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VOLUME 4 第四卷

good
citizens

好公民



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2015

The *Good Citizens* (*Hao Gongmin*) moral-education curriculum is a collective memory and a shared experience of a generation of Singaporeans. In recent years, local designers have been appropriating the cover art of the *Good Citizens* textbooks for a dose of nostalgia.

No matter the *Good Citizens* curriculum then or the Civics and Moral Education today, both are essentially a set of standards for “citizens” prescribed top-down, and are in fact a form of national education. Does the term “citizens” or “civic” in the context of Singapore entail the concept of a “civic society”? In other words, does a civic society exist in Singapore? Is there a difference between a “national” and a “citizen”? What are the rights of a citizen and what are the obligations in exchange for these rights? And who has the say on these rights and obligations?

Singapore celebrates 50 years of independence this year. “Independence” and not “nation-building”, as the nation-building project for Singapore began after the Second World War as an anti-colonial struggle for independence and the nation most of our forefathers envisioned was a Malayan nation inclusive of Singapore. Our forefathers had diverse visions on pressing issues such as nationality, citizenship, the model and composition of the nation-state, et cetera. These different visions competed and the one that emerged victorious is perhaps neither the best nor the most compatible model—but the model advocated by the victor in that complex power struggle.

“Citizens” or “citizenship” is envisioned (imagined and constructed). The Western concept of “citizen” or “civic society” is of course also envisioned, and thus debatable and not universal. Singapore does not have to blindly adhere to the Western model, as that might not suit the context of Singapore. What is important is that the people of Singapore should be allowed the rights to the envisioning of a “Singapore citizen”. Maybe we could start thinking, are the obligations, rights, role of a citizen determined and constant, or should they be often communicated, negotiated, dialogued, and adjusted according to different eras and contexts? Should the concept of “citizens” be pluralistic, especially in a diverse society like ours? Despite the official discourse on “citizens”, do different interpretations of “citizens” already exist in our society? And as citizens ourselves, could we be

American academic Benedict Anderson raised the famous concept of “Imagined Community”. From the foundation of Benedict Anderson’s concept, Malaysian academic Abdul Rahman Embong proposed that “community” is not merely “imagined”, but also “constructed”, thus he employed the term “envisioned” to encompass both concepts.

more pro-active in envisioning our obligations, rights and role? Shouldn’t the right to interpretation of “citizens” be held in the hands of the people?

Since Drama Box launched the pilot issue of our online newsletter in December 2011, the newsletter has evolved into an ezine in 2013. In this issue, we are taking things yet a step further and publishing in print! *Draft* is available free-of-charge, good job for getting your hands on a copy! As this is our first printed issue, there have been a lot of details to be worked out, and we decided to invest our efforts into just creating one, instead of two issues this year.

We have chosen to explore the countless interpretations of “citizens” in our society, through the theme of “Good Citizens” for this issue of *Draft*. By providing various possibilities for the envisioning of “citizen”, we hope to activate the readers’ imagination to form their own ideas of what being a “good citizen” means. In the Feature, Corrie Tan takes us through 50 years of socio-political theatre in Singapore. In the two Columns, Phoon Yuen Ming discusses the reactionary “good citizens”, while Josh Hong deliberates the issue of refugees. We have 3 writers who came on board and carried out interviews – Neo Hai Bin with four young people from Singapore, Macau and Taiwan on the topic of civic engagement; Robin Rheame with a former political dissident on the alternative model of “good citizen”; Szeto Hiuyan with a former court journalist. Four young poets share their ideas through words, and a photography collective, through images, in Open Call.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of *Draft*, and as the Japanese saying of “ichi-go ichi-e” reminds us to treasure our encounters with people as they may never be repeated, let us cherish this only copy of *Draft* this year.

Eng Hao
Co-editor, *Draft*

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《好公民》课程是新加坡一代人的集体记忆与共有经验。近几年，新加坡设计师就乐此不疲地挪用《好公民》系列课本的封面美术诱发怀旧情绪。

无论是当年的《好公民》或现在的“公民与道德教育”，皆是官方自上而下灌输的一套对“公民”的标准，是国民教育。新加坡的“公民”，具有“公民社会”（civic society）的涵义吗？“国民”与“公民”有区别吗？公民的权利，以及换取这些权利的义务有哪些？这些权利与义务又由谁说的算？公民在国家中扮演的角色是什么？公民的角色与其他的社会角色又有抵触吗？

新加坡今年欢庆SG50，究竟是欢庆建国或独立引起一段小争议。新加坡在二战后开始反抗殖民、争取独立的建国工程，而当时的先贤普遍上想要建立的是一个以包括新加坡的马来亚为单位的民族国家。这段过程中，先贤们对国籍、公民权、民族国家等问题提出不同的构想，而这些构想相互竞争着，最后脱颖的不是最好的或最合适的，而是权力斗争的胜利者所倡议的。

我想强调的是，“公民”或“公民权”皆是被“构想”（“envision”）出来的。西方的“公民”或“公民社会”不是放诸四海皆准，也未必适合新加坡的脉络——新加坡不需要照搬西方的一套。然而重要的是，新加坡人民应该把握构想“新加坡公民”的权利。也许我们可以思考，公民的义务、权利、角色是否固定不变，还是我们应该不时针对“公民”的议题进行沟通、协商、对话，依照不同的时代脉络进行调整、达成共识？尤其在一个标榜多元的社会中，“公民”是否也应该多元？或虽然官方是一套标准，但是民间本来就存在着对“公民”的多元诠释？而身为公民的我们，是否应该主动构想我们的义务、权利、角色？应该把对“公民”的诠释权把握在我们人民的手中？

美国学者班纳迪克·安德森 (Benedict Anderson) 提出了著名的“想像的共同体” (Imagined Community) 概念。马来西亚学者阿都拉曼·恩蓬 (Abdul Rahman Embong) 在安德森的基础上提出“共同体”不仅是被“想像”出来的，也是被“建构” (constructed) 出来的，并采用了“构想” (envisioned) 一词同时涵盖“想像”与“建构”的概念。

戏剧盒从2011年12月开始发行电子通讯，至2013年电子通讯转型成网络杂志《志异》，至本期除了在线上发行，也终于出版纸本，放置在全岛各处让人免费索取。由于第一次出版纸本，有许多工作细节需要摸索，我们决定把精力全投注在一期之中，而非原定的一年两期。

本期《志异》选择了“好公民”为主题，以探讨我们社会中对于“公民”的多元诠释。我们希望通过提供各种“公民”的可能性，催生读者构想“公民”的动力。本期专题，陈霖灵论述了新加坡社会剧场50年。两篇专栏，潘婉明探讨了“好公民”的反动，唐南发则探讨了难民的议题。三篇专访，梁海彬通过对话，与四位分别来自新加坡、澳门、台湾的年轻人，探讨了“好公民”与社会参与的议题；Robin Rheume 采访了前政治异议者，探讨了有别于官方论述的“好公民”；司徒晓欣采访了前法庭记者，从法律角度切入探讨“好公民”。公开征稿，我们邀请到四位年轻诗人针对主题创作了8首诗作，也邀请到摄影团体针对主题拍摄了一系列摄影作品。

希望读者喜欢本期《志异》，而就如日本思想中的“一期一会”提醒我们珍惜不可复得的人生际遇，就让我们珍惜今年唯一一本《志异》。

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Politics for the apolitical: 50 years of socio-political theatre in Singapore

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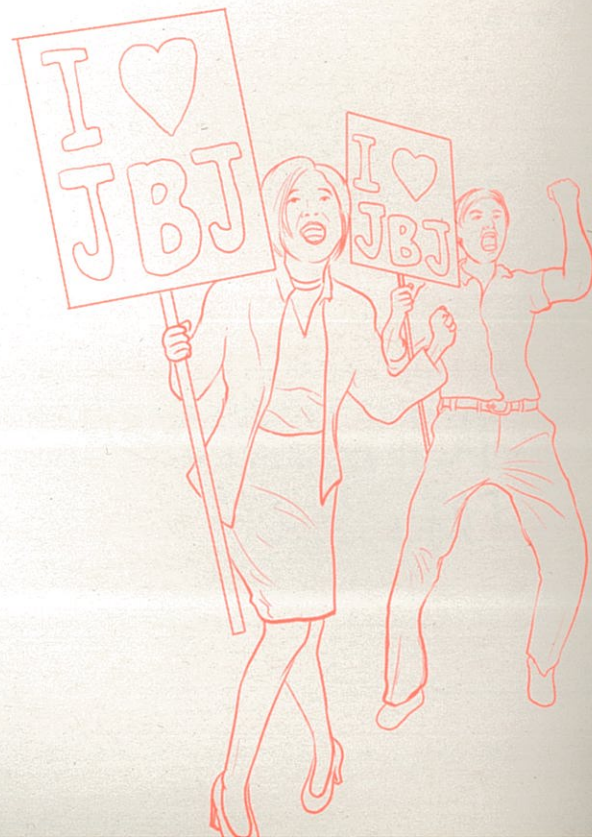
A Theatre in Singapore has always been inherently political. It was an avenue for rebellion and protest when other conduits were closed, and when the doors were closed on theatre it often found a way, through mischievous or disguised means, to slip in through the cracks.

FEATURE

Politics for the apolitical: 50 years of socio-political theatre in Singapore

by Corrie Tan

Corrie Tan is the theatre correspondent and critic for The Straits Times, where she writes about the performing arts and cultural policy. She also co-organises and sits on the judging panel of the annual M1-The Straits Times Life Theatre Awards, which honours excellence in Singapore theatre. She is interested in issues relating to cultural memory, arts and media censorship, as well as socio-political and interventionist theatre.



In Singapore, and the rest of the world, the state will always be at odds with the art that does not fit the brand of “public service broadcasting”, or the expectation that artists ought to be “good citizens” in helping to shape society and its people according to a certain set of principles and values. In an interview with The New Yorker in 2008, American multimedia artist Paul Chan—who later put on an extraordinary production of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting For Godot* in hurricane-hit New Orleans (where the community was still waiting for more help, more resources, more support)—pondered the link between politics and the arts. He believed that politics and art

are not only separate but incompatible: politics is about concentrating power, he says, and art is about dispersing it. Certain works of art resist our attempts to interpret or explain them, Chan believes, and that resistance—what he calls their “articulate speechlessness”—is what gives them enduring power.

Singapore multimedia artist Loo Zihan, who went to Nantes, France for a three-month arts residency earlier this year, spoke with The Straits Times about

the dilemma that artists like him face in accepting state funding, because “no matter how avant-garde or controversial the work, we are being co-opted into the system and this necessarily means that the work we are producing aligns with the interest of the state and what it would like to represent”.

The state’s idea of the good citizen does not always align with the artist’s ideal of the good citizen. In theatre in particular, the good citizen is often one that is actively engaged in intelligent debate, exploring alternatives, and probing the reasoning behind social conventions and norms. As such, theatre in Singapore has often sought to put pressure on the comforts of Singapore living. There is no doubt about it—living in Singapore is easy. Here, where there are no obvious, life-threatening difficulties, and where “sensitive” discussions on race, religion and sexuality are often swept under an ever-expanding carpet, the status quo can soften the instinct to agitate and to protest. As Singapore stepped from third world to first, its challenges have also shrunk to complaints. It is therefore an ideal of the theatre, where the edges between life and art entwine and overlap, that a passive audience can be prodded to take a more active stance on the socio-political issues that concern them.

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.

