

In 2017 I was chosen to represent Hungary at the Parliamentary Debate World Conference and Competition held in Oegawa. I was lucky enough to meet Keiko Ogura. That moment of listening to her keynote speech, as she remained seemingly emotionless while recounting her experience as a Hiroshima survivor became an important juncture in my life. I began to discover in myself a longing to explore her unfathomable experience as well as the vast chasm of cultural difference I encountered on my trip to Japan. Taking on the challenge of learning Japanese, deciphering Japanese culture and mapping the often hidden signs of exchange with the West has become my mission.

As soon as I got home from this trip, I began to explore Japanese literature and culture. Junichiro Tanizaki's *Some Prefer Nettles* showed me that an absolutely mundane story could depict the daily life of everyday people in an explicit way. *The Dancing Girl of Izu* by Kawabata Yasunari was fascinating for its permanent floating of passion towards something unreachable. The anti-cathartic ending sums up perfectly the absence of the traditional narrative arc that forms the basis of a Western reader's expectations, as well as how social class and exclusion remain core themes to Japanese literature. Coming across Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* helped me discover how Japanese cinematography was an important influence on mainstream US filmmaking. Parallels between specific character types - for example the way George Lucas 'borrowed' Kurosawa's peasant protagonists and deployed them as C-3PO and R2-D2 - or appropriated the archetypal relationship between master and student all point to this relationship. Indeed adaptations work both ways as many of Kurosawa's other works, while not directly based on the Bard's plays, still contain Shakespearean elements. The inclusion of comedic characters, like the fool, in serious drama is prevalent, serving to relate the story and setting elements to the audience, as well as provide moments of levity to offset the often dire nature of the plays.

On my academic tutor's suggestion, I also wrote an essay reflecting on the differences between European and Japanese management styles exploring why conflict avoidance is a key factor in forming relationships and how that helped Japan become one of the world's largest economies today. A Japanese saying goes "Nagai mono ni wa makarero" which exemplifies the cultural emphasis placed on flexibility, one that is arguably rooted in confrontation avoidance and maintained harmony. My essay focused on how the Japanese communication style makes this all possible and hereafter I decided to also look into how this contributes to explain why Japanese politics remained static over almost 40 years. During this research, I found the shift in political language - emphasizing simple slogans rather than arid economic indicators - introduced by Junichiro Koizumi a very interesting sign of Western influence that was brought in as a reaction to the economic crisis and low political support of the reigning party.

When I turned 15 I set myself the goal to become fluent in 5 languages by the time I turn 30. Beyond my native Hungarian, I am fluent in English, I speak intermediate German and reached elementary Danish and beginner Japanese through self-study. Currently, I am taking a gap year, to improve in these languages, to have the time to explore Japanese history and gain work experience. I am employed by the Milestone Institute, an EU talent centre, where I was studying before and I am preparing with the Hungarian National Team for the 2019 EuroHockey Championships. Before hockey, I did rowing for 5 years becoming national champion 6 times in multiple categories. Besides these activities, I organized a fundraising project for my Nigerian friend's application to the US so far tallying £200. In my

decision to apply to the UK, the personalized education offered by leading institutions played a central role.