conversation: Paul, Jim, and Jerry; three ordinary male names suggest that they are as anyone the audience have encountered, as anyone they could have encountered. “Fuck her!” “Fuck her!” Men raise their voice; the first line of the film begins with the cursing of women. In the following conversation, those men refer to women as priced commodities or playthings, unsurprisingly blaming women for not “focusing on closing her own shit.” In other words, they believe that women should take the responsibility for the tragedy or misfortune that befell them due to their lack of dignity for themselves. A few moments later, their attention is drawn to a beautiful blond woman on a couch nearby who is *obviously* drunk. She appears to be alone and vulnerable, which makes her a perfect prey to a lion’s claw. “I mean, that is just asking for it!” one of the men declares. The subsequent plot seems to follow a predictable course, until it does not. As Jerry, who abducts the woman to his apartment, attempts to undress her, the woman opens her eyes, clear and sober, looking at the ceiling, straight into the gaze of the audience as the fourth wall shattered. “Hey,” the woman speaks up with a steady and firm voice, “I said, what are you doing?”, repeating the question that he deliberately ignores numerous times before. Jerry, who is in the process of raping her, is terribly startled, shocked, and frozen, staring at her with an unbelievable expression. The woman leaves early next morning, walking barefoot on the street. In one hand she holds her high heels, the



Source: Promising Young Woman IMBD

elegant accessory used to elevate her appearance at the cost of physical comfort, and in the other hand a doughnut whose frosting dyes her mouth with candy stains and drips on her arm and leg, leaving bloody traces.

During the entire incident, the name of the woman is undisclosed, which points out that the man intending to assault her is indifferent to her identity; her true identity is none of his concern, as long as she is imprisoned in his dominance. Moreover, whether the woman's name is Natalie, Addison, or Christine is of little importance in this case because the protagonist represents all women; whatever happened to her could happen to all of us. Instead of holding the offender accountable, the public would judge her as *deserving* the misfortune due to her short of self-respect.



Source: Focus Feature

In the day time, Cassie, our protagonist and the woman in the previous incident, is a lovely barista who dresses in pastel colours, yet she transforms into a dark queen as the night falls. She takes full advantages of the licentiousness in men's nature; she will prey on them in the nightclubs and bars, feigning drunkenness to be picked up by those who bear ill intentions against women and who take advantages of unconscious women without having second thoughts. The moment those men think this will be another night of triumph, Cassie reveals her true colours and teaches them an unforgettable lesson about the danger and possible consequence of their lechery. Unlike those male predators aiming at violence, Cassie's action halts at intimidation; to some extent, she remains hopeful for the repentance of the other sex. All her accomplishments are recorded in a little notebook with hundreds of names, which indicates the equal number of women who would have had fallen into their filthy hands.



Source: Promising Young Woman IMDb

Cassie was a promising young woman, so was her friend Nina. They, who were top of their class in medical school, had a bright future waiting for them, until a sexual assault, committed by their classmate Alexander Monroe, turned their lives upside down. Nina, who took her life shortly after, was the immediate victim of the assault, Cassie the collateral damage. The offender, the trauma of that night, the indifference of people around them, as well as the hostility and malice of the world against women all have their fair share in Nina's suicide; she is deemed *unworthy* of sympathy and confidence for not being a *good girl*. The Dean of the school, in charge of dealing with the incident, was more concerned about the promising future of the rumoured offender than the welfare of the victim. In her view, these are childish dramas unworthy of serious attention, let alone a man's

tainted reputation is in more dire need of defence and protection than the ruined life of a woman. For Cassie, the time stopped since she was forced to drop out, to give up the favourable future she could have had; her purpose of life dies along with Nina. Cassie, engulfed by anger, regret and sorrow, embarks on a journey of revenge against male predators and a quest for self-redemption. On the one hand, she recognises that the assaulter is responsible rather than Nina. On the other hand, she blames herself for not accompanying her that night, wondering whether the situation would have turned different if she had been at the site. Cassie's life would have continued to be the daily repetition of one another had not an old acquaintance, Ryan, from the medical school, showed up and disturbed the routine. It is owing to his appearance that Cassie's revenge for Nina commences.

Promising Young Woman creates a contrasting atmosphere to that of *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is set in a fictional world with a suffocating and depressing ambience. Throughout the film, *Promising Young Woman* employs the familiar warning given by every mother to their daughters and cliché excuses utilised by men attempting to absolve themselves or each other in order to create and to reinforce the impression that the incidents are neither independent nor imaginary but prevalent, and that the story truthfully reflects everyday life.



Source: Promising Young Woman IMDb

Since a girl is born, she is raised with contradicting values; only a restrictive space between glass ceiling and glass gutter is left for her survival. On the one hand she is encouraged to be ambitious, to reach for the stars, and to believe that the world is for the taking. On the other hand, she is either advised, warned, or threatened that she should behave herself; she should not wear skirts too short or make-up to heavy, nor should she return home too late or party all night outside. Otherwise, it would be her responsibility if she is treated as a prostitute and attacked by anyone. Commonly, she would be blamed for not protecting herself well enough or for wearing inappropriate clothes, having an attractive appearance and walking with a seductive gait. On the contrary, "I am just a kid" is an excuse frequently used by men to exonerate themselves from all responsibilities for their

actions. In the film, the severity and horror of abducting drunken or nearly unconscious women to their lodging are played down as a simple “mistake.” The audience cannot be more familiar with these lines of excuses: “I am a nice guy,” they say. “This is a mistake.” Indeed, from Alexander Monroe’s perspective, his sexual assault of Nina meant no more than “having fun,” as one of the bystanders, Ryan, views himself innocent for “doing nothing”.

The difference between us and those women being assaulted is straightforward and unnerving: none. What we have is a little more luck that helps us escape from the talon of beasts for one more day. The third season of the BBC series *Broadchurch* demonstrates an excellent example. A forty-nine-year-old woman is raped by a male at her friend’s birthday party. When she is finally informed by the police of the identity of the offender, a sixteen-year-old boy who is her daughter’s classmate, she is terribly shocked, finding the truth hard to swallow. The rape was not planned but rather a whim of thrill. She asks unbelievably with a tone of anger, “So I was just unlucky?” Before assuring her that justice will be enforced, the police fall into silence for a moment; their unspeakable distress reveals the cruel and painful truth.

Promising, there is no more suitable and accurate description foretelling the propitious prospects for medical students and the lucrative career prepared for them. Young, the term represents the prime of one’s life, indicating a person’s hope and endless possibilities. Woman, however, names the beginning of life-long misery, inequality and injustice not incurred by herself but inflicted by the patriarchy.

Promising Young Woman tells a story of a woman’s life annihilated by men-children--as they claim themselves to be--and another woman’s life ruined. It is less a story of vengeance and more an everlasting nightmare and the execution of belated justice. Though it ends in an unexpected direction (for a film), the closure is an accurate portrayal of reality.

Recommended videos:

Glass Gutter, Kate Willet’s stand-up comedy.

Snatches: Moments from Women’s Lives, BBC. (Episode 5 is related to the film.)

Broadchurch, Season Three, BBC.

“Be a Lady, They Said.” Poem by Camille Rainville, narrated by Cynthia Nixon.

Dusk till Dawn

Writer: Quorra Lu

Page Design: Karen Dellinger

Paris to Madrid, La Cité de Fleurs to La Puerta Europa,

1,275.1 kilometres,

The distance between sunset curfew and midnight parties,

As Cinderella's magic, vanishes at the strike of twelve.

Airport's the gateway, to a week escape from the cornered bay

Where *La Cuisine* the furthest destination, *Le Balcon* the crowded resort.

Walking down the cobblestone streets, pacing with joy and excitement,

Humming the delightful tune with the smile that mask fails to conceal.

In glamour she dresses, on La Plaza Mayor she dances,

Under the solemn gaze of four-hundred-year glory,

Among the passionate beauty of seventeenth century Baroque.

The exuberant liveliness gloats at the face of the still horror,

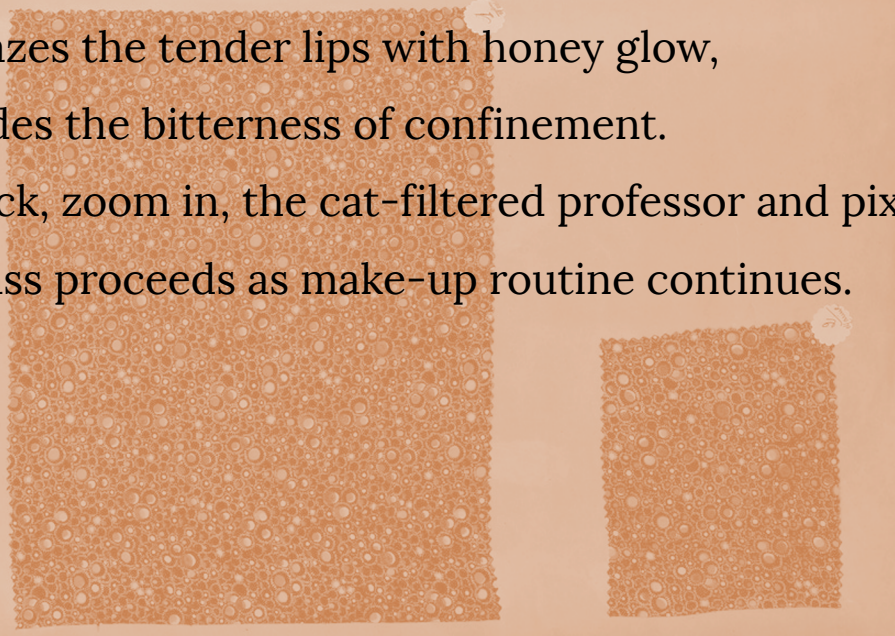
The sweet taste of freedom, spreads from the tip of the tongue,

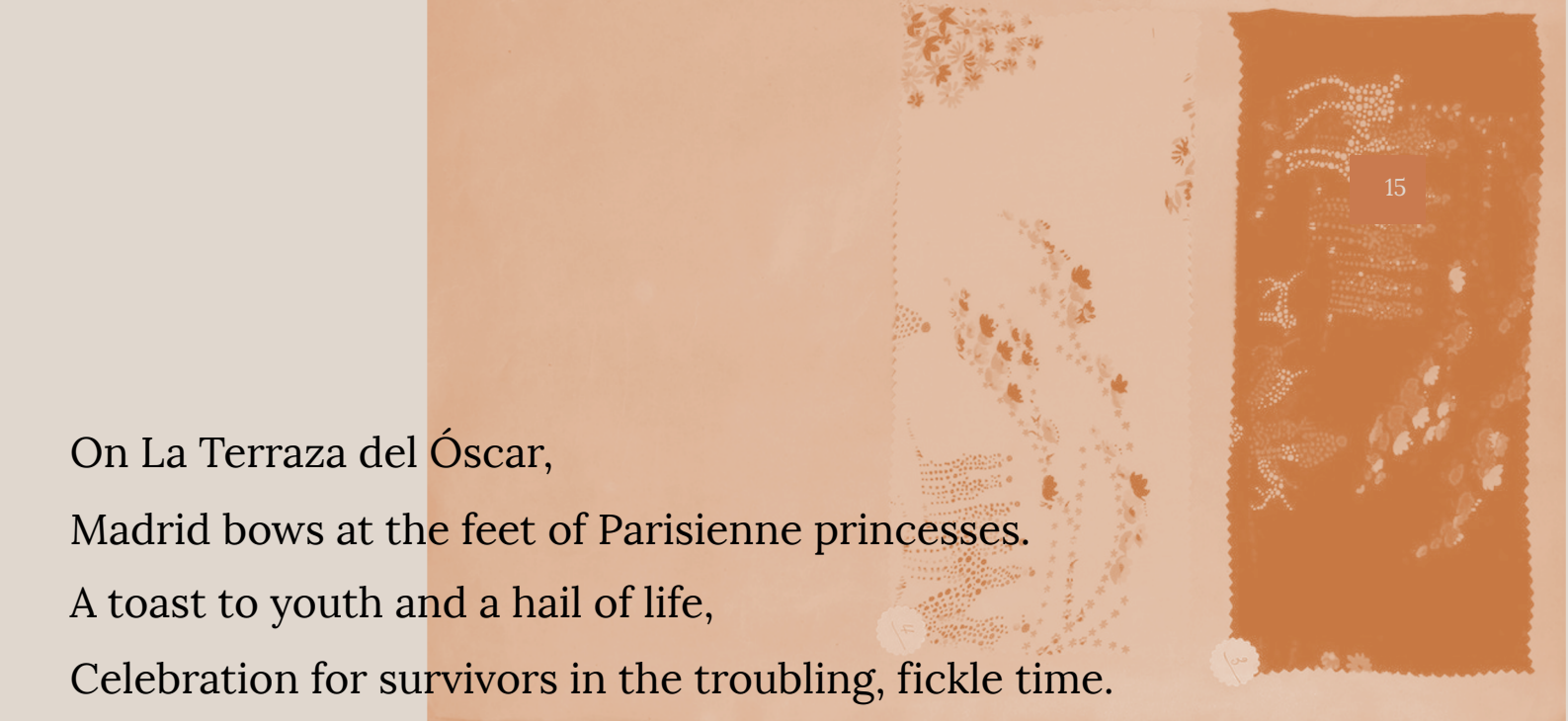
Glazes the tender lips with honey glow,

Fades the bitterness of confinement.

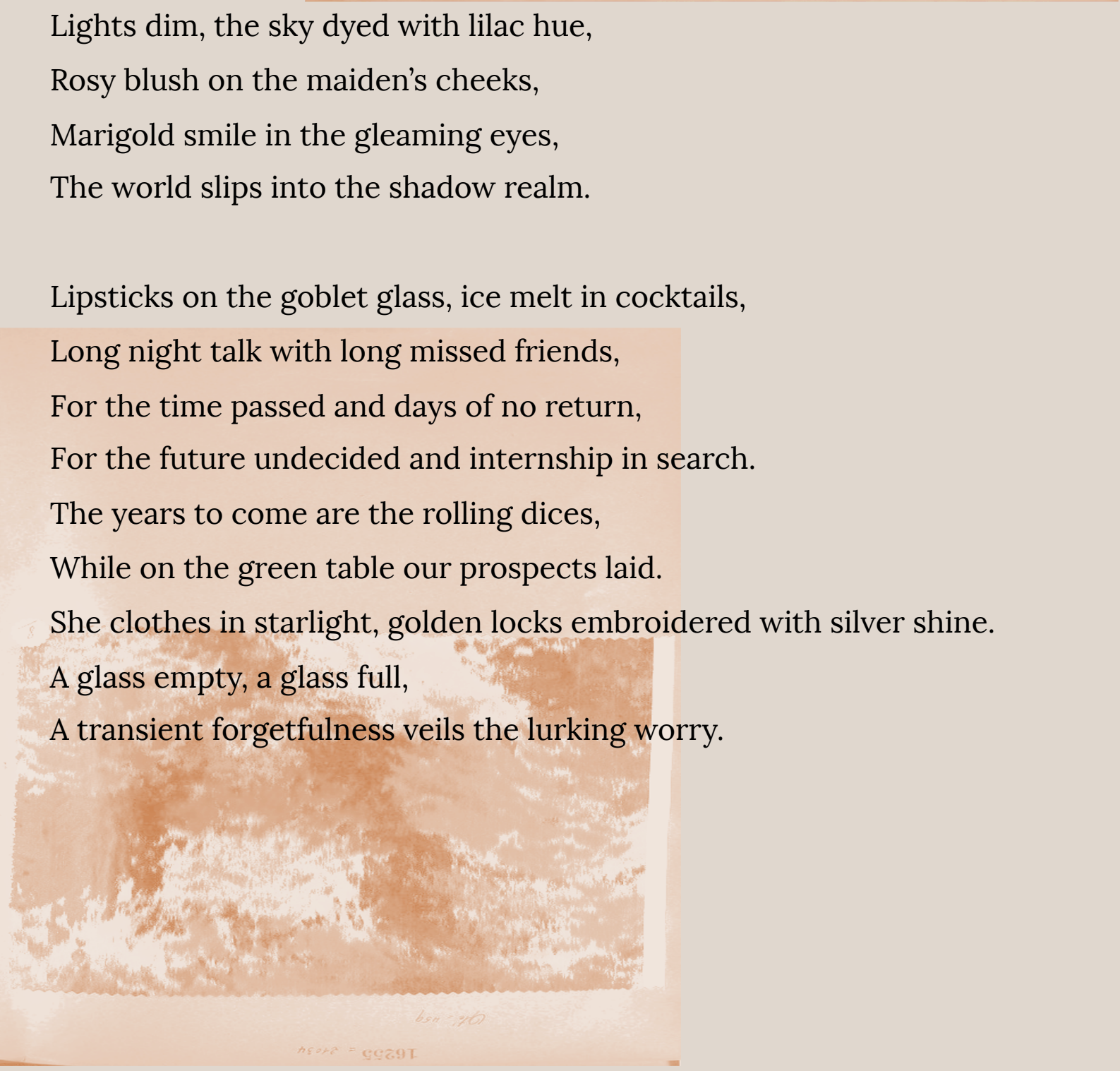
Click, zoom in, the cat-filtered professor and pixelated peers,

Class proceeds as make-up routine continues.






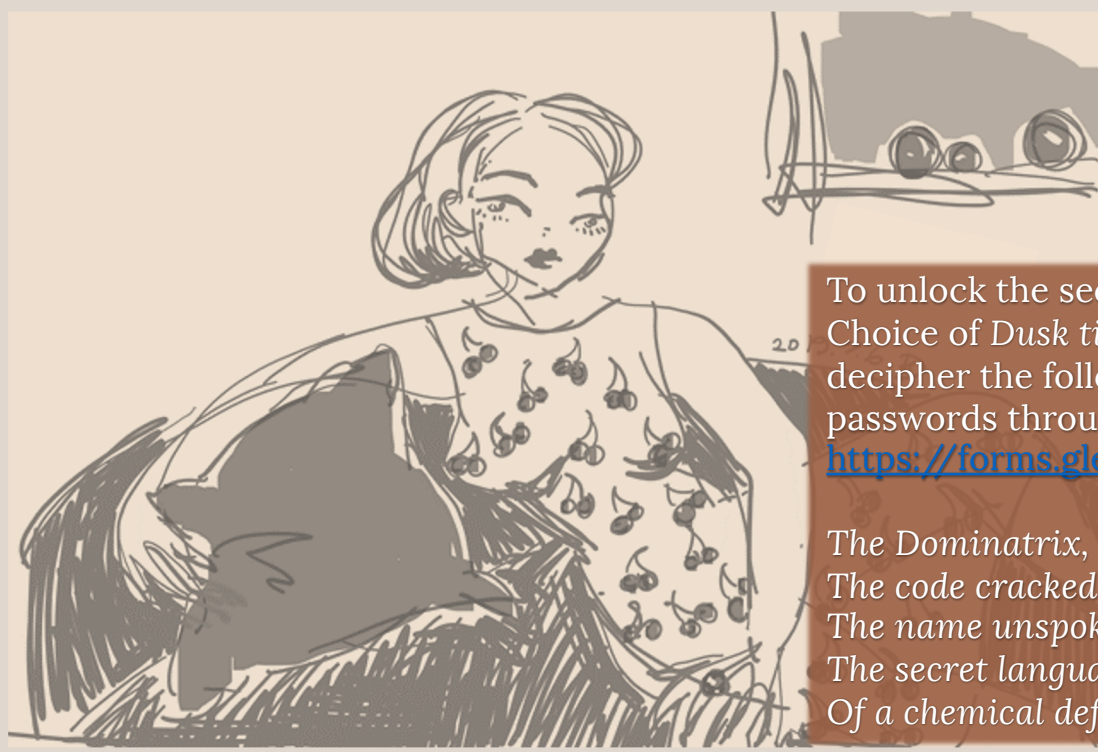
On La Terraza del Óscar,
Madrid bows at the feet of Parisienne princesses.
A toast to youth and a hail of life,
Celebration for survivors in the troubling, fickle time.
Lights dim, the sky dyed with lilac hue,
Rosy blush on the maiden's cheeks,
Marigold smile in the gleaming eyes,
The world slips into the shadow realm.



Lipsticks on the goblet glass, ice melt in cocktails,
Long night talk with long missed friends,
For the time passed and days of no return,
For the future undecided and internship in search.
The years to come are the rolling dices,
While on the green table our prospects laid.
She clothes in starlight, golden locks embroidered with silver shine.
A glass empty, a glass full,
A transient forgetfulness veils the lurking worry.



Till the first break of dawn,
Golden sunshine pierces through the daisy clouds,
Rising from the horizon, reclaiming dominance of the frosty heavens.
Sunrise in Madrid, with the fragrance of softness, warmth and fresh,
And the unknown worth exploring,
Where adventure awaits the bold yielding to no darkness.



To unlock the secret edition of Editors' Choice of *Dusk till Dawn*, decipher the following codes and enter the passwords through the link:
<https://forms.gle/SgN9liz6zezC441RA>

*The Dominatrix, the Virgin and the Ice Man.
The code cracked, to the secret of the heart.
The name unspoken, replaced by the cipher,
The secret language of sentiment, of affection,
Of a chemical defect found in the losing side.*



My name is not Corona—

The pandemic of racism strikes
Taiwanese students abroad.

Alone on the streets of London at 9 pm, a Singaporean graduate student realized he was being stalked by four teenagers. Trying to escape the foreseeable dangers, he picked up his pace. Seeing that he was trying to make a narrow escape, the teenagers cornered him. “Coronavirus!” Next thing he knew, he was punched twice in the face, and tackled to the ground, blood sputtering across the pavement.

“I don’t want your coronavirus in my country!” the attacker shouted, fracturing the boy’s face.

This is one of the many stories Theresa, another graduate student, told me about her Asian friends who were attacked while studying abroad during the early stages of the pandemic.

It wasn’t the first time that minorities were scapegoats for the spread of diseases or when epidemics sparked hate in the “Other”. The Black Death of 1347 led to riots against Jews; the cholera of 1991 led to accusations against Waros; the swine flu of 2009 led to discrimination against Mexican Americans.

Asians have long been seen as a threat to Western society. In the early 19th century, the term “Yellow Peril” was popularized and is linked to an imagery of primitive madmen who possess special powers to depict Asians as a threat to the White race.

Although xenophobic views towards Asians are nothing new, COVID-19 has lured these thoughts and actions out from their dark corners and brought them into the spotlight. If, before, they could not find a reason to audaciously attack these model minorities who tried to blend in and prove their worth, now was the time.

A week after the “Stop Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Hate” website was launched, Asian Americans reported over 650 cases of racism. Between March and September 2020, there were 2,500 reports of Asian racism incidents in America that were related to COVID-19.

When the pandemic swept through Europe and the Americas, Asians seemed to be the virus many hoped to eradicate. Many were quick to point fingers at Asians and their mask-wearing. Even those who had grown up in the Western countries, and knew more about the West than they ever did about the East were told to “go home”.

Cases of pneumonia with unknown origins were found in Wuhan city, China on December 31st, 2019, and were initially thought to be related to Wuhan’s Hunan Seafood Wholesale Market, which trades in fish and a variety of live animal species such as bats, marmots, and snakes. As authorities failed to contain the virus at an early stage, there has been a global spread of COVID-19, with cases arising from human-to-human transmission as well as from asymptomatic individuals.

This has, in turn, caused Asian diasporas in Western countries to fall victim to hate speech, cyber-bullying, and physical violence. Multiple Taiwanese students felt that the media outlet’s mixed use of Chinese and Asians gave Westerners an excuse to see all Asians as one and the same. Important figures like former U.S. president Donald Trump used the term “China Threat” as a label for COVID-19, which Taiwanese students believe encouraged racist behaviors. Meanwhile, media coverages ran

headlines such as “China is the real sick man of Asia”, “Chinese Virus Panda-monium” and “China Kids Stay Home” in bold capital font. I

“Denmark even ran a report with a Chinese flag changed it into a virus. This story not only affects the Chinese, but also all of us Asians abroad, because Westerners equate all Asian faces with the Chinese,” Theresa tells us about the harm that media coverages and official reports have caused.

“I would not stand up for myself now. I feel like it’s impossible to change people’s minds,”

This could also explain why as an ethnic minority who had to brace themselves against discrimination and violence, many Asians stayed silent. There were no large protests that hoped to catch the media’s attention. None of the Taiwanese students interviewed reached out for institutional help. None of them told authorities. None of them spoke up.

“I would not stand up for myself now. I feel like it’s impossible to change people’s minds,” Theresa said as she opted to stay in London for her education during the beginning of the pandemic.

Christine, an American citizen of Taiwanese ethnicity, believed that the signs of racism were always there.

“It’s just that this time, not only White people were out to get us. Even other ethnic minorities were quick to point their fingers,” she stated.

Hannah, an undergrad exchange student who studies in the Netherlands, told me how an Asian deliberately covered up his face with his clothes the moment she and her family boarded a bus already filled with other passengers.

“We hadn’t even spoken, but we had become a threat,” Hannah recalled.

Anyone or anything that marginally resembles Asian culture could result in discrimination, if you were lucky, or physically assault, if not.

Tony, a graduate student studying media architecture, told me how he was targeted on a train to the airport. Six teenagers crowded beside him when they saw that he was wearing a mask.

They mimicked him by pulling their shirts up to cover their faces and stared into his face. Then, a red-haired girl with earrings tried to taunt him by sharing hand sanitizers with her buddies, and deliberately smudged their hands with it.

“...they started clapping their hands in my face like this,” he demonstrated over the phone the slow pop, pop, pop of their insulting applause.”

Multiple students remember being asked if they were toxic, spit on, or called names. Theresa’s Korean friend is called Corona and Chinese by a White adult male, who also taunted her by pulling the end of his eyes upwards.

“My friend didn’t even bother to correct him, because she was so traumatized by all the media coverage of assault that Asians had endured.”

In Russia, Erica, a Taiwanese exchange student, was approached by a towering Russian man and questioned if they were Chinese, demanding to know why they were there.

“Before we could explain, the man pounded my friend aggressively on the head. Another Asian classmate of ours even had grape juice poured all over him,” Erica recalled.

The Taiwanese students interviewed had been residing in countries all over the Western hemisphere: the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Czech Prague, and Spain. Yet, they all experienced the same shame, hurt and helplessness had brought. In their utter pain, they

could only call a friend far away or simply “learn to forget about it”

because, venturing out in a foreign country all on their own, it felt like “no one could help”.

“It breaks my heart that white people are able to pin people of color against each other,” an American-born Taiwanese says in her last call.

“It breaks my heart that white people are able to pin people of color against each other.”

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