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The Political Kinesthetics of Contemporary Dance:  
Taiwan in Transnational Perspective

By

Chia-Yi Seetoo

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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of the

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Abstract

The Political Kinesthetics of Contemporary Dance:  
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By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Studies

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This dissertation considers dance practices emerging out of post-1980s conditions in Taiwan to theorize how contemporary dance negotiates temporality as a political kinesthetic performance. The dissertation attends to the ways dance kinesthetically responds to and mediates the flows of time, cultural identity, and social and political forces in its transnational movement. Dances negotiate disjunctures in the temporality of modernization as locally experienced and their global geotemporal mapping. The movement of performers and works pushes this simultaneous negotiation to the surface, as the aesthetics of the performances registers the complexity of the forces they are grappling with and their strategies of response.

By calling these strategies “political kinesthetic” performance, I wish to highlight how politics, aesthetics, and kinesthetics converge in dance, and to show how political and affective economies operate with and through fully sensate, efforted, laboring bodies. I begin my discussion with the *Cursive* series performed by the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, whose intersection of dance and cursive-style Chinese calligraphy initiates consideration of the temporal implication of “contemporary” as “contemporaneity” that underlies the simultaneous negotiation of local and transnational concerns. Extending from the *Cursive* series, I depart momentarily from the milieu of Taiwan to engage with two contemporaneous transnational Chinese choreographers whose works blend dance and Chinese calligraphy differently as a way to problematize further the performance of “Chineseness” and the economy of forces and power at work in the transnational. The dissertation then takes up another prime case of temporal reconfiguration, examining the Legend Lin Dance Theatre of Taiwan and its artistic director Lin Lee-Chen’s early works whose kinesthetic shifting and continuity form a prism through which dance mediates, complicates, and alters Taiwan’s developmentalist ethos, in a way that complicates readings of (self-)Orientalisms. Finally, the dissertation engages with the Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe led by Japanese butoh dancer Hata-Kanoko, who lived and worked in Taiwan for nearly a decade and whose works draw attention to the legacy of Japanese colonial modernity in Taiwan and East Asia. The troupe’s leftist and self-marginalizing politics in the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance produce alternative inter-Asian engagements.

Enacting different ways of negotiating temporalities of modernity across space, these performances are counterpoints to one another on various levels. They also articulate ways of

thinking, performing, and “moving” Taiwan transnationally: transnational Chineseness, self-conscious formations of “Asian” culture in opposition to an idea of the “West,” and inter-Asian relationships. Parsing out the complexity within the colossal designation of “transnationalism,” this project also proposes a concept of “contemporary dance” that moves beyond simple periodization or labeling of dance genres and styles and instead unpacks the temporal negotiations of moving bodies implicated in transnational relationships from differing and sometimes contradictory perspectives. Although seeking to transcend the periodization paradigm, my historicized case studies addressing the post-1980s conditions of Taiwan and globalized Chinese culture also index shifts from the end of the Cold War to globalization that affect cultural forms and their conditions of production and circulation.

To my parents

and those who generously lent their guidance and support to this research.

# **The Political Kinesthetics of Contemporary Dance: Taiwan in Transnational Perspective**

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## Introduction

### “Contemporary Dance”

In 2001, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (*Yun men wu ji* 雲門舞集), the largest professional modern dance company in Taiwan, created *Cursive* (*Xingcao* 行草), a dance piece inspired by cursive-style Chinese calligraphy (*xingcao*). This piece marked the beginning of a sustained aesthetic exploration, with three subsequent installments over the next decade: *Cursive II* (*Xingcao er* 行草 貳, 2003),<sup>1</sup> *Wild Cursive* (*Kuangcao* 狂草, 2005), and *Water Stains on the Wall* (*Wu lou hen* 屋漏痕, 2010). *Cursive*, Cloud Gate’s first attempt to explore the intersection between Chinese calligraphy and modern dance, contains sections that juxtapose dancing and images of ancient Chinese calligraphy scrolls projected on stage. Modern mechanical and digital technology brings into the present ancient writing in fluid ink traces, while the dancing absorbs, interprets, and interacts with the kinesthetic capacity retained in the writings. The imbrication of modern technology, dancing bodies, and ancient writings brings forth questions of aesthetics, medium, and temporality. Cloud Gate artistic director Lin Hwai-Min’s 林懷民 remarks about the aesthetic effects and generative process of this piece expose how complex these terms really are, as in the following excerpt from dance critic Tsou Chih-Mu’s 鄒之牧 interview with Lin about the clean-cut (“neat”) quality brought forth by the way *Cursive* includes technology:

[Tsou:] How did you come up with the sense of “technology” and “neat”-ness this time?

[Lin:] [...] In recent years when my pieces toured abroad, people called them “contemporary dance”; as for this piece, it should not simply become a “folk dance”! I want the piece to have *clarity*, to have things like the *slides* that give a *high-tech* feel, with lines that are very *clean cut*, in order to create a *counterpoint* to the soft bodies and soft lines of the dancers in front of them, to create a *tension*. Everything is *hard-edged*. For example: every frame that appears as a result of the projection, the squares, the rectangles, the hard lines.[...] It might seem easy, but [the stage designer] Lin Keh-hua has to synthesize them all. Finally, there is the question of *balance*: how do things *combine*? What Chinese characters [from the scrolls] to show in the background, and what dances to make in the foreground? How to create parallels, correspondences, and contrasts between them? These are all very interesting challenges!<sup>2</sup>

Tsou faithfully retained in her transcription the question and answer session conducted in Chinese with English phrases. I try to express this “bilingual” quality by placing the English phrases used in the conversation in italics: *neat*, *contemporary dance*, *folk dance*, *clarity*, *slides*, *high-tech*, *clean cut*, *counterpoint*, *tension*, *hard-edged*, *balance*, and *combine*. These terms range from aesthetic qualities to materials, categories, and methodologies. What is certain is that aesthetics is not neutral, as the splitting of language discloses the varying frames of references Tsou and Lin draw on, which can be unsettled again if we begin to wonder what exactly determines the language being chosen to carry forth concepts at the moment of their enunciation—habit, the conscious, or the subconscious? I would note that the manifest linguistic

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<sup>1</sup> *Cursive II* is later renamed as *Pine Smoke* (*Songyan* 松煙).

<sup>2</sup> Chih-Mu Tsou, *Cursive: The Birth of a Dance* (行草——齣舞蹈的誕生) (Taipei: Ecus Publishing House, 2001), 42. Translation mine. Italics refer to the words spoken in English.



split does not operate as a simplistic *reflection* of Chinese and English aesthetic references; rather, it gestures to a complex historical proliferation of international versus local frameworks, not in the form of stark contrasts but of permeable impurities. This passage, at its base, signals how *Cursive* could really be seen as a performance of the negotiations between differently perceived and evolving aesthetic traditions and concepts, negotiations having intimately to do with the embeddedness of the piece in transnationalized performing arts conditions and contexts. Aesthetic, medium, and temporality are caught within a complicated network of influences and concerns that demand consideration beyond the confines of national borders and that have profound implications within the transnational relations that Taiwan and its performing arts productions are embedded in and constantly rearticulating. This dissertation shows how this embeddedness and its rearticulation can be illuminated by attending to aesthetics—and, as the primary object of this study is dance, kinesthetics—as they operate in intimate relation to varying transnational forces and conditions.

More broadly, this project initiates a discussion of how dance performs ways to negotiate or inhabit multiple temporalities, as informed by practices in Taiwan and an array of transnational engagements. The concern for making *contemporary dance*, as Lin disclosed, draws attention to the question of temporality, that is, that dance as a time-based art is both about and works to reconfigure kinesthetically. *Contemporary dance* may suggest that which is present and alive at the moment, something that is contemporary to, or at the same time with, the addresser and the addressee. But the temptation to define something as “contemporary” by making a distinction from another designated placeholder of time is worth pondering; it points to the complexity internal to the temporality of the “contemporary” that Lin’s creation of *Cursive* tried to articulate.

Rather than severing from the past to emphasize the occupation with the present moment, Lin and the Cloud Gate dancers actively engaged with knowledge and experiences from both the recent and the ancient past to make something that responds to the present and that is palpable to both local and international audiences. Such dealing with the past and the present while being implicated in newly transnationalized conditions of performance enabled and quickened by the processes of globalization echo across dance works rooted in and extending from Taiwan. As this project reveals, the collective phenomenon concerns the ways performance grapples simultaneously with the temporality of modernity as locally experienced and their global geotemporal mapping. The traveling of performers and performed works pushes this simultaneous negotiation to the surface, and the aesthetics of their performance registers the strategies deployed.

I draw attention to kinesthesia, the felt experience of movement. In fact, this dissertation encourages its readers to consider temporality as a felt experience as well, and to see that movement—manifesting in ways that propel, orchestrate, or halt the flows of time—is critical to its specific structures and material impacts. In engaging with kinesthesia, my discussion does not take it as pure experience, aesthetics, or physics, but considers the various forces that condition embodied experiences. I propose that we think in terms of the “political kinesthetics” of these performances, for I wish to highlight how politics, aesthetics, and kinesthetics converge in dance performances, and that political and affective economies penetrate and operate with and through fully sensate, efforted, laboring bodies. Furthermore, I entertain the idea that these experiences, aesthetics, and physics perform a kind of political kinesthetics in response to larger socioeconomic forces. As I will elaborate further, each of the performances I engage with brings

forward specific kinesthetic expressions that are also political statements. All of them in some way entail negotiations of cultural identities as they re-create the sense of time—upsetting the modernist linear progression of time by evoking, inserting, or being immersed in the past, the premodern, or the mythical, thereby resculpting the sense of performance time with particular kinesthetics of fluidity, slowness, fragmentation, trance, or collision. The question of cultural identities turns out to be about not only mirror images but time. Kinesthesia allows me to glimpse into dance’s negotiating moves over time.

In pursuing this inquiry, I begin with Cloud Gate’s *Cursive* series to unpack what underlies the interpretation of *contemporary dance* and its linking of the “tradition” (Chinese calligraphy) with the “modern” (mechanical and digital technologies). Succeeding discussions engage with different choreographers, dance troupes, and their works to discuss different aspects of how dance reconfigures temporality in relation to the varying force dynamics that shape both the Taiwanese and international dance worlds. Extending from the *Cursive* series, I depart momentarily from the milieu of Taiwan to engage with two contemporaneous transnational Chinese choreographers’ works that blend dance and Chinese calligraphy differently as a way to problematize further the performance of “Chineseness.” I then take up another prime case of temporal reconfiguration, examining the Legend Lin Dance Theatre of Taiwan and its artistic director Lin Lee-Chen’s early choreography that form compelling shifts and continuity. Finally, I engage with the Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe led by Japanese butoh dancer Hata-Kanoko, who lived and worked in Taiwan for nearly a decade and whose works draw attention to the legacy of Japanese colonial modernity in Taiwan and East Asia. Enacting different ways of negotiating temporalities of modernity across space, these performances form counterpoints to one another on various levels. They also articulate ways of thinking, performing, and “moving” Taiwan transnationally: transnational Chineseness, self-conscious formations of “Asian” culture in opposition to an idea of the “West,” and inter-Asian relationships. In considering the simultaneous negotiation of temporalities that these performances entail, we must critically engage with the temporal implications within the notion of “contemporary.” Significantly, I consider the intersection between the kinesthetic discourses and the socioeconomic discourses of development—which itself contains a kinesthetic quality, as elaborated further below—in bringing forward the unique ways in which these dances negotiate temporalities.

### **The Political Kinesthetics of Dance in the Transnational**

As the sensation of movement felt within oneself, kinesthesia is central to dancers’ movement experiences and training processes and thus essential to choreographies and their aesthetic properties. One of the reasons I pay attention to kinesthesia is that many of the dance practices I study are highly self-consciously and rigorously dealing with it. This has to do with dancers’ devotion in honing their art of moving. But in my case studies, explicit political agendas also figure into the integrated process of training and public performance. Moreover, studying kinesthesia also allows me to engage the labor embedded in the dancers’ aesthetic agency as their performances are part of transnational political and affective economies.

Recent dance studies scholarship shows a surge of interest in the discussion of kinesthesia. Deidre Sklar discusses the under-recognized, “ghostly” status of kinesthesia in Western objectivist and ocular-centric tradition and calls for “remembering” one’s felt movement sensations, for they contain vital embodied knowledge of one’s culture. Sklar also

argues for kinesthesia's potential for stirring self-reflexive awareness of one's *habitus*, or the social structures that are perpetuated at the level of the body by the unconscious braiding of movement practices and ideologies, as theorized by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the original Aristotelian sense, *habitus* is understood to be repeated acquisition of moral or practical craft until its excellence becomes imprinted in one's behavior, so it also encompasses an embodied performative aspect.<sup>4</sup> Similar to Sklar, Carrie Noland argues that kinesthesia open up conscious reflexivity by noting the fine distinction between kinesthesia and proprioception, or between the sensations of movement available to the conscious mind as "the *experience* of a particular subject" through culture and language and the inarticulate nervous system as the body's physiological mechanism.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Noland argues for the location of embodied agency in kinesthesia, as the inscription of cultural conditionings into one's muscles and bones enables one to experience movement's fine tonicity and be "inspired" to alter its inscribed qualities.<sup>6</sup> Agency, as Noland also clarifies, can be a double-edged sword in that it "is the power to alter those acquired behaviors and beliefs for purposes that may be reactive (resistant) or collaborative (innovative) in kind."<sup>7</sup> Susan Foster discusses kinesthesia in terms of its power to inspire the viewer to feel a similar sensation of movement (metakinesis). Problematizing the universalism in John Martin's thesis of "metakinesis" proposed in the 1930s and complicating it with discourse analysis and current studies in neuroscience, Foster argues that any choreography contains kinesthesia, a "choreographing of empathy" that "entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling."<sup>8</sup>

An early section in *Cursive* exemplifies dance's self-conscious highlighting and theorization of its own kinesthesia. The section begins with dancer Chou Chang-Ning 周章佺 dashing in to stand in front of a projection screen on stage. Slowly raising her right hand, she suddenly drops her weight and then makes a swift rebound while her hand performs a grasping gesture above her head. At the same time, a black, oval-shaped dot shows up on the projection screen. Without stopping, she twists her waist slowly toward her left, trailing her right arm horizontally across the space. She keeps twisting but then suddenly counter-twists herself and alters her body's moving course to sink toward the ground, until another swift stand-up with her right elbow and right leg pivoting to her right side breaks the preceding sinking. Meanwhile, the back projection keeps revealing, in near synchronicity with Chou's movement, black lines that turn out to be a stroke-by-stroke rendition of the Chinese character *yong* 永 in the near-standard script of Chinese calligraphy (see figure 1).

<sup>3</sup> Deidre Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia," in *Migrations of Gesture*, ed. Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 85–112.

<sup>4</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London: Routledge, 2011), 2. For John Martin's concept of "metakinesis," see Martin, *The Modern Dance* (1933; rpt., Chicago: Princeton Book, 2004). See also Susan Foster, "Movement's Contagion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46–59. The discovery of "mirror neurons" by Alain Berthoz proves Martin's point.



Figure 1. Chou Chang-Ning dancing in front of the Chinese character *yong* 永 in *Cursive* (2001), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Liu Chen-hsiang.

The character 永 is taken from an ancient Chinese calligraphy scroll, reanimated by digital technology. It becomes clear very soon that the dancer's movement mimes the stroke-by-stroke writing of the Chinese character, but their near synchronicity also exposes and amplifies their difference. The technological limitations make the reanimated 永 appear rather flat, mechanical, and even-speeded, in great contrast to the dancing, which is imbued with breathing, pauses, rhythms, and motional intensities. It is almost as though the Chinese character is there to provide a frame—that is, a script and “choreography”—while the dancing fulfills its kinesthetic capacities, embodying the rhythmic twisting, dragging, and pressing of writing Chinese calligraphy with brush and ink on paper. One may read it as a kind of remediation of the kinesthetic of writing between the text and the body. But the performance also seems to theorize the relationships between dancing and inscription, animation and fixation, process and product, agency and discipline, and all of these in relation to “Chineseness” and modes of Chinese writing.

On the one hand, this section of *Cursive* engages the tensions between the entwinement of text, inscription, “choreography,” writing, and dancing that a significant body of dance studies scholarship has substantively theorized.<sup>9</sup> To the extent that dance in *Cursive* (and its series) moves beyond the mimesis of Chinese characters and dwells on elaborating a poetics of Chinese calligraphic kinesthesia, the choreography can be construed as illustrating the concepts of a written body that writes,<sup>10</sup> kinesthetic agency that innovates from inscription,<sup>11</sup> choreography that

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, eds., *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995); André Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance,” in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 124–139; Foster, *Choreographing History*.

<sup>10</sup> Foster, *Choreographing History*.

enfolds kinesthesia,<sup>12</sup> and the embracing of process, including writing itself, in contrast to the “apparatus of capture,” the writing *down* of dance to become “choreography” (originally referring to dance manuals and notations in the seventeenth-century European court).<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the highlighting of kinesthesia as exemplified in the *Cursive* series—and that resonates across all my case studies—also has to do with how non-Western dancers negotiate with modern dance’s Western origin, by performing cultural identities not at the level of symbols but as distinct *movement qualities*, which may carry some of the value of modernity.

The basis of Cloud Gate dancers’ movements highlights the entirely different ways of moving and kinesthetic experiences informed by the training in *taiji daoyin* 太極導引 and Chinese martial arts that dancers receive alongside ballet and modern dance company classes. Their dancing features a solid grounding of the lower body, loose and flexible joints, continuously curving and spiraling movements, and conscious directing of energy flows to show both the serene and the explosive. The training also emphasizes and hones dancers’ sensitivity to their internal sensations of movement. For example, Chou, the dancer of the section just discussed, has poetically described her kinesthetic experience informed by *taiji daoyin* in rehearsing for *Cursive*: “In a transparent body, a thin stream flows through inch by inch, and its pathway is where the movement originates.”<sup>14</sup> The training’s emphasis on attending to breathing and *qi* (vital energy) derived from a traditional Chinese bodily view is translated into a highly poetic personal *experience*. Sharing a similar concern for the performance of one’s own cultural identity but different from the selective eclecticism of Cloud Gate, Legend Lin Dance Theatre’s epic, highly spiritual works are based on a unique training system that has been crystalized into a six-character mantra: calming (*jing* 靜), settling (*ding* 定), releasing (*song* 鬆), grounding (*chen* 沉), slowing down at ease (*huan* 緩), and issuing elastic force (*jing* 勁). Each word is a kinesthetic quality; together, they articulate a continuous movement cycle and philosophical view. If the “contemporary dance” of Cloud Gate seeks to smoothly merge “the East and the West” (more specifically, in the *Cursive* series, with the traditional Chinese aesthetics), Legend Lin seeks to create works of a pure “Eastern body aesthetics/view” (*dongfang shenti guan* 東方身體觀) that nevertheless aims to attain a level of artistry comparable to the refined concert dance of the West (such as ballet). As to *butoh*, it entails radical rejection of ballet and Western modern dance. The *ankoku* (“dark”) *butoh* that *butoh* cofounder Hijikata Tatsumi hailed in the 1960s embrace “darkness” with expressions of the weak, deformed, and grotesque in rejection of the upward extension and embrace of “light” that he saw in ballet and Western modern dance. *Butoh* training involves conjuring mental images of creatures or bodily and environmental conditions to help dancers generate kinesthetic sensations that result in movement qualities different from those of ballet and Western modern dance. Whereas the kinesthetics of my previous two cases can somewhat “congeal” into distinct qualities (even in modes of fluidity), *butoh*’s rejection of Western dance poses a contrast in that it also destabilizes any systematizing

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<sup>11</sup> Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*.

<sup>12</sup> Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*.

<sup>13</sup> Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance”; Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 51, no. 2 (2007): 119–123.

<sup>14</sup> Chou Chang-Ning, “My Body’s Trilogy (我的身體三部曲),” in the program for *Cursive* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2001). The translation is mine. Original text: 在透明的身體裡，又有一涓涓的細流一寸寸的流過，它流經之處，也就是動作產生的源頭。

endeavors, including butoh itself. That is, whereas the kinesthetic qualities of my first two cases can be named, drilled, and refined, those of butoh cannot be pinpointed but are in constant disintegration. The kinesthetics of butoh resides in the shivers and “cries” of the muscles as the body “is on the edge of crisis,” according to Hijikata. Butoh critic Iwabuchi Keisuke writes of a butoh dancer’s body that it is “as though each fiber of the muscles has its own selfish autonomy and shudders violently as it pleases. It is not some *kata* (codified shape) that cries or is sad, but the muscles themselves that are crying.”<sup>15</sup> Hata-Kanoko carries the practice and politics of butoh to Taiwan, creating works that continue to destabilize butoh itself and the boundary of “art”—working with blind dancers, adopting Taiwanese phenomena and customs to her choreography, and participating in local social movements. Revising Hijikata’s statement to “butoh is body in face of crisis,” her butoh seeks to unearth the body’s own impulse for survival, the fundamental struggling of the flesh and its “grabbing of life” in face of crisis.<sup>16</sup>

My discussion of the political kinesthetics of dance is informed by dance studies research that considers the differently intertwined dynamics between politics, aesthetics, affect, labor, and kinesthesia, particularly discussions situated in a transnational framework in which sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations, and social formations take form across nation-states.<sup>17</sup> My case studies span the transnational relationships in which Taiwan has been involved. While they can be seen as engaging with three different relationships—transnational Chineseness, self-conscious formations of “Asian” culture in opposition to an idea of the “West,” and inter-Asian relationships—they also overlap, resonate, or form contrasts to one another. For example, whereas Chinese calligraphy is particularly inspirational for many transnational Chinese dancers, it also evokes affinity and a sense of cultural heritage from Japanese and Korean audiences. Cloud Gate, Legend Lin, and Yellow Butterfly are all

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<sup>15</sup> Keisuke Iwabuchi, “The Paradigm of Butō” (*Butō no Paradaimu*), *Butōki* 3 (1982): 75, quoted in Susan Blakeley Klein, *Ankoku Butō: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1988), 50.

<sup>16</sup> Hata-Kanoko, in e-mail to author, December 28, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> For concepts of transnationalism, see Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 2009). The specific dance studies works whose critical contributions to transnational dance studies I am indebted to are Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, in which she investigates tango’s travel, change, and consumption across Argentina, Western Europe, and Japan and the political economy of passion that is crucial to this process, one that embodies the technology of (neo)colonial domination and whose routes parallel the core countries’ extraction of material goods and labor from, and imposition of colonial apparatuses on, the Third World; Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), which considers Indian dance as transnational labor in the negotiation of legal and cultural citizenship in the context of U.S. Orientalism, immigration, and multiculturalism in that it is enmeshed in exotic and diasporic desires; Lin Yatin, “Choreographing a Flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan’s Changing Identity,” in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, ed. Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 250–260. Lin draws from the notion of “flexibility” in relation to the disciplines of economics and anthropology (Harvey 1989; Ong 1999; Appadurai 1996) to argue for the correspondence between the corporeal flexibility of Cloud Gate dancers (especially those with *taiji daoyin* training) and the performance of the “cultural flexibility” of Taiwan’s identity that ties in with globalization; SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford University Press, 2013), which discusses transnational Chineseness by engaging with the dialectics between the kinesthetic experiences of being in transnational Chinese cities and the dance performances that emerge from those locales. Reading between Cloud Gate’s *taiji daoyin*-based work *Moon Water* (1998) and the city of Taipei, Kwan notes a fluid “national kinesthesia” that corresponds to the ambiguity of Taiwan’s “nationhood” (particularly regarding its political under-recognition) but also to the fluid plurality and inconclusiveness in its internal national narratives.

negotiating the relationship between “East and West”; although Cloud Gate and Legend Lin have similarities and differences in their relationships with major international festivals in the West, the two also form contrasts to Yellow Butterfly’s inter-Asian activities and conscious self-positioning at the margin (within both Asian spheres and the capitalist system). As such, this study also aims to parse out the difference and complexity within the colossal designation of “transnationalism.” Considering the dimension of kinesthetic empathy, kinesthesia also allows me to ponder how dance moves its audience in globalized conditions. If, as Joseph Roach has hypothesized about contemporary performance, “kinesis is the new mimesis—that as the arts proliferate within the mediated and multicultural languages of transnational space, expressive movement is becoming a lingua franca, the basis of a newly experienced affective cognition and corporeal empathy,” how does dance—the quintessential art and cultural form of kinesis—*move* as it moves among differently acculturated audiences?<sup>18</sup> How do differing *experiences* form interpretations that in turn shape the discourses of dance?

### Contemporaneity

Regarding the temporal implications of “contemporary,” I am interested in unpacking the temporal meaning contained in the word “contemporary”—“contemporaneity,” or being at the same time—and contemplate what “being at the same time” means in a transnational framework. Here, I want to raise another counterpoint to Lin’s speech that explicitly resonates with my point. In the opening of the film *Movement (R)evolution Africa* (2007), a documentary about contemporary dance companies from various African countries shot during their U.S. tours between 2004 and 2006, Germaine Acogny, artistic director of the Senegalese company Jant-Bi, boldly remarks: “Qu’est ce que c’est danse contemporaine en Afrique? Si c’est dans le temps, on est contemporain. Si c’est un concept comme en France, et bien, c’est pas comme eux: on peut dire qu’on est pas contemporain. Mais on est contemporain!” (“What is contemporary dance in Africa? If it has to do with time, then we are contemporary, and if it is a concept like in France, well, we are not like them. They can say we’re not contemporary. But we are contemporary!”)<sup>19</sup> Acogny, having received dance training in France, Senegal’s former colonizer, differentiates between “we” and France as she questions the notion of time in the utterance and concept of “contemporary.” The claiming of “contemporary,” specifically in relation to France, carries the forceful affirmation of temporal equivalence to the European center of arts and modernity that “we” (Africans) have been continuously denied by differentiations carried over into temporal terms, a symptom of the residual forces of colonialism and racism still active in new guises.

Seen side by side, Acogny’s and Lin’s remarks reveal how “contemporary dance” is a relational concern from self-consciously disparate geocultural vantage points. Another comment in *Movement (R)evolution Africa*, by Béatrice Kombé, choreographer for Company Tché Tché from Côte d’Ivoire, reveals another dimension of the concern: “Cherchez à comprendre: qu’est-ce que c’est? Pas dire, ‘oui, c’est la danse africaine.’ Non! Non, c’est pas la danse africaine. C’est la nouvelle expression.” (“Try to understand what it is. Don’t say: ‘Ah, this is African dance.’ No! It’s not ‘African dance.’ It’s a new expression.”)<sup>20</sup> Here, “contemporary dance” is

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Roach, “Kinesis: The New Mimesis,” *Theatre* 10, no. 1 (2010): 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Movement (R)evolution Africa*, DVD, Joan Frosch and Alla Kovgan, 2007. Also viewable at <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/3963/Movement-Revolution-Africa> (accessed May 4, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

set apart from “African dance” as a new expression that bears temporal meanings and also recalls Lin’s differentiation between *Cursive* and “folk dance.”

These temporal implications mapped onto space, race, and types of dance all bear the residual forces of modernity. The “historicism” or “universal history” called forth by modernity that enabled European domination in the nineteenth century and carried into the ideology of progress or “development” later on was sustained by rendering spatial into temporal difference, a positing of historical time “as a measure of the cultural distance...that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West.”<sup>21</sup> For my specific inquiries, I find that art historian Reiko Tomii’s theorization of *gendai bijutsu*, or “contemporary art” in Japan, offers a compelling way to think through these invocations of “contemporary” and their temporal implications. Historicizing the discursive practices of *gendai bijutsu* in Japan from the 1950s to the 1970s, Tomii argues for using the meaning of “contemporary” as “occurring at the same time, that is, contemporaneously” for a dynamic dialogue between the present and the past that informs and is informed by our historical consciousness. “To consider something ‘occurring contemporaneously,’” she elucidates, is “to consider something occurring contemporaneously *with* something else.”<sup>22</sup> This *with* highlights that at least two entities are required in order for “contemporaneity” to be perceived, a concept useful for thinking about dance and other cultural performances in a transnational framework. Tomii also notes the existence of an interface that enables the *with* to happen, such as through international institutions or the ubiquitous realm of cyberspace, both “sites of the globalization of art.” In her historical study, she looks at the complex interface of the international-local in discourses of *gendai bijutsu*, which she notes “prefigures that of the global-local,” adding that “international was in effect the code word for Euro-America.”<sup>23</sup>

Echoing the temporal implications Tomii made about *gendai bijutsu*, the dance practices that inspired this study also aspire to being “contemporaneous *with*” the “international” (coding the First World or Euro-America). Manifested in the pronouncement of “contemporary dance” is a will to close the sense of temporal disparity with the “international” that bears the traces of historical ideological forces of modernity and their continuities and permutations in the postwar, postcolonial era. Attending to the historicity of the discursive term “contemporary dance,” which the newness and foreignness disclosed in Lin’s speech reveals (with cross-continental resonance), my study focuses on the latter half of the twentieth century, especially the dances that came out of and responded to the post-1980s political, economic, social, and cultural conditions in which Taiwan was embedded. In the end, this study pushes against simple periodization or labeling of dance genres and styles, and instead aims at engaging “contemporary

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<sup>21</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7. Similar points are made in Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), and Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989). Also see Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 184–224, and Arif Dirlik, “Modernity as History: Post-revolutionary China, Globalization and the Question of Modernity,” *Social History* 27, no. 1 (January 2002): 16–39, the latter of which addresses the resurgence of multiple temporalities under global capitalism that continues the ideology of modernity, even if breaking away from a previous kind of geotemporal mapping in a single teleology.

<sup>22</sup> Reiko Tomii, “Historicizing ‘Contemporary Art’: Some Discursive Practices in *Gendai Bijutsu* in Japan,” *Positions* 12, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 612; emphasis in the original.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.



dance” as a conceptual proposal with the temporal and kinesthetic implications of moving bodies from differing and sometimes contradictory vantage points in a transnational framework.

The time frame I study here bears its own significance as the world has experienced great change since the 1980s. In Taiwan, stringent authoritative rule relaxed, leading to the lifting of Martial Law (1947–1987) and the greater democratization and liberalization of the society. The Cold War structure was disintegrating: the Berlin Wall fell in 1989; the USSR was dissolved in 1991; and China embarked on postsocialist reforms embracing a market economy, marked by Deng Xiaoping’s speech in his 1992 tour to China’s southern cities. The ending of the Cold War was also accompanied by the intensification of globalization, characterized by a greater sense of time-space compression with the advancement of communication and travel technology along with greater and more complex transnational circulation of capital. International festivals flourished at this time. Since the 1980s, dancers and performance artists in Taiwan have been exposed to more international exchanges bringing aesthetic engagements closer to international trends while compelling them to reconsider the performance of their cultural identities. The issue of cultural identities also met with the surge of reflection within Taiwan on political ideologies that inform past narratives of the nation.

In investigating dance phenomena based in and transcending the locale of Taiwan, this dissertation also engages the political, economic, social, and cultural forces at work as the world becomes increasingly globalized. My approach is informed by dance studies and performance studies that consider the effect of those conditioning forces and even consider what dance performances *do* to negotiate with those forces.<sup>24</sup> As we are immersed in the intense time-space compression of globalization today, with information, materials, and cultures from the world at our fingertips and political and economic forces forming a close-knit network in which we are all enmeshed, how can the study of dance performance with an attention to the temporal implications it harbors and negotiates illuminate some of the nuances of those dynamics? The geotemporal politics of modernity aside, dance is durational in nature—it is a time-based art, and dance training takes time. How does dance, essentially about a process over time, stretch, compress, bend, break, fragment, solidify, or liquidate the sense of time as strategies for negotiating the greater temporal implications within the forces of modernity?

## **Developmentalism**

Developmentalism is central to probing the political-economic negotiations of “contemporaneity” that parallels and intertwines with concerns in Taiwanese modern dance world; it also impacts how the sense of temporality figures in the negotiation of cultural identities in my case studies. After World War II, the Taiwanese government engineered a series of economic developments for the country. Land reform, infrastructure building, and industrialization ensued. Taiwan moved from domestic light industries in the 1950s, to export-

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<sup>24</sup> Some foundational studies include Cynthia Jean Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Susan Leigh Foster, ed., *Choreographing History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Marta Elena Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995); Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

oriented light industry and the assembly of products in the 1960s and the early 1970s, then to heavy industry and high-tech production from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. By the beginning of the 1980s, Taiwan had become one of the “newly industrialized countries” in East Asia, along with South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Building on this basis, in the 1980s Taiwan entered a more intense developmental phase spearheaded by the state-promoted information technology industry. Called “catch-up developmentalism” by scholars in economics and political science, this phase discloses a kinesthetic urgency of racing forward to “catch up” with the developed countries.<sup>25</sup> It also captures an overall developmentalist drive in the modernizing ethos penetrating postwar Taiwan. Contemporary dance’s pursuit of temporal togetherness with the international parallels and intertwines with Taiwan’s developmentalist ethos of “catching up” with the First World. The kinesthetic quality embedded in the agential desire from the latecomer to development to be “in step” and “in time” with the developed offers a vital entry point for me to engage the political kinesthetics of dance in relation to the larger political, social, and economic forces at play.

Economic developments went along with other intense changes in Taiwanese society: urbanization, environmental pollution, and the rise of a materialism that trumps other kinds of values are some of the most viscerally felt impacts. The discourse of Eastern body aesthetics prominent in the Taiwanese performing arts circle from the late 1980s to the 2000s sought to create a different movement language grown out of the “Eastern” perspective (*guan* 觀), in contrast to Western modern dance, the primary component of the institutional dance training in Taiwan. This attempt also expresses critiques of the developmentalist ethos and alienation as well as longings for reconnection with the senses of self, roots, or nature. The movement qualities in performances of Eastern body aesthetics often come across as slow, calm, and meditative, like *taiji daoyin*, which is central to Cloud Gate’s kinesthetics today and the overall aesthetics of Legend Lin. Taiwanese performing artists also looked to butoh for inspiration and engaged with it in this way (which, I would note, is different from how Hata-Kanoko formed an aesthetics closer to the absurd and grotesque of *ankoku* butoh initiated by Hijikata). The paradox lies in that while Taiwanese dance troupes are reacting to the intensity and effects of local development, aesthetically the troupes still aspire to be on par with what is recognized in the international dance world. As such, the energy that is against the current in the local context may be seen differently in the international. The “Eastern body” may spark a renewed Orientalist desire that then reinforces renewed self-Orientalism, while contemporaneity, in one sense framing the local-to-international aspiration, may engender further tension in the (sometimes conflicted) geotemporal (re)mappings or become another way to negotiate the looping desires. Complicating the picture is the mission of “cultural diplomacy” that the troupes performing in the international sphere came to bear; the politically under-recognized Taiwan needs international visibility whenever possible.

What deepens the transnationalism in the dance phenomena studied here is that developmentalism itself is not a locally isolated program but is fully imbricated in the operations of the world, even though artists respond immediately and viscerally to the specific effects of the local’s development. Development has roots as a modern narrative that informed European industrialism and empire; it became an internationally orchestrated project in the mid twentieth

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<sup>25</sup> Such as Akira Suehiro and Tom Gill, *Catch-up Industrialization: The Trajectory and Prospects of East Asian Economies* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), and Peter C. Y. Chow, *Trade and Industrial Development in East Asia: Catching Up or Falling Behind* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012).

century (1940s–1970s), a “*nationally-sited* economic growth across the Cold War divide” based on a universal quantifiable measure of development, such as Gross National Product (GNP).<sup>26</sup> It aligns with the “historicism” of modernity brought up earlier, in what Dipesh Chakrabarty characterizes as “first Europe, then elsewhere’s structure of global historical time”; in the nineteenth century, this came to non-European peoples “as somebody’s way of saying ‘not yet’ to somebody else...*not yet* civilized enough to rule themselves.”<sup>27</sup> Kate Manzo further elucidates the Western modernist ideology in developmentalism; specifically, within it is a colonialist paternalism in which less developed countries are like children who should “grow up” to become like the adults, that is, the developed countries, according to universal criteria of economic development.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, Andrew Jones’s genealogical critiques of developmental thinking from evolutionary models in the nineteenth century and its translation and dissemination in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly as it is figured in literary tropes of the “child,” elucidate the discourse’s historical precedence and geocultural relevance to my study.<sup>29</sup> Under this ideological legacy, “to develop” also becomes a way for the less developed countries to project a sense of their own agency in developing (recall what is embedded in the ethos of “catching up”). In the case of Taiwan’s IT industry, although it helps accelerate Taiwan’s development, it also has to do with the transition of the First World into a postindustrial, post-Fordist, flexible accumulation in which works, especially manufacturing, are subcontracted to other countries. From the perspective of the developing countries, the insertion of their industries into the global supply chain also becomes an economic imperative.

The surge of interest in a transnational framework of analysis in all disciplines, humanities included, came with the intensification of globalization.<sup>30</sup> This brings us back to the particular time frame in which my study is grounded. The transition from the end of the Cold War to globalization also saw the political-economic imperative shift from developmentalism to neoliberalism. The “world-systems analysis” proposed by theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein argues for attending to all dimensions of political, economic, social, and cultural forces at work beyond bounded nation-states in a historical process unfolding over a long period of time, engaging systems, economies, and empires each as a “world,” “an integrated zone of activity and institutions which obey certain systemic rules.”<sup>31</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully cover all relevant political-economic forces, it is useful to bear in mind their interrelations on this scale. What I hope to do here is to offer a nuanced glimpse into the dynamics of these interrelated forces by attending to the kinesthetics of dance circulating in a specific geopolitical context.

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<sup>26</sup> Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2012), 4; emphasis in the original.

<sup>27</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 7–8.

<sup>28</sup> Kate Manzo, “Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 26, no. 2 (1991): 3–36.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew F. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, and Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *World-systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

Throughout my study, I am conscious of a certain conception of “contemporary dance” in Marta Savigliano’s telling phrase—a “ballet-modern-contemporary continuum” that belies a fixed genealogical and positional characteristic in a specific matrix of dance training and aesthetics performed on the concert stage.<sup>32</sup> While my cases do show traces of this continuum, my focus on the specific conditioning forces of these dance practices echoes Savigliano’s intention of debunking the universalizing tendency in certain invocations of the term. Moreover, the dance practices I look into are bending, twisting, and even overturning this (temporal) succession in compelling ways; I wish to shed light on this through my study of the kinesthetics of dance. The first few chapters stay relatively close to this “continuum” in order to fully investigate the dynamics across Taiwanese and international dance worlds and the context-specific formations of the modern dance institution in Taiwan. The last chapter echoes butoh’s founding politics in drastically departing from, even negating, the aesthetics and positioning of ballet and Western modern dance. This chapter also studies the opportunities that the end of the Cold War offers for East Asian countries to reflexively engage with the imperialism and colonialism of their region that the Cold War structure had suppressed. Taiwan was Japan’s colony for fifty years (1895–1945). Its prewar modernization was subordinate to the modernization program of Japan; the Western modern dance of Taiwan during this period was also filtered through Japan. Hata-Kanoko’s “butoh action” (*wuta xingdong* 舞蹈行動)—which merges butoh practice and social engagement—carries the politics of modernity critique in the legacy of postwar Japanese avant-garde performance. As her butoh action is involved in contemporary social movements in Taiwan, its politics also come up against the residues of Japanese colonial modernity, triggering a stream of self-reflections on the historical relationships between Japan, Taiwan, and East Asia. The last chapter is my strongest attempt at thinking alternatively about “contemporary dance.” That is, can “contemporaneity” be more diversified than would be revealed by a focus on local-international or local-global relationships? Can “contemporaneity” form modes of connection that maintain a critical stance toward the hegemonic versions of globalization, both historically and in their view toward the “future”?

### **Stories: Taiwan’s Histories**

The specific geopolitical context of my study is the island of Taiwan, but that island has itself been a site of circulation and uncertainty. Cloud Gate’s early work *Portrait of the Families* (*Jiazu hechang* 家族合唱, literally, “Chorus of the families”) reflects the identitarian complexity and the porous boundedness of this island. Premiering in 1997, ten years after the lifting of Martial Law in Taiwan, *Portrait of the Families* performs a kind of mosaic memoir (that is necessarily fragmentary and incomplete) of Taiwanese people’s life immediately preceding and throughout the twentieth century. Over two hundred black-and-white photographs of family portraits and all kinds of life-event documents in different time periods, environments, and communities were collected from all over Taiwan, reassembled, and projected on stage. Recordings of interviews with Taiwanese people telling their family stories in aboriginal languages (such as the Yami language of Orchid Island), in various Chinese dialects (Hoklo, Mandarin, and Hakka), and using occasional words in Japanese are broadcast throughout the performance. Each story is disclosed in small pieces, sometimes suspended, sometimes resumed. Amid the sounds and images that relay complexly and intimately the slices of Taiwanese lives,

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<sup>32</sup> Marta Elena Savigliano, “Worlding Dance and Dancing Out There in the World,” in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan Foster (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 163–190.

the dance on stage switches among repetitions of everyday acts, stylized movements, and heightened theatrical presentations with distinct costumes and characterizations. As the subtitle “Memorandum for *fin-de-siècle* Taiwan” (“Taiwan shijimo beiwanglu 台灣世紀末備忘錄”) suggests, *Portrait* performs simultaneously a way of remembering and an attempt to release the angst and trauma of the repressive Martial Law era. On stage, a dancer moves with the difficulty of a wounded corporeality, distressed, limping, supporting himself with one hand and two legs; the fourth limb is dysfunctional, and he eventually collapses onto the ground, after which other dancers enter to draw the contour of the collapsed body with a chalk, marking death and its legal evidence. Another section features a dance of a single hand, solely lit with a deathly pale hue on an otherwise dark stage. With the wrist initiating the movements, the hand lifts, flips, and twists, alternately graceful and frantic, as it morphs into different gestures and states: from a delicate lotus to a pair of striding feet; from a pointy finger to a deformed claw; and so on.

Taiwan, an island in the western rim of the Pacific Ocean and close to the southeastern coast of mainland China, was inhabited by Austronesian aboriginal groups and limited numbers of Han-Chinese migrants from the mainland before the seventeenth century. Migration from Fujian and Guangdong, the two provinces of mainland China across the straits, increased from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, creating cultural landscapes similar to those the migrants left, involving, for example, the Hoklo and Hakka dialects spoken in these regions. Sporadically documented in mainland Chinese historiography and long deemed an unimportant “frontier” from that perspective, Taiwan became increasingly valuable for its resources and geographical position in international trade and politics because of the Dutch and the Spanish colonial presence in the seventeenth century. The island came under Chinese jurisdiction, if only an attenuated one, by Qing Chinese forces in 1683 after the Han Chinese Cheng Chen-Kung (Koxinga) had defeated the Dutch in 1662. In 1885, Taiwan became a province of the Qing government as Japanese and French imperialist incursions raised the geopolitical stakes. In 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan according to the Shimonoseki Treaty signed after Qing China’s loss in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), and it became a colony of Japan for fifty years until the end of World War II. In *Portrait*, the people of Taiwan documented in the photographs are wearing Qing robes, kimonos, military uniforms, and aboriginal ceremonial costumes, reflecting many different cultural influences. The interviews in *Portrait* also tell stories about Taiwanese identifying themselves as “Japanese” in their childhood, being drafted by the Japanese military for its wartime effort, and hiding from the bombings by the U.S. military during the Pacific War.

With the agreement reached at the 1943 Cairo Conference, Taiwan was to be retroceded to the Republic of China (ROC; established in 1911 after a revolution that toppled the Qing empire) after the war ended. The February 28 incident of 1947 rose to a nationwide collision between civilians and the Nationalist government, fueled by the desire of Taiwanese for self-governance that had lasted from the Japanese colonial era.<sup>33</sup> The Nationalist government resorted to importing military forces from the mainland to crack down on dissent, resulting in a horrendous massacre of civilians.<sup>34</sup> Afterward, the voices for Taiwanese self-governance were

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<sup>33</sup> The incident was widely attributed to the shooting of a civilian bystander policeman during an attempted arrest of a woman selling cigarettes illegally, although other accounts also raise a complex body of factors.

<sup>34</sup> An estimated 8,000 to 10,000 people died in the 2/28 Incident (Steven Philips, “Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945–1948” [1999], in *Taiwan: A*

effectively silenced. Meanwhile, the Chinese Civil War (1927–1950) was taking place in the mainland between the Nationalist and Communist parties. In 1949, the Nationalist regime retreated to Taiwan upon its defeat; mass migration of mainlanders to Taiwan ensued; and Martial Law was instituted, granting almost unlimited power to then president Chiang Kai-Shek (and later his son and succeeding president Chiang Ching-Kuo) in which the political party, the government, and the military were essentially one and extremely centralized. Heavy censorship was imposed on all levels of citizens' lives; this was only gradually relaxed in the 1980s. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, thousands of Taiwanese and recently arrived mainlanders were arrested, killed, or intimidated on suspicion of ties with the Communists, during the so-called "White Terror." The heavily censored way of life that seized hold of people's bodies and minds during the Martial Law era is reflected in *Portrait* as dancers collectively repeat the daily hygienic routines of brushing teeth and washing faces under militaristic commands from a disembodied voice and are punished when deviating from these routines.

In another section of *Portrait*, a woman's voice recounts in Mandarin the story of her father taking an unexpected detour trying to leave from Chongqing for Taiwan by boat in 1949; his plan was disrupted and he became involved in guerilla fights in Vietnam and finally flew from Hong Kong to Taiwan to rejoin his family more than a year later. This story represents one of the recent chapters of the dispersal of "Chineseness" (that created transnational ties and ethnic splits within Taiwan). Rich and poignant as *Portrait of the Families* is, the political, economic, and cultural strife of Taiwan also exceeds the stories and pathos it invokes. Relevant to this study are also the cultural nationalist promotion of Mandarin Chinese and orthodox Chinese culture, the absorption of Taiwan into Cold War politics, its economic development under that world political structure, and shifts in Taiwan's international recognition; all affect the modern dance development in Taiwan.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Nationalist government was invested in fighting communism and maintaining the "authentic" representation of "China." It promoted an orthodox Chinese culture, continuing the "re-Sinification" endeavor started upon the retrocession of Taiwan from Japan, and suppressing many of the other cultural expressions existent on the island. This cultural nationalist ideology was fueled by the will to counter the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) that happened on mainland China under the Chinese Communist Party. Earlier, with the outbreak of the Korean War (1950–1953), Taiwan increasingly came under U.S. political and economic support and became enmeshed in Cold War politics. Under oppressive, autocratic rule, since the 1960s Taiwan experienced high growth in its economic development through state-led economic plans that implemented agricultural reform and gradual industrialization. In 1971, the Republic of China on Taiwan resigned from the United Nations due to the contention over the representation of the seat of "China," which the People's Republic of China assumed after Taiwan's resignation. In 1978, with the U.S. shift of political interest after the Vietnam War, Taiwan and the United States ended their official diplomatic relationship. Taiwan experienced a series of diplomatic setbacks thereafter. The under-recognition of Taiwan's legitimacy as a "nation" by international communities haunts how Taiwan situates itself in and navigates the international political, economic, and cultural fields.

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*New History*, ed. Murray Rubinstein, expanded ed. [Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007], 275–319). For a more detailed account of this period, see Tse-Han Lai, Ramon Myers, and Wou Wei, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991).

## Stories: Modern Dance in Taiwan

Embedded in the aforementioned discourses and histories, the development of modern dance in Taiwan is multilingual and polyvocal while it interprets and interacts with the contemporary political, social, economic, and cultural changes in Taiwan. Modern dance in Taiwan has in various phases received influences from Japan, the United States, and Europe, as well as cultural nationalist imperatives of the KMT; thus, the embodied episteme is already of transnational hybridity, harboring waves of foreign and domestic political influences as well as continued mixings, indigenization, and occasional breaks.<sup>35</sup> My study does not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of Taiwanese modern dance but engages with the modern dance trends and historiography in Taiwan in relation to transnational dance practices. Cloud Gate's and Legend Lin's respective developments reveal different threads of this genealogy in significant ways. Hata-Kanoko's butoh, working in the line of Hijikata's radical rejection of Western modern dance as practiced in Japan, is imbued with self-critique and critiques of modernity; in a way it "reconnects" with what became a rupture in the early Japan-inflected Western modern dance in Taiwan, but through a sort of "negativity." This negativity also echoes the reflections on Japanese colonialism and the contemporary biopolitical violence in Hata-Kanoko's works. The radicalism in her works, engaged in depth in chapter 6, casts the temporality of modernity figured in Taiwan in a new light.

The first generation of Taiwanese modern dancers were initiated and nurtured through Japanese colonial education. The kinds of dances they learned and performed also shaped the look of modern dance in Taiwan in the immediate postwar years through their private teaching and choreography. In the 1930s and 1940s, a number of Taiwanese dancers studied modern dance with its founding father in Japan, Ishii Baku, and his students, as well as ballet, Japanese classical dance, and other "Oriental" dances that sought to represent other Asian cultures through Indian, Indonesian, and Korean dances, and the like.<sup>36</sup> These dancers' modern dance training and choreography integrated influences from ballet, eurythmics, "dance poems" (Ishii's merging of ballet character dance with the language of mime), and European modern dance of the early twentieth century as filtered through Japan. During the height of Japanese militarism, they also learned and performed various Oriental dances as well as creative dances set to Japanese folk music and performed in Japanese traditional costumes, as dance groups were recruited to provide entertainment for soldiers and workers.<sup>37</sup> Part of the Oriental dance experience and influence was also channeled into their production of *minzu wudao* 民族舞蹈 (Chinese classical and ethnic dance, explained later) under the Chinese Nationalist ideological directive in the 1950s and 1960s.

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<sup>35</sup> Chen Ya-Ping, "Dance History and Cultural Politics: A Study of Contemporary Dance in Taiwan, 1930s–1997" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003). Chen's study is by far the most comprehensive attempt at a historiography of Taiwan's modern dance, with discussion informed by theories in cultural studies. My broad overview of modern dance development in Taiwan is partly drawn from and parallels that presented in Chen's study.

<sup>36</sup> Lin Min-Te 林明德 studied dance with Ishii Baku's student, the Korean dancer Sai Shouki; Tsai Jui-yueh 蔡瑞月 and Li Tsai-e 李彩娥 studied with Ishii, and Li Shu-fen 李淑芬 studied ballet with Kaitani Yaoko and in the Youyuan Art School for Japanese classical and folk dance and "Oriental" dances. See Chen, "Dance History," 23–28.

<sup>37</sup> Examples are the Southeast Asia tours Tsai Jui-yueh and Li Tsai-e participated in with their respective companies.

In the 1950s and 1960s, with dance practice in Taiwan being centered on *minzu wudao*, Japanese-inflected ballet and modern dance practices were relegated to the margin.<sup>38</sup> Originating in the military in response to the official guidelines of extolling national culture by making “combat literature and arts” (*zhandou wenyi* 戰鬥文藝), the propagation of *minzu wudao* extended beyond the military with the inauguration of the state-directed annual *Minzu wudao* competition since 1954. All levels of schools and private dance studios began making *minzu wudao* the core of their dance curricula. Corresponding to the heavy political agenda that permeated all aspects of Taiwanese social life, *minzu wudao* became the embodied ideological articulation of de-Japanization and re-Sinicization, anti-Communism and recovery of mainland China, and competition for the legitimacy and authority of representing “China” vis-à-vis the People’s Republic of China. The choreographies of *minzu wudao* encompass pan-Chinese national themes and emphasize traditional motifs and ethnic representations. Both mainlander and Taiwanese choreographers were recruited to create and codify these dances. Dance historian Chen Ya-Ping notes the Orientalist problem *minzu wudao* shares with the legacy of Oriental dance from Japan, as they are both based on limited resources and mostly rely on choreographers’ personal imagination and creation. Eventually, the “invented tradition”<sup>39</sup> of *minzu wudao* resulted in an “endless process of recycling and diluting of the often inauthentic origins.”<sup>40</sup>

In the 1960s, the American school of modern dance performance and training was introduced to Taiwan and became an initiating experience for many of the postwar generation of Taiwanese dancers. In a way, the American school of modern dance, introduced at a time when *minzu wudao* had become repetitive and stagnant, provided a creative antidote to the rigidity of the *minzu wudao* codifications. One of the occupations of the later modern dance developments in Taiwan was negotiating between being “modern” and retaining a cultural identity inspired or nourished by “tradition,” but departing from reproducing yet another piece of *minzu wudao*. Recall the differential Lin made between *Cursive* and “folk dance”: the legacy of the state-imposed cultural nationalist agenda does play a role in the choreographer’s distancing attempt and in how “folk dance” had come to be perceived in international performing arts spheres, the underlying message being that it is something not related to “the contemporary.”<sup>41</sup>

A number of American modern dance companies and artists visited Taiwan in the 1960s, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (1963), José Limón Dance Company (1964),

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<sup>38</sup> *Minzu wudao* can be roughly grouped into five categories: classical dance (*gudian wu* 古典舞), including the Chinese fan dance, court lamp dance, and so on; folk dance of the Han Chinese (*minjian wu* 民間舞), such as the lion dance and other festival dances; dance of ethnic minorities (*bianjiang wu* 邊疆舞), such as Mongolian dance and Tibetan dance; military dance (*zhandou wu* 戰鬥舞), such as the sword dance and spear dance; and dance of the Taiwanese indigenous people (*shandi wu* 山地舞). See Chen, “Dance History,” 40–41.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For the study of political ideology in the creation of *minzu wudao* in Taiwan, see Ya-Ping Chen, “Dancing Chinese Nationalism and Anticommunism: The Minzu Wudao Movement in 1950s Taiwan,” in *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion*, ed. Naomi M. Jackson and Toni S. Phim (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 34–50.

<sup>40</sup> Chen, “Dance History,” 32.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the distinction between “Dance” (as art) and “(other) dancing” (as culture studied by anthropologists yielding “folk dance” or “world dance”) and the problems of this knowledge production also relevant to the aforementioned “ballet-modern-contemporary continuum,” see Savigliano, “Worlding Dance and Dancing Out There in the World.”



Paul Taylor Dance Company (1967), and Martha Graham (1969). The visits by the Paul Taylor Dance Company and Martha Graham were part of the Cultural Exchange Program conducted by the American Information Agency in Taipei, the official cultural agency of the U.S. government in Taiwan, as part of the U.S. Cold War strategy of promoting American values to the “free world.” This program is an example of the American cultural presence in Taiwan that has succeeded the military and economic ones since the outbreak of the Korean War. Also influential were workshops taught by Chinese American modern dancers Al Chung-liang Huang (Humphrey and Graham techniques) and Yen Lu Wong (Graham technique) in 1967. In 1964, the founding of the Chinese Cultural College’s Dance Department marked the first higher-education institution of dance training. Ballet, modern, and *minzu wudao* were in the curriculum and maintained to mark, with different emphases, the dancing bodies of the typical institutionally trained dancers in Taiwan.

The 1970s saw the founding of the first Taiwanese modern dance companies, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre in 1973 and Neo Classic Dance Company in 1976. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the gradual liberation of the society from political control preceding and succeeding the lifting of Martial Law, Taiwan experienced a proliferation of various modern dance groups whose works blended techniques and choreographic methods of modern dance, postmodern perspectives, and approaches of European dance theater. Within the continual flourishing of various styles of and approaches to modern dance, from the late 1980s to the first decade of the 2000s, the trend of Eastern body aesthetics emerged. According to Chen Ya-Ping, Eastern body aesthetics is a kind of “counter-action” to the habitual learning from Western paradigms that had dominated Taiwanese modern dance practice. The methods used by these artists in search of an “Eastern Body Aesthetics” have a total concern for the body, mind, and philosophy. The inspiration and training range from Taiwanese folk rituals, butoh, and Chinese martial arts, to the concept of *qi* and various *qigong* practices, including *taiji daoyin*.<sup>42</sup> Since the height of the popularity of Eastern body aesthetics in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a wide range of aesthetic explorations have emerged in the Taiwanese dance scene.

## Chapters

Drawing on significant threads within and beyond the genealogy described earlier and focusing on the post-1980s conditions of Taiwan in relation to transformations in the world, this study embarks on a journey to discover the ramifications of political kinesthetics of contemporary dance in Taiwan and relevant transnational engagements. The first three chapters take Cloud Gate Dance Theatre’s *Cursive* series as an entry point to engage with the pursuits, stakes, and mediations of “contemporaneity” among locales, kinesthetic engagements, the present and the past, and the periphery and the center—as relational rather than fixed—in modern world configurations. The chapters demonstrate that Chinese calligraphy, one of the most distinct emblems within the international imaginary of “Chineseness,” is not only physically practiced with experiential depth and intimacy, but also overturned, de-territorialized, and re-territorialized within changing conditions and power relations.

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<sup>42</sup> *Taiji quan* 太極拳 and Peking Opera movement (*shenduan* 身段) were incorporated into the curriculum of the Dance Department of the National Institute of the Arts (now National Taipei University of the Arts) at its inauguration in 1982 with Lin Hwai-Min as the founding chair. *Taiji quan* is a form of Chinese martial arts, or *wushu*, as opposed to *taiji daoyin*, a kind of *qigong* more for the sake of health conservation than attack and defense.

Chinese calligraphy has been a mandated practice in Taiwanese citizens' general schooling, besides its permeation through everyday life and preservation in museums. Using this example, chapter 1 introduces the intertwining of a developmentalist ethos, aspirations for local-international "contemporaneity" in dance practices, and the structure of memory for Chinese culture that figures in the embodied subjectivity of Taiwanese people. I conduct a reading of the discourses and aesthetics of *Cursive* and Ray Chen's installation piece *Sishu xi* 私塾習 (literally, "Private studio, practice")<sup>43</sup> in dialogue with the merging of computer technology and Chinese calligraphy. The *Cursive* series performs what I see as a dual move of return flight, as renewed nostalgia for "tradition" in light of the effects of Taiwan's developmentalist path accompanied by aspirations to be aesthetically contemporaneous with the international arts world. This move mirrors the dual aesthetic logic embedded in its choreography, a "contemporaneity" made between traditional Daoist Chinese aesthetics and abstract modernist aesthetics.

Chapter 2 discusses the kinaesthetic complexity in the dancing in the *Cursive* series and the limitations or frictions that occur in the seemingly "fluid" crossing of boundaries. I start by attending to the kinesthetic experiences of the dancers and the accessibility of embodied knowledge with the migration of Chinese mainland martial arts masters to Taiwan post-1949. I also examine some of the written criticisms from audiences of different backgrounds. While scholars and cultural elites of East Asia primarily engage the *Cursive* series by relating it to their knowledge of Chinese calligraphy, reviewers from Western dance circles more sufficiently engage with the dancing, albeit through a different knowledge system and experiential habit from the dancers'. Besides engaging the dancers' labor and aesthetic agency, this chapter proposes rethinking the boundary of local-international in terms of different sites of the international within historical regional interrelations, which intersect unevenly with different formations of taste and/or class.

Chapter 3 extends the previous discussions to engage two New York-based transnational Chinese choreographers' works that also combine Chinese calligraphy with dance. One is Shen Wei's choreography for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the work from which it derives, *Connect-Transfer* (2004). The other is Yin Mei's multiple reincarnations of her solo performance. The elasticity of the boundaries in these works echoes a certain stretch of artistic disciplines in that these intersections between dance and Chinese calligraphy all bleed into painting. While Cloud Gate's choreography draws from the principles of traditional Chinese water-ink painting (*qi yun sheng dong* 氣韻生動, literally, "breath-rhythm-vitality-movement"), Shen's and Yin's are haunted by associations with Jackson Pollock's action painting—both Shen and Yin have their own and their dancers' bodies carry black ink in some way as they swish, roll, and leave ink traces on paper or canvas on the ground, which then become abstract paintings of their own. A close comparison and contrast reveals the shifting ideological implications and de-/re-territorializations of "Chineseness" as embodied through these transnational dance performances.

A "Pause" ensues after the first three chapters to introduce recent discourses in dance studies that contemplate the "kinetic of modernity" in relation to the kinesthetics of dance, which chapters 4 and 5 engage. The discussion here derives from reflections on Legend Lin's

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<sup>43</sup> The title *Sishu xi* is also translated as *Self-practice* in the catalogue description text; see the exhibition catalogue of *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* (Taipei: Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, 2009), 110.

attendance of the inaugural *Movimentos* Festival held by the Volkswagen Group in Germany in 2003. Legend Lin's aesthetic of *huan* 緩 (at once at ease, deeply rooted, tranquil, and slow) was reconceived in terms of automobile's deceleration, while companies from other countries represented the accelerating end. In a way, the reconceptualization of dance in terms of the speeding up and slowing down of the automobile becomes a late capitalist permutation of the Orientalist mapping of the world along the terms of the Volkswagen corporation, whose product is emblematic of the ethos of modernity's progress,<sup>44</sup> and whose renewed Orientalist mapping has gone beyond symbols and representations to include kinesthetics. My discussion approaches the development of Legend Lin's *huan* aesthetics in its own terms rooted in Taiwan's socioeconomic and performing arts developments (which nevertheless are not isolated from international influence) and gives a more complex account than a reading based simply on theories of the Orientalist desiring mirrors and as a resistance to renewed Orientalist mapping.

Chapter 4 considers the dance aesthetics of Lin Lee-Chen 林麗珍 prior to her founding of Legend Lin Dance Theatre (1995). Lin's dance works in this phase extensively exploited Taiwanese institutional dance training, including Western ballet, modern dance, and *minzu wudao*: they feature clear lines positioned in geometrical angles, with ballet-based techniques such as pirouettes, leaps, and splits, invigorated with the powerful use of unison group dancing reminiscent of state-supported mass dance for national ceremonies. I focus on two pieces Lin made for the popular films *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983) and *Kidnapped* (1983) and a concert dance piece *Who Am I?* (1982). The dancing, with the way it is shot and edited in *Papa*, performs an embrace of forward-moving, ever-accelerating excitement and drive for development in the capital city of Taipei, which poses a stark contrast to the works of Legend Lin. The other two dances use the same movement idiom in different ways that respond to and comment on Taiwan's socioeconomic development and changes brought forth by urbanization.

Chapter 5 discusses the *huan* kinesthetics of Legend Lin enfolded in its dance movements that feature deeply grounded gliding walks, slightly forward-bending torsos, and meditative states. Despite the contrast in appearance between Lin's two phases, there is nevertheless a kinesthetic continuity. The *huan* to which Lin has led the company is not a break from one mode into a drastically different mode, or the mechanical reduction of speed as in automobiles, but a process of *fanghuan* 放緩 (slowing down) as part of an organic cycle that is different from recuperation geared to enhancing capitalist efficiency and productivity. However, at the end of this chapter, I also reflect on how far this *fanghuan*—and its relevant critique of Taiwan's developmentalist drive—can go, especially when dance performance becomes absorbed in the international festival network mostly in Western centers. I engage with David Michaelek's traveling installation *Slow Dancing* (2007), which appeared in Taipei in 2009, to deepen the discussion about kinesthetic differences and their implications. I also discuss the genealogy of Eastern body aesthetics in Taiwan, and the political economy of performing arts touring in the age of globalization.

Chapter 6 discusses the "butoh action" that connects butoh performance with social engagement of Hata-Kanoko and the Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South troupe that she formed with Taiwanese artists during her decade-long residency in Taiwan. Yellow Butterfly fluidly

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, "Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-Intensification," trans. Heidi Ziegler, in *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory, and the Global*, ed. André Lepecki and Jenn Joy (London: Seagull, 2009); André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

converges with the “tent theater” collective Haibizi 海筆子 initiated by another Japanese director, Sakura Daizo, also in the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance. My discussion centers on Hata-Kanoko’s butoh action in the Lo-Sheng Sanatorium, a leper colony in New Taipei City, along with her participation in the protest movement by its residents against being forcibly moved by the city government due to a construction plan for a mass rapid transit station and train depot. Carrying the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance, Hata-Kanoko’s butoh politics and its critique of modernity comes up against the legacy of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, as Lo-Sheng’s establishment and segregationist approach to patients of Hansen’s disease were the policy of Japanese colonial government. The forced movement due to urban development sees the reincarnation of violence toward the socially marginalized and abjected internal Other still carried out by the current government. I focus on Yellow Butterfly’s 2011 work *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (*Zhu gao zhi qi* 祝告之器) that addresses both the aftermath of the Fukushima tsunami on March 11, 2011, and the Lo-Sheng movement, which was staged in Hiroshima on the anniversary of the A-bomb explosion. I engage with the constant disintegration of butoh kinesthetics, the idea of “exchanges” (*jiaohuan* 交換) between the living and the dead enfolded in Hata-Kanoko’s politics and aesthetics, and her revision of Hijikata’s statement about butoh as the body’s own “grabbing of life” “in face of crisis.” My discussion also engages with Chen Kuan-Hsing’s proposal of “Asia as Method,” which seeks to mobilize “the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia” to “provide alternative horizons and perspectives” for Asian subjects to carry out the processes of de-colonization, de-imperialization, and de-Cold War.<sup>45</sup> Yellow Butterfly’s butoh action resonates with Asia as Method but has its own concerns and its own fluid ways of working, with its rhizome-like operation and rejection of any institutional funding, enacting a kind of alternative inter-Asian transnationalism informed by its leftist and self-marginalizing politics. “Fluidity,” it turns out, embodies different political kinesthetic nuances. With that in mind, let us delve into the different takes and metamorphoses of “fluid Sinographies,” or how dance and cursive Chinese calligraphy rewrite each other, in the following pages.

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<sup>45</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

## Chapter 1

### Suturing Times: Contemporary Dance and Contemporaneity

Let us start an exploration of contemporary dance and contemporaneity with Chou's dance of/with the Chinese character *yong*, introduced previously. In addition to performing a self-theorization of the relationship between choreography and kinesthesia and staging a reflection of dance's "textuality" that engages the unfolding process of writing, this dance also embodies the disciplinary properties of writing Chinese calligraphy. In Chinese calligraphic practice, the character *yong* is deemed to contain the discipline's fundamental techniques. Termed the "eight ways of *Yong*" (*yongzi bafa* 永字八法), each of the eight strokes of the character manifests a certain way of manipulating the brush, the command of which sets the foundation for mastering the art of Chinese calligraphy. This connection with the fundamentals of Chinese calligraphy and its "first lessons" pushes *yong*'s significance far beyond its semantic meaning ("eternity"). That *yong* is projected in isolation onstage and revealed in stroke-by-stroke rendition during Cloud Gate's performance reinforces this signification. To Taiwanese audiences (and those of the Sinophone world who follow this writing practice), *yong*'s relationship to learning Chinese calligraphy would be readily apparent. *Yong*'s symbolic connection to learning directs us to the primary concerns of this chapter: the modern Chinese educational experience (as well as its role in the conditioning of the Taiwanese people) and the role that writing (which *Cursive* melds with dancing) plays in the formation of the citizens' *embodied* subjectivity. As we shall see, the latter phenomenon enables *Cursive* to tap into and evoke the kinesthetic and cultural memory of writing Chinese calligraphy in the service of contemporary political-aesthetic purposes.

Significantly, the learning and discipline evoked by *yong* intersects with a conscious temporal enfolding of present and past that is central to the *contemporary*. In *Cursive*, the kinesthetic and cultural memory of writing Chinese calligraphy—and its associations with the past, the traditional, and, indeed, even the ancient—are brought forth not only by the medium of the dancing bodies but also, most fantastically, by a technology (digital projection) that is the contemporary "antithesis" of writing practice. When the first three installments of the *Cursive* series were to be restaged in Taipei in 2009 as *Cursive: A Trilogy*, the publicity materials highlighted this connection in magical terms, noting that the performance would "summon the souls of the ancient Chinese characters by modern technology."<sup>46</sup> The invocation of sorcery in reference to the projection of ancient Chinese calligraphy scrolls underscores the perceived temporal distance between the two technologies—a divide so great that it could be bridged only by supernatural forces. Indeed, the projection of the ancient Chinese characters offered a kind of alchemy: through modern technology, the static written script was animated and thus revived. This imagery was further extended in ever more marvelous terms: "handwritings of historical calligraphers, delivered via projection, appear on the backdrop of the stage—their presence is like an emperor overlooking the world; the computer technology washes away the amber shades of the thousand-year-old rice paper, resulting in the sharply black-and-white images whose ink tones, intoxicatingly rich, make one feel as if the masters, having just written their last strokes,

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<sup>46</sup> Publicity pamphlet for *Cursive: A Trilogy* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2009). Translation mine. (Original text: 以現代科技召喚古老的字魂)

had left only a moment ago.”<sup>47</sup> Erasing the trace of time is digital technology’s magic of rewind; it regenerates a moment through the vibrant performative act of the calligrapher, recalling an instant when the art object had barely separated from the artist’s hands—when the ink tone was at its richest, the ink moist even, perhaps still soaking the paper and expanding, ever so subtly, the contour of each stroke. This collapsing of time-space between past and present becomes the temporal structure of *Cursive*. Rather than giving in to the lack of materiality that the digital is often associated with, the performance clings an immediate affective stirring in the face of the corporeality and materiality of writing Chinese calligraphy. Of course, since *Cursive* is a dance work, there are distinct material bodies moving dynamically on stage. But in the interplay with the projected scrolls, the dancing is really endeavoring to reanimate a certain kind of cultural memory connected to the experience of practicing Chinese calligraphy that is geared, in this context, toward the Taiwanese audience. This chapter will consider the kinds of *contemporary* concerns that engaging with such memory structures brings forth.

As noted previously, for Taiwanese audiences the writing of *yong* signifies the eight ways of *Yong* and the act of learning Chinese calligraphy, a task that is embedded in the modern Chinese educational experience (and perhaps most associated with the bittersweet memory of mandatory homework assignments). Yet Cloud Gate’s performance, rather than summoning the immediate corporeal memory of a childhood learning experience, calls forth the actions of an ancient Chinese calligrapher. This temporal dislocation is enhanced by the fact that the projected writing recalls the fluidity, romanticism, and artistry of traditional cursive scripts rather than the stilted rigidity of standard instructional scripts. Thus, the immediate experiential memory activated by the performance serves to access a cultural memory that is much further back in time. Investigation of this epistemological structuring of memory aside, the more pressing question is, in what ways does this unique blending of ancient cultural memory and immediate experiential memory further the kind of *contemporary* statement the *Cursive* series is trying to make?

This chapter will also consider the contemporary interest in Chinese calligraphy in Taiwan in the context of our increasingly computerized global culture. The entirely different “writing experience” that comes with this new technology has led to renewed interest in traditional forms of writing. Alongside efforts to imagine and invent ways of bridging writing technologies emerging at different historical moments, there has been a renaissance of Chinese calligraphy aimed at preserving tradition (this is particularly interesting in light of the fact that traditional Chinese scripts/writing were seen by some reformers as too cumbersome for modern purposes a century ago).<sup>48</sup> These competing impulses have led the computer and Chinese calligraphy to be pitted against each other in a range of new forms of art praxis, including that in which *Cursive* participates. While nostalgia for a “national” mode of writing may play a role here, these discursive practices carry a broader network of intersecting concerns rooted in aesthetics, technology, heritage, and even modes of being.<sup>49</sup> I suggest that the developmentalist

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. (Original text: 歷代書家手跡，透過幻燈投射，以君臨天下的姿勢出現在舞台後方；電腦洗去千年宣紙的昏黃，黑白分明的影像，墨色酣飽，彷彿大師們不久前才收筆離席。)

<sup>48</sup> Such a sentiment prompted many late-Qing Sinoscript reforms. See Tsu Jing, “Chinese Lessons,” in *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 18–48.

<sup>49</sup> There have been numerous new media art projects that seek to bridge computer and Chinese writing, often through Chinese calligraphic forms. For example, in 2009 and 2010, there was an exhibition titled “Feeling the Chinese Characters: Interactive Installation Exhibition” in the Digital Art Center, Taipei. The Chinese title, *Zimo* 字

ethos in Taiwan that most intensely defines the “structures of feeling” in the two decades leading to the 2000s (when the *Cursive* series was made) is a key condition to which these practices respond.<sup>50</sup> In this chapter, I therefore consider the intertwining of Taiwan’s developmentalist ethos, aspirations for local-international “contemporaneity” in dance practices, and the structure of memory for the Chinese culture that figures in the embodied subjectivity of Taiwanese people. I then contemplate the question of the “contemporary,” through what I see as a dual aesthetic embedded in the choreography of the *Cursive* series and its relationship to the intertwined concerns and sentiments mentioned above to elucidate the unique suturing of times that the *contemporary dance* of the *Cursive* series scribes.

### ***Sishu xi* 私塾 習 (Private Studio Practice, or Self-practice)**

Exemplifying the type of dynamic negotiation between aesthetics, technology, heritage, and modes of being described earlier is Taiwanese architect Ray Chen’s 陳瑞憲 installation *Sishu xi* 私塾 習 (2009). It also bears a close intertextual relationship with the *Cursive* series. *Sishu xi* was included in the joint exhibition of *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* (無中生有: 書法、符號、空間), held by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei (MOCA Taipei), which immediately preceded the restaging of *Cursive: A Trilogy*. *X beyond O* featured the creative engagement of eight different artists from Taiwan and Hong Kong with the works of contemporary calligrapher Tong Yang-Tze 董陽孜, whose calligraphy is also featured in a section of *Cursive*. The installation offers an entry point from which to think through the varying ways Taiwanese people’s structural memory of Chinese calligraphy informs their understanding of the *Cursive* series.

The larger framework of *X beyond O* explicitly addresses the practice of Chinese calligraphy in the age of computerization and the information explosion. Lamenting “the era of calligraphy’s decline amid the sea of words,”<sup>51</sup> the curatorial vision nevertheless makes a number of plays on language and signs across the coexisting Chinese and English titles of the exhibition, which is accompanied with a bilingual catalogue. The “X” and “O” in the English title, for

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摸, playfully puns with the term in the Chinese tile game mah-jongg for winning by one’s own draw (*zimo* 自摸). The Department of Cultural Affairs of the Taipei City Government has organized an annual Chinese Character Festival (*hanzi wenhua jie* 漢字文化節) since 2005. That Taiwan is a unique place that continues to use traditional Chinese characters (as opposed to their simplified form) is an argument for its preservation of “Chinese culture.” The festival started out with a more educational orientation by piquing young people’s interest in Chinese writing. Some form of Chinese calligraphy exhibition or live performance is almost always present, among other endeavors to link Chinese writing with contemporary visual art, installation, and public art, as well as food, fashion, digital technology, and martial arts. See <http://ccf.culture.gov.tw/index.html> (accessed January 30, 2013). Since 2010, there have also been annual “Cross-Strait Chinese Character Art Festivals” held in China and Taiwan in rotation organized by the Chinese National Academy of Arts (China) and the General Association of Chinese Culture (Taiwan). The one in Taiwan in 2011 featured an exhibit on contemporary art in mainland China curated by Shi Jui-Jen, among other exhibitions of ancient scrolls, live performance of Chinese calligraphy, lectures, and symposia. See <http://october19.idv.tw/ccart/index.html> (accessed January 30, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128–135.

<sup>51</sup> Shih Jui-Jen 石瑞仁, “X beyond O: A new movement in the era of calligraphy declination amid the sea of words” (“無中生有：文字氾濫、書寫式微時代的文字新行動”), in the exhibition catalogue of *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* (Taipei: Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, 2009), 8–9. The catalogue has all articles in both Chinese and English texts.

example, reference the symbols for “kiss and hug.” The exhibition extends this reference by exploring an informational mode of intimating Chinese calligraphy—“embracing calligraphy/caressing culture”—to draw a corporeal resonance from the codes of English language.<sup>52</sup> The Chinese title, *Wu zhong sheng you* 無中生有, alludes to the Daoist philosophy of bringing substance/something/presence (*you* 有) out of emptiness/nothing/absence (*wu* 無), which evokes a state devoid of constraints, “nonlimitation,” and endless possibilities. Besides the fact that traditional Chinese aesthetics is heavily influenced by Daoist philosophy, a branch of thought to which the tradition of Chinese calligraphy belongs, the “something” out of “nothing” seems also to evoke the digital immateriality that permeates today’s heavily informationalized culture. Rather than finding existing semantic near-correspondence between two languages, as typical translation acts do, the newly invented parallelism between “X/O” and “*wu/you*” as performed in the two titles of the exhibition exploits the inability of linguistic equivalence to openly allow for a proliferation of meanings. The creative energy of translation’s potential to expand meaning seems to correspond to and enliven the ways *re-presenting* and reengaging Chinese calligraphy can be imagined and performed. It certainly corresponds to the nonlimitation of *wu* in Daoist thinking; in the discourse of the exhibition, *wu* is defined as “no limits, no boundaries, and no bindings,” in contrast to *you*, which is understood as “substance” and envisioned as a basis for “imagination, topics for discussion and dialogue.”<sup>53</sup>

Within the curatorial framework of *X beyond O*, a number of artists use computer technology to engage with Tong’s work. For example, the first installation piece, *Writing & Infinity* (書·無), a collaboration between MOCA Taipei’s Rainbow Team and the Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) of Taiwan, aims to make a positive connection between Chinese calligraphy and computer technology by storing and re-presenting knowledge pertaining to Chinese calligraphy in a decidedly computerized interactive environment. Hong Kong media and theater artist Mathias Woo’s 胡恩威 work *Nothingness* (*Wu* 無), in contrast, offers a somewhat more cynical take on the digitized landscape by projecting a reanimated stroke-by-stroke writing of the character *wu* by Tong onto different surfaces—an empty TV screen, a small wooden desk from a grade school classroom, and a blank scroll on the wall. The “emptiness” and seeming lack of substance in the projected *wu*, which coldly appears and disappears on the surfaces of artifacts with which Chinese calligraphy is associated, seems to render the art of writing absurd, even evoking an iconoclastic nihilism that plays off the literal meaning of *wu*—“nothing.” In contrast, Chen’s *Sishu xi*, the last and largest installation in the exhibition, stood out as a vast, a-digital environment filled with traditional writing materials—ink, brushes, rice paper—as well as an abundance of Chinese scripts and an invitation to visitors to actually take up the brush and write in the old-fashioned way.

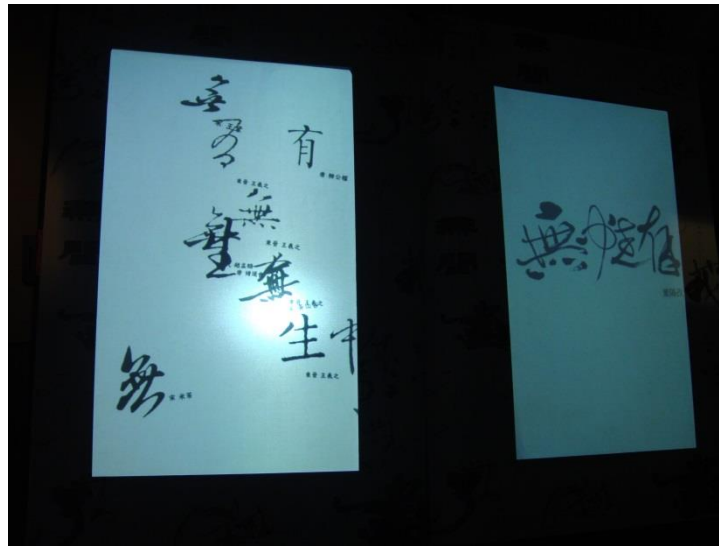
Designed to prompt multisensory stimulation and phenomenological engagement, *Sishu xi* is built around a huge rectangular tank filled with black ink that occupies the center of the gallery. One side of the tank is made into a long table on which calligraphy brushes, strips of rice paper, and a sutra text written in Chinese calligraphy are placed. Visitors are invited to take a seat at any spot along the table and copy the sutra text using the brushes and the ink inside the

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<sup>52</sup> Jui-Jen Shih and Yu-Chieh Lin 林羽婕, “Embracing Calligraphy/Caressing Culture” (“擁抱書法·親吻文化”), in Exhibition catalogue of *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* (Taipei: Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, 2009), 24–32.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



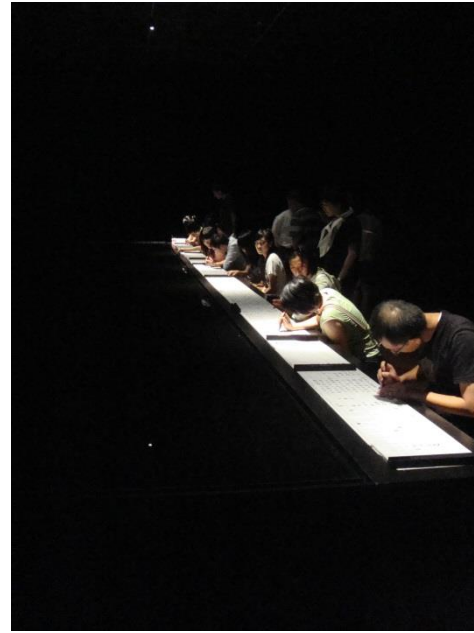


*Writing & Infinity* by the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei's Rainbow Team and the Industrial Technology Research Institute of Taiwan in *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei.  
Photo by the author.



*Nothingness* by Mathias Woo in *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei.  
Photo by the author.

big tank. On the opposite side of the tank are glass cases in which Tong's highly stylistic, wild cursive calligraphies are displayed. The surface of the glass is partially smeared with black ink, as if the ink from the tank has spilled over onto the glass, thus blocking Tong's works from full visibility. The space is filled with the scent of the ink. The sound of ink dripping into the tank is subtly amplified to resonate in the background.



*Sishu xi* (2009) by Ray Chen in *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei.  
Photo by the author.

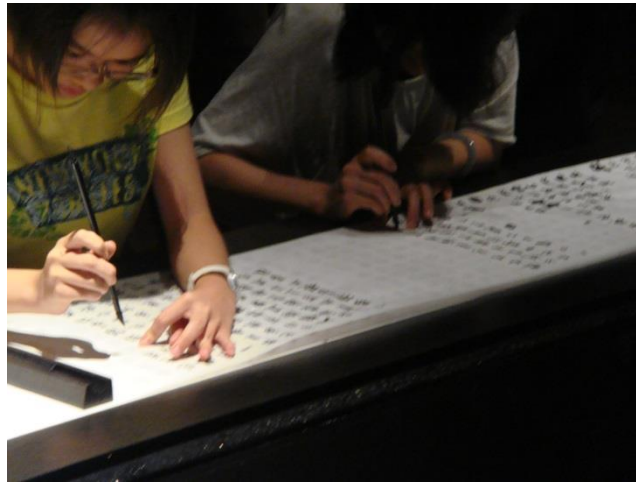
Many visitors did take up the brush to copy the sutra text and became highly absorbed in the act of writing. Alternatively, or at different moments, they could walk around the room to experience the installation from different angles and see other visitors performing the same writing act. What makes *Sishu xi* particularly rich and nuanced is that on top of the alternation between performing and observing—a dynamic that allows viewer engagement from different vantage points and corporeal experiences—it deliberately embeds Chinese calligraphy discourses. The concentration of these discourses within the exhibition—a realm removed and thus denaturalized from conventional contexts for Chinese calligraphy (such as classrooms or museums)—invites renewed reflection on Chinese calligraphy praxis.

That many visitors were able to sit down, take up the brush, and become absorbed in writing Chinese calligraphy also suggests their sense of ownership of this practice. In a public interview, Ray Chen expressed that he intended for people to revisit the practice of Chinese calligraphy, which he perceived to be more detached from daily life than it once had been.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the ink used in the installation was mixed with certain ingredients to create a special fragrance intended to call forth visitors' memories through olfactory stimulation. So what was it

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<sup>54</sup> Ray Chen, interview by Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, 2009, *X beyond O Artist Interview*, accessed June 2, 2012, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72vGSaRHUB4>.

like when Chinese calligraphy was more “integral” to daily life? And how did visitors respond to the invitation to take up the brush and resume this now “distanced” practice?



*Sishu xi* (2009) by Ray Chen in *X beyond O: Calligraphy-Sign-Space* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei.  
Photo by the author.

Under the Mandarin Chinese system of cultural education promoted by the Chinese Nationalist government in postwar Taiwan, Chinese calligraphy is emblematic of national culture and tradition. In addition to holding a central place in the calligraphy societies, exhibitions, competitions, and publications associated with this political-cultural agenda, Chinese calligraphy has been part of the mandated Chinese language curriculum for primary and middle school students. Alternately called “writing class” (*xiezi ke* 寫字課) or “National Language class” (*guoyu ke* 國語課, *guoyu* meaning Mandarin), this course was mandated in a manner similar to that used to promote calligraphy within the Japanese colonial education system. In 1968, the government instituted a compulsory nine-year curriculum for Taiwanese citizens in primary and junior high school. The curriculum standard published by the government in 1975 stipulates that Chinese calligraphy education must be provided beginning in the third grade, and that a specific amount of time each week must be allotted for its practice.<sup>55</sup> Chinese calligraphy education in junior high and high school is also listed in the Chinese language and literature curriculum (*guowen ke* 國文科), in which it often takes the form of homework.<sup>56</sup> Most students are required to turn in calligraphy copybook assignments or weekly journals written in Chinese calligraphy. For the majority of students, the completion of these assignments is laborious and even painful, although many also find a sense of achievement in gradually mastering the art and gaining

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<sup>55</sup> Chinese calligraphy practice is instituted under the “writing class” along with regular writing practice (writing by pencil or pen); these practices should be carried out for forty minutes a week. See *Curriculum Standard for Primary Schools of Taiwan* (國民小學課程標準) (Taipei: Ministry of Education, 1975).

<sup>56</sup> See Lee-Er Lin 林麗娥, “The Present Circumstances and Evaluation of Calligraphy Education in Taiwan (臺灣書法教育之現況與評估),” in *Research Project of National Science Council of Taiwan* (1999), and Shew-Hua Lee 李秀華 and Shih-Nien Yang 楊勢年, “A Study of the Status of Primary Calligraphy Education in Taiwan (臺灣書法基礎教育現況之調查研究),” *Kaohsiung Normal University Journal* 25 (2008): 1–24.

recognition in competitions. Some people eventually pick up the practice of Chinese calligraphy again on their own, years after completing their schooling. For those individuals the practice is no longer a torturous school assignment but instead a sophisticated hobby.

*Sishu xi*'s resonance with many visitors' school experiences becomes especially clear when viewing a line of people sitting at the edge of the ink tank, absorbed in the act of copying a given text. There is something about this communal act that recalls the discipline and structure that Michel Foucault has identified as central to modern institutions' means of governance, control, and management of individual bodies.<sup>57</sup> The fact that *Sishu xi* asks visitors to sit down, hold a brush, and engage with the pressing, dragging, and twisting of that brush to form scripts further pushes each individual writer's corporeal gestures into the foreground of what may be read as an allegory of cultural disciplines. As Carrie Noland theorizes about embodied subjectivity, "it is by gesturing that bodies become inscribed with meanings in cultural environments."<sup>58</sup> *Sishu xi*, by inviting visitors to alternately re-perform and observe the gesture of writing Chinese calligraphy, restages and potentially invites reflection on the embodied process of subjectification. To note, despite being an embodied discipline, Chinese calligraphy continues to be developed by practitioners, much like how dancers create aesthetic innovations upon the training they received (as I will draw attention to in the next chapter). For the moment, I want to highlight the difference between the collective practice that evokes cultural discipline and the self-practice that is a private cultivation endeavor most compellingly staged in *Sishu xi*.

In fact, the practice of Chinese calligraphy in Taiwan has many different forms. I want to be cautious of presenting the picture of Chinese culture's existence in Taiwan as solely a result of the Nationalist government's political ideological promotion. Indeed, politics plays a significant role in shaping postwar Taiwanese people's national conscious and cultural environments, but it works through interaction with the different streams of historical cultural processes in Taiwan. In terms of Chinese calligraphy, the policy aligns with the historical Sinographic writing practice that came with Chinese migrants since the seventeenth century. Calligraphy was also part of the general curriculum during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan (1895–1945). This is to say that although much of the contemporary Taiwanese experience of practicing Chinese calligraphy is tied to the directives of the Nationalist educational program, the history of this writing practice extends far beyond any single political cause and is unevenly aligned or in tension with the complex regime changes, foreign occupations, and migratory settlements reflected in various cultural continuities and breaks throughout Taiwan's history.<sup>59</sup>

Pierre Nora's theorization of the topographics of memory offers a useful way of interpreting Chinese calligraphy in Taiwan, if it indeed has become a waning practice that some people pick up again and use to reconnect. I suggest that Chinese calligraphy in Taiwan lies somewhere between the *lieux* and the *milieux de memoire*. Nora differentiates between sites (*lieux*) of memory, which he characterizes as museums or monuments that objectify and conserve memory, and environments (*milieux*) of memory, which offer living, evolving

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<sup>57</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (1978; repr., New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>58</sup> Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 206.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of the unique deployment of Roman and Sinographic scripts versus indigenous languages in Taiwan throughout its history of foreign occupations, see Tsu Jing, "The Missing Script of Taiwan," in *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 144–173.

experiences of the past.<sup>60</sup> Chinese calligraphy exists in *lieux de memoire*, as a treasured practice central to national culture and tradition. Ancient examples of this practice, such as scrolls created by renowned historical calligraphers, are secured and exhibited in the museums. Much of this Chinese cultural treasure was brought to Taiwan with the postwar migration of the Nationalist regime. Housed in places such as the National Palace Museum at the outskirts of Taipei, these precious ancient Chinese calligraphy scrolls, along with other types of Chinese cultural antiques, have been widely exhibited in order to articulate a continuity of Chinese national culture, history, and tradition. This practice is in keeping with the regime's Chinese nationalist vision and was vital to the formation of the citizens' national conscious in the postwar years. As *milieux de memoire*, however, Chinese calligraphy practice crosses a range of applications and contexts, from folk rituals of Chinese diasporic cultures, to classes on writing Chinese calligraphy, and more contemporary contexts. Examples include the TV screen that is also a surface for calligraphy projection in Matthias Woo's installation, and such TV programs as *A Word a Day* (*Meiri yizi* 每日一字; 1981–1998), which demonstrates “proper” writing of the standard scripts of Chinese words via calligraphy, accompanied by information on their classical etymologies, standard (i.e., Mandarin) pronunciations, and proper usages, whose broadcast reached the living rooms of Taiwanese people for a substantial period of time, a facet of the nationalist teaching penetrating the everyday.<sup>61</sup>

*Sishu xi* does not stop at inviting reflections on the constructive processes of subjectification that penetrate corporeal experiences and memory spaces. It also engages the discourses of Chinese calligraphy in such a way that immersion in their sense of authenticity is constantly met with their possible destabilizations, so that there is something almost like an alternation between love and doubt, dedication and hesitation, attachment and alienation that constantly plays with the work's possible meanings. The “*Sishu*” in the work's title refers to private studios for education that served as alternatives to public schools in the premodern Chinese tradition. *Xi* means practice. In the essay in the exhibition catalogue, the work is also referred to in English as “self-practice.” Whereas the installation takes place in a public exhibition, and its relational aesthetics stage a collective performance of the writing act for the public, much emphasis is also placed on the private (*si* 私), individual, internal dimension of the self's practice. *Sishu xi*'s description explains that the ink tank alludes to the legend of the “Sage Calligrapher,” Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), whose diligent practice of calligraphy by a pond was said to have made its water turn “dark as ink” from the constant washing of his brushes. “In this modern era where calligraphy is in decline, Ray Chen intends to reverse the flow of time and transform the exhibition into a space of self-practice, taking the audience back to a time where calligraphy was at its finest,” according to the catalogue description.<sup>62</sup> With this, we are brought again to the suturing of the master narrative of an ancient Chinese memory with the contemporary Taiwanese audience's immediate corporeal memory, which the creation of environmental stimulants seeks to reactivate with a time-reversal effect.

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<sup>60</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

<sup>61</sup> *A Word a Day* was produced by China TV of Taiwan, one of the three government-dominated television stations, and the only available ones in Taiwan from the 1970s to the 1990s. The daily five-minute program was produced between 1981 to 1987 and had strongly imprinted on the minds of the people growing up in Taiwan during this period.

<sup>62</sup> Exhibition catalogue of *X beyond O*, 110.

Within this discursively articulated aesthetic tradition, do contemporary master Tong Yang Tze's works, encased at the other end of the ink tank, stand in for an aspired-to artistry? Would the copying practice that is foundational to the study of Chinese calligraphy on one end of the "pond" guarantee the attainment of artistry on the other end? Another historical anecdote mentioned in the exhibition catalogue asserts that Wang Xizhi's son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之, despite diligent practice (using up eighteen tanks of water), was humbled by his father's skill—a single stroke added to the son's writing by the father was its only praiseworthy feature.<sup>63</sup> If "self-practice" is necessary but not a guarantee for artistry, what is the purpose of it? Or, is "self-practice" enough as an act for its own sake? This brings up another line of discourse embedded in the installation—the sutra text. In the Buddhist tradition, sutra copying as a private ritual is an act in which one finds union with Buddhist teachings; it is also a form of meditation, through which one cultivates a purer sense of self.<sup>64</sup> Much of this private ritual is about practicing a mode of being, and the practice itself is all that matters. To think in light of Buddhism's transcendence of worldly pursuits, "artistry" then is perhaps not to be engaged as a form of worldly gain (or recognition) that externally drives the self's practice, but rather as something along the lines of self-cultivation, for which the act of self-practice itself is thus solely sufficient. Tong's works are discretely submerged under the ink smears; visible on the other end is a collective gesture of concentrated writing/copying. Self-practice's intensive introversion can be seen in different lights. Each round of viewing produces another layer of complexity.

### **Chendian 沈澱 (Sedimentation) versus the Developmentalist Race**

In the post-show talk after the 2009 Taipei restaging of *Wild Cursive*, the third installment of *Cursive: A Trilogy*, Lin Hwai-Min mentioned Ray Chen's recent installation *Sishu xi*. Seeing the line of people quietly absorbed in writing Chinese calligraphy as part of that work, Lin was delighted, and he relayed that experience to the audience of *Wild Cursive*, emphasizing the state of *chendian* 沈澱 in writing Chinese calligraphy and extolling its positive value.<sup>65</sup> *Chendian* literally means the process of sedimentation, in which materials settle to the bottom of something, often a liquid solution; in this case, the liquid also becomes more purified as the solids are deposited on the bottom. The settling and purification central to the process of *chendian* take time (and patience) to organically run their course. The process thus lends itself as a metaphor for a state of being in which a kind of meditative tranquility becomes essential. I suggest that the exaltation of *chendian* as it is accessed through the act of writing Chinese calligraphy, this longing for a certain experience or state of being framed within the structures of memory discussed earlier illuminates much about experiences of Taiwan's modernization process. Taking cues from the degree to which Chinese calligraphy has been reengaged in relation to computerization, I delve into the discourse of computerization in Taiwan and the structures of feeling that have accompanied it. More specifically, I draw attention to a certain

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> John Stevens, "Shakyo: Sutra Copying," in *Sacred Calligraphy of the East* (Boulder, Colo., and London: Shambhala Publications, 1981), 97–131. Sutra copying can also be an act of worship for the repose of the deceased or a prayer for the well-being of others. See also Amy McNair, "Texts of Taoism and Buddhism and the Power of Calligraphic Style," in *The Embodied Image Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*, ed. Robert E. Harrist and Wen Fong (Princeton, N.J.: Art Museum, Princeton University, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 224–239.

<sup>65</sup> Field note, September 17, 2009.

kind of “developmentalist” ethos that brings to light new ways of understanding the *contemporary* choreographed via *Cursvie* series.

That the Industrial Technology Research Institute of Taiwan was involved in the technical support of the house team’s installation of *X beyond O* makes clear the extent to which computerization is undergirded by industry. In fact, ITRI played a significant role in the development of the information technology (IT) industry that drove the country’s economic development in the last two decades of the twentieth century, leading it to become internationally recognized as a fully developed economic competitor.

The IT industry in Taiwan began in the 1980s as the focal point of a state-led plan to promote “strategic industries” characterized as high-value, skilled, and export-oriented that enhanced quality of life and had low environmental impact. In the previous decade, the rise of labor-intensive, export-oriented industries had elevated Taiwan to the ranks of “newly industrialized countries” such as Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore. The rise of the IT industry in Taiwan thus continued a government mission that began in the 1950s, when local manufacturing began to take the place of imports, and continued in the 1960s, through the promotion of exports, and into the 1970s, with the development of heavy and capital-intensive industries. The IT industry has further accelerated the country’s program of industrial upgrades and indigenous technological advancement, enabling it to “close in on” the progress of advanced industrialized countries. In fact, the development of high technology at this time is shared by Taiwan’s neighboring newly industrialized countries (NIC).

Seizing the momentum created by the launch of personal computers and microelectronics, Taiwan’s IT industry initially focused on manufacturing and exporting information hardware as a subcontractor for multinational corporations such as IBM. Taiwan’s innovative small- and medium-size companies were flexible and quick to respond to market trends. As corporations from the First World reoriented—by downsizing long-term, unionized employees in favor of subcontracted workers; shifting manufacturing overseas to take advantage of cheaper labor and fewer regulations; and developing a global communications network and financial system that enabled a newly transnational industrialism<sup>66</sup>—Taiwanese companies adapted, too. Soon, Taiwanese companies became the second-tier subcontractor in the transnational production chain, further capitalizing on Taiwan’s decentralized industrial structure. The focus over the past few decades on software development, national and global marketing efforts, and the application of IT to various aspects of life in order to create an “information society” represents the latest effort to advance Taiwan’s industry, achieve “technological autonomy,” and “enhance the overall quality of the citizens’ life.”<sup>67</sup>

Scholars in political science have theorized the emphasis on the IT industry in many emerging East Asian countries as “catch-up developmentalism.” This term captures a feeling of urgency implicit in the race to catch up with countries whose industries were more developed; for Taiwan, those countries at the time were the United States and Japan. A strong sense of competition also exists among the NICs in this larger developmental “race” and even permeates

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<sup>66</sup> For the political-economic transformation from Fordism to flexible accumulation in the U.S. context in the 1970s to 1980s, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 121–200.

<sup>67</sup> Vincent Wei-cheng Wang, “Developing the Information Industry in Taiwan: Entrepreneurial State, Guerrilla Capitalists, and Accommodative Technologists,” *Pacific Affairs* 68, no. 4 (1995/1996): 551–576.

local discourses. From the local standpoint, the success or failure of development is measured according to how effectively the country has closed the gap. For instance, in 1997, when Taiwan's IT industry had indeed contributed greatly to the country's economic development, its contributions were assessed in terms of how it had narrowed the gap between Taiwan and leading countries in the international arena:

In the era of steel and petrochemical industry, Taiwan did not catch up with it, missing the timing for developing automobile and aviation industries. But in the semiconductor industry that silicon has set off, Taiwan is *moving in step with the world* (*yu shijie tongbu* 與世界同步). Currently the output value of Taiwan's IT industry is ranked the third in the world, after only America and Japan; the output value of semiconductor industry is ranked the fourth in the world, after America, Japan, and Korea.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, in 1999, Taiwanese reports lauded that "Taiwan's notebook PC is world no. 1" in the amount of production in the world market.<sup>69</sup> And political scientist Vincent Wei-Cheng Wang, in his study of Taiwan's IT industry in 1995, had already characterized IT as "the bridge for Taiwan—connecting Third World stardom status to First World prestige."<sup>70</sup>

Significantly, the notion of "catching up" not only permeated the discourses of Taiwan's IT industry and economic development in general but also elevated the country's international stature. I am interested in delving into how the drive to "catch up" has spurred the development and achievements of countries like Taiwan. In addition to considering the sense of urgency that accompanies these endeavors, I wish to draw attention to the affective and kinesthetic qualities embedded in the "catching up"—conditions that are also vital to the structures of feeling that underlie such developmentalism. Raymond Williams has identified "structures of feeling" as a "particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period." They are distinguished from "reduced senses of the social as the institutional and the formal," instead encompassing "meanings and values that are actively lived and felt" as part of a process that may "not yet [be] recognized as social but [is] taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which [...] has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics." This process has a sense of structure, "as a set, with specific internal relations at once interlocking and in tension," and is in variable relations with formal and systematic beliefs.<sup>71</sup> Williams's attention to the affective of the *social* is illuminating, particularly as "structures of feeling" concern the distinct qualities of a specific period as we now reflect on the ethos of Taiwan's developmentalism (that has passed its emergent stage). In the developmentalist "structure of feeling," development is imagined as a race along linear tracks; the ones who have fallen behind are compelled to speed up in order to catch up with the front runners. As the metaphor "moving in step with the world" suggests, "catching up" also translates positional sameness in a linear space to a sense of kinesthetic correspondence and simultaneity. To move in step with the world, which, as Wang's assessment discloses, is really the First World, is a chief desire within the developing Third World. Moreover, a sense of positive agency is attributed to the sentiment and action of "catching up,"

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<sup>68</sup> "Taiwan, Technological Island" ("Taiwan, keji dao 臺灣, 科技島") *Commonwealth Magazine* (*Tianxia zazhi* 天下雜誌), June 5, 1997, 41–48; italics mine.

<sup>69</sup> Ya-Huei Fang, "Taiwan's Notebook PC is World No. 1" ("Taiwan bijixing diannao ju shijie diyi 台灣筆記型電腦居世界第一") *Global View Magazine* (*Yuanjian zazhi* 遠見雜誌), December 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Wang, "Developing the Information Industry in Taiwan," 555.

<sup>71</sup> Williams, "Structures of Feeling."



as the conclusion of Wang's study suggests: "The success of a NIC like Taiwan in developing high-tech offers optimism for the Third World: a nation's place in the international system *is not ascribed, but acquired.*"<sup>72</sup>

To be sure, the sentiment of "catching up" is conditioned and structured in alignment with the ideology of modern political and economic developmentalism. Political scientist Kate Manzo has elucidated a modernist discourse of developmental theory. She points out that developmentalism "relies on the principles of nineteenth-century liberal philosophy, which treat the individual nation-state in the Third World as the sovereign subject of development, and which accepts the Western model of national autonomy with growth as the appropriate one to emulate."<sup>73</sup> Exemplary of "a logocentric disposition," the discourse of modernization theory sets the First World and Third World in opposition to each other, a dynamic in which "the former clearly represent the ideal, the model to which the latter must aspire."<sup>74</sup> The two bear oppositional traits: "within the boundaries of the Western world one finds the already grown, autonomous, rational, democratic, educated, secular, and wealthy state. Outside of this space resides the 'traditional other'; ungrown, dependent, emotional, authoritarian, illiterate, superstitious, and poverty-stricken."<sup>75</sup>

Developmental theorists have identified "catch-up developmentalism" as a "successful" paradigm that resulted in the "East Asian Miracle."<sup>76</sup> Apparently, such a view operates within modernist discourse as a parallel to the objective of development. But in celebrating this paradigm, studies of East Asian countries' "catch-up developmentalism" seem to endow a sense of agency to what said modernist discourse has designated as the "nondeveloped object," a phenomenon that Wang's conclusion also exemplifies. Particularly, the studies emphasize the state government's role in effecting the "catch-up." Echoing Wang's study, Japanese theorist Murakami Yasusuke points out that developmentalism "approves government intervention in the market from a long-term perspective" insofar as it is useful in achieving the objective of industrialization, or a continuous growth in per capita production, another capitalist framework.<sup>77</sup> Significantly, the paradigm of "catch-up developmentalism" may be read as an alternative to the paradigm of neoliberalism represented by the "Washington Consensus," a model whose Asian counterparts differ mostly in regards to their approach to government intervention and reliance on neoliberal prescriptions for greater privatization, freedom of capital, and integration in the

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<sup>72</sup> Wang, "Developing the Information Industry in Taiwan," 576; italics mine.

<sup>73</sup> Kate Manzo, "Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 26, no. 2 (1991): 6.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 14. Moreover, a "parent/child metaphor" is contained in the discourse of a relationship "between an individual-developed subject and a non-developed object." Citing Ashis Nandy's thesis, Manzo points out the colonialist nature in this metaphor: "The theory of progress as applied to the individual life-cycle [results in] the frequent use of childhood as a design of cultural and political immaturity or [...] inferiority. Much of the pull of the ideology of colonialism and much of the power of the idea of modernity can be traced to the evolutionary implications of the concept of the child in the Western worldview."

<sup>76</sup> Such as Akira Suehiro and Tom Gill, *Catch-up Industrialization: The Trajectory and Prospects of East Asian Economies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), and Peter C.Y. Chow, *Trade and Industrial Development in East Asia: Catching Up or Falling Behind* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> Yong W. Lee, *The Japanese Challenge to the American Neoliberal World Order: Identity, Meaning, and Foreign Policy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 64.

world market.<sup>78</sup> The government in Taiwan, for example, assumed the role of manager, financier, venture capitalist, and information provider in the 1980s and 1990s, thereby nurturing high-tech industry and the accompanying economic development.<sup>79</sup> The idea of government intervention for the good of the nation's economic growth corresponds to and is undergirded by the modernist conception of the nation-state as the sovereign subject of development. As Manzo points out, the developmentalist construct sees "the Western state [as] the sovereign subject and privileged agent of change and progress for its non-Western counterpart," a notion that is "analogous to modernity's 'reasoning man' in that its desired attributes are those prized in individuals."<sup>80</sup> Within this ideological framework, the East Asian countries' government interventions—launched with the aim of "catching-up"—represent a reversal: their passivity and objecthood are overturned in favor of animating their efforts to become competitive in the international marketplace. It is like "growing up" to become the "reasoning man," as seen from the "child's" perspective. The kinesthetic resonance inherent in such an evolution adds to the sense of the nation's agency, if directed toward staging innovation within the structures of existing capitalist frameworks (as opposed to acting in resistance).<sup>81</sup>

The intellectual genealogy of the developmentalist discourse—including the concepts of "racing" and "catching up"—can be traced to Russian economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron and his thesis of the "latecomer effect," published in the 1950s.<sup>82</sup> Based on his study of industrialization in nineteenth-century Europe, he identifies the "latecomer effect" as the material condition of "follower" countries. Rather than seeing the "lateness" as a drawback, he theorizes via his historical study that the latecomers possess an advantage in that they can learn from the leaders' success and *accelerate* the process of industrialization. State intervention is also key to his thesis. As Gerschenkron's student Albert Fishlow summarizes:

The central notion is the positive role of relative economic backwardness in inducing systematic substitution for supposed prerequisites for industrial growth. State intervention

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<sup>78</sup> "Washington Consensus" was coined by the free-market economist John Williamson in the 1980s. The term refers to the "lowest common denominator of policy advice" directed at mostly Latin American countries by the IMF, the World Bank, and other Washington-based international economic institutions and think tanks. In the 1990s, it became the global framework for "proper" economic development. In exchange for much-needed loans and debt-restructuring schemes, governments in the global south were required to adhere to the programs of the Washington Consensus. See Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–20. See also John Williamson, ed., *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1990), and Barbara Stallings, ed., *Global Change, Regional Responses* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>79</sup> Meredith Jung-En Woo, "After the Miracle: Neoliberalism and Institutional Reform in East Asia," in *Neoliberalism and Institutional Reform in East Asia: A Comparative Study*, ed. Meredith Jung-En Woo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–34; Yun-han Chu, "Re-engineering the Developmental State in an Age of Globalization: Taiwan in Defiance of Neoliberalism," in *Neoliberalism and Institutional Reform in East Asia*, ed. Meredith Jung-En Woo, 91–121.

<sup>80</sup> Manzo, "Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory," 14.

<sup>81</sup> Despite widespread criticisms of seeing American neoliberalism as a kind of "capitalist imperialism," Aihwa Ong discusses how Asian governments have selectively adopted neoliberal forms in creating economic zones and imposing market criteria on citizenship, reconfiguring neoliberalism into new types of governance. See Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).

could, and did, compensate for the inadequate supplies of capital, skilled labor, entrepreneurship and technological capacity encountered in follower countries seeking to modernize. England, the locus of the Industrial Revolution, could advance with free market guidance along the lines of Adam Smith. France, beginning later, would need greater intervention to compensate for its limitations. In Germany, the key innovation would be the formation of large banks to provide access to needed capital for industrialization, even as greater Russian backwardness required a larger and more direct state compensatory role.<sup>83</sup>

Gerschenkron's historical study is the antithesis of many neoliberal persuasions, particularly regarding government deregulations. It is clear that Gerschenkron's study operates within the modernist discourse that Manzo has elucidated. But it also brings to light that the "emotional and kinesthetic structure" of "catch-up developmentalism" has been present since the Industrial Revolution in Europe, preceding the postwar time frame and exceeding colonialism while in complex interaction with (neo)colonialism.

Applying Gerschenkron's "latecomer" thesis to the study of contemporary "catch-up developmentalism," John Mathews, writing from the perspective of business management, emphasizes the need for developing countries to "link" with the global value-chain as a way to leverage its "lateness."<sup>84</sup> He cites the high-tech industry that helped advance economic development in East Asian countries and attributes its success to the global production chain. Mathews's prescription sheds new light on developmentalism's contemporary permutation—the need for developing countries to insert themselves into the global economy, often by providing low-cost manufacturing service to acquire knowledge from the advanced world as a trade-off, in order to "catch up."

At this point it is worth considering Taiwan's developmentalist path in relation to *chendian* and Chinese calligraphy. Developmentalism contains kinesthetic and emotional feeling—a sense of racing forward to catch up and be in step with the First World—while ensuring and strengthening the interdependence of local and global economies. As discussed earlier, the rise of the IT industry in Taiwan, and the subsequent computerization of its citizens' lives, sparked an intense phase of industrial and economic development. The invocation of *chendian*, and the country's reengagement with the practice of Chinese calligraphy, responds to the effects of development in profound ways. While reengagement with a traditional writing form immediately evokes a sense of nationalistic nostalgia, I think it does more than enact a simple symbolic function, given the fraught notion of nationalism in light of Taiwan's history of migrations, colonizations, and shifting identity politics. I suggest that the resurfacing of *chendian* articulates a deeper response to the ethos of developmentalist agitations subjected to and in interaction with the unique structure of cultural memory in Taiwan discussed earlier. As to its experience, *chendian* is a mode of being that resonates with the meditative and encompasses corporeal substance and kinesthetic registers. Rather than worrying about one's position or movement in relation to the perceived superior other and anxieties about "closing the gap,"

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<sup>83</sup> Albert Fishlow, cited in note 11 of John A. Mathews, "Catch-up Strategies and the Latecomer Effect in Industrial Development," *New Political Economy* 11, no. 3 (2006): 313–335. For original reference see Albert Fishlow, "Alexander Gerschenkron: A Latecomer Who Emerged Victorious," *Economic History Services* 14 (February 2003): 3.

<sup>84</sup> Mathews, "Catch-up Strategies and the Latecomer Effect in Industrial Development."

*chendian* directs focus toward oneself and the cultivation of a purer and more settled being in which “sedimentation” happens organically over time rather than being harshly driven by an external cause (that then in turn compels one to innovate along this cause).

A similar shift in focus can be seen in the evolving role of computers within Taiwanese society. In the mid-1990s, on the path to the nation’s wholesale informationalization, the urgency to “catch up” still permeated mainstream discourses. In 1996, an article assessing Taiwan’s information education in *Commonwealth Magazine*, a mainstream periodical centering on business and commerce, bears an alarming title that warns against falling behind: “Information Race Begins Globally, Whether Taiwan Can Move in Step with the Globe Depends on the Success or Failure of Information Education.”<sup>85</sup> By the mid-2000s, the metaphorical race was paired with persistent concerns about the well-being of individuals living in this newly information-saturated world. A 2005 article in *Commonhealth* magazine (a sister publication to *Commonwealth* launched in 1998) titled “Combating Eye Fatigue Caused by Computers” exemplifies one of countless responses to the increasing presence of technology.<sup>86</sup> The article recommends many methods of recovering from the eye strain caused by staring excessively at computer screens (a symptom of working overtime). Despite the militant tone of the article’s title, evident in the suggestion that the body’s exhaustion be “combated,” the text proposes a number of relaxation techniques, including self-massage along certain acupuncture points, that draw from traditional Chinese medical knowledge. In this context, though, the relaxation techniques are framed as ways to recuperate from the stress of work in order to generate more productivity.

Indeed, a return to traditional, indigenous practices is often proposed in response to the bodily strain and fatigue caused by working under the condition of developmental pursuits. The arts likewise accrue socioeconomic relevance in relation to the level of *feeling* they stir within the body. Consideration of developmentalism’s structure of feeling in Taiwan thus calls forth the kind of antidotal sentiment/function attributed to Chinese calligraphy, an association that is vital to both Ray Chen’s *Sishu xi* and Cloud Gate’s *Cursive* series. But the parallels between socioeconomic conditions and the arts can be dealt with on a broader level as well. Even when seen as separate domains, there is a clear parallelism between the transnationalized operations of the socioeconomic realm and the arts in terms of their shared need to connect to or move in step with the international arena. Recall, for instance, Lin Hwai-Min’s identification of Cloud Gate with *contemporary dance* and the line of Euro-American choreographers’ aesthetics (discussed in the Introduction) or the insertion of local arts development into the international that echoes Taiwan’s economic needs.

The transnationalized operations of the socioeconomic realm and the arts become further intertwined as both are subjected to political currents. While economic concerns are often inextricable from political ones, Taiwan’s controversial status as a legitimate “nation” raises the stakes for its linkage with the global economy. The necessity to politically and economically link with other nations ensnares Taiwanese arts as well. Indeed, many branches of the arts share a

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<sup>85</sup> “Information Race Begins Globally, Whether Taiwan Can Move in Step with the Globe Depends on the Success or Failure of Information Education” (“Zixun jing sai, quanqiu kai pao, Taiwan neng bu neng yu quanqiu qi bu, zixun jiaoyu de chengbai shi guan jian 資訊競賽，全球開跑，臺灣能不能與全球齊步，資訊教育的成敗是關鍵”), *Commonwealth Magazine*, July 1, 1996, pp. 212–223.

<sup>86</sup> “Combating Eye Fatigue Caused by Computers” (“Dui kang diannao zaocheng de yanjing pilao 對抗電腦造成的眼睛疲勞”), *Commonhealth Magazine*, March 2005, pp. 70–74.

concern with engaging with the international art world, and in turn become further enmeshed in the political and economic forces of the global context.

In the July 1999 issue of *Commonwealth Magazine*, an article titled “Art, Taiwan’s New International Passport” brings to the surface the interconnectedness of the country’s political, economic, and artistic development. Written at the height of Taiwan’s IT industry achievement, when its notebook PC production became “world no. 1,” the article draws attention to using the arts—with a special mention of Cloud Gate and images of its 1998 piece *Moon Water*—as a “world language” that serves “dialogue with the international”:

Taiwan, an island often unmarked on the world map, because of having multiple “world no. 1s” in commercial and industrial strength, [through] “Made in Taiwan” has reached deeply in every corner of the world. [However,] the knowledge of Taiwan by the international world mostly comes from economic impressions.

With Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and various scales of international festivals [in Taiwan], Taiwan is able to use the world language of “art,” a relatively more moving and precise language, to dialogue with the international.

“In order to expand its economic power and diplomatic influence, Taiwan ought to use the world language to help its endeavors in connecting the two,” a critic from New York Times pointed out after watching Taiwanese groups perform in New York. Performing arts is exactly the world language; the government can engage with the world by funding performing arts groups to perform abroad.<sup>87</sup>

This passage demonstrates the ways political concern surrounding Taiwan’s international standing have affected both the performing arts and the country’s economy. I discuss the political and economic dimensions of the Taiwanese performing arts in chapter 5. Here I want to address the question of *contemporary dance* and the aspiration for a kind of kinesthetic simultaneity (“moving in step with the world”) that traverses the domains of politics, economics, social concerns, and the arts.

### **Contemporaneity**

Art historian Reiko Tomii’s theorization of the conditions and temporality of “the contemporary” is illuminating for the question at hand. In her study of the discursive practices of *gendai bijutsu*, or contemporary art, in Japan from the 1950s to the 1970s, a period in which Japan was undergoing a process of rapid economic growth similar to that of Taiwan during the 1980s, Tomii offers insights on how “global contemporary art” is discussed today. She argues that staging a dynamic dialogue between past and present in our historical consciousness is possible if we read the “contemporary” in “contemporary art” as meaning “occurring at the same time,” or “contemporaneously.” Moreover, she asserts that bringing such temporal sameness to the fore points to the necessity of considering contemporaneity as a relationship among multiple entities:

To consider something “occurring contemporaneously” is to consider something occurring contemporaneously *with* something else; at the minimum two entities are required in order for “contemporaneity” to be perceived. To put this in the context of art,

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<sup>87</sup> “Art, Taiwan’s New International Passport” (“Yishu, Taiwan xin guoji tongxingzheng 藝術，臺灣新國際通行證”), *Commonwealth Magazine*, July 1, 1999, pp. 250–257.

we discuss “global contemporary art” today because we have acquired the ability to see the production of art in multiplicity.<sup>88</sup>

Tomii further elucidates and problematizes the condition for contemporaneity by drawing our attention to the issue of “interface”:

Contemporaneity is a matter of interface because it requires at least two parties for it to occur. [...]“Sites of globalization” can then be rephrased as “sites of globalized interface.” A subsequent question is: who interfaces with whom? On the one hand, the postulation of the global requires reexamination, for there is no such entity as the “global” out there. On the other hand, the external gaze looking at or upon the locale is not the sole viewpoint or mode of interface, because locales also look out at the world (the global) and at each other. This sends us back to the question of individual locales: how does each locale perceive and interact with the global and other locales? And what could that possibly mean?<sup>89</sup>

Tomii points out that the “sites of the globalization of art” often reside in “international institutions and the ubiquitous realm of cyberspace.”<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, she concludes that the complex interplay of international-local in historical discourses of *gendai bijutsu* “prefigures that of the global-local,” while “international was in effect the code word for Euro-America.”<sup>91</sup>

We see a similar pattern in Taiwan’s aspiration to attain parity within the international field of concert dance as well as in the political and economic domains that shape world culture. In this context, the international (a construct that prefigures the global) mainly refers to the First World, or Euro-America. Lin Hwai-Min’s articulation of the concept *contemporary dance* crystalizes the moment when the interplay between international and local is made explicit in domestic discourse. *Contemporary dance*, translated as *dangdai wudao* 當代舞蹈, has slowly been gaining recognition in the realms of Taiwanese dance and dance criticism in recent years; it is certainly more recognized now than in 2001, when *Cursive* was created (and the performance of this utterance was made). But the general public in Taiwan still primarily understands Cloud Gate as *xiandai wu* 現代舞 (modern dance), a term that has a longer existence in Taiwan, dating from its translation of the Euro-American “modern dance” in the postwar years. The ushering in of a new term and concept thus had made visible the extent to which temporal and historical structures inflect the terms of national aspirations and their continuity. We could say that *contemporary dance* as enacted by Cloud Gate contains a process of becoming contemporaneous with the international dance world. This structure of “becoming contemporaneous with the international” mirrors the structure of the developmentalist race and its kinesthetic resonance. Their further entanglement with the political and economic conditions driving Taiwan’s efforts to link with the international community further complicates the stakes of being “contemporary,” as computer and dance, among many, become Taiwan’s “interfaces” through which to engage the world.

At this point we are arriving at an even more intriguing operation in the *contemporary dance* of Cloud Gate, as elaborated in the *Cursive* series. Two disparate forces are at play. On the one hand, Cloud Gate’s practice taps into a nostalgia for Chinese calligraphy, and in particular to

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<sup>88</sup> Reiko Tomii, “Historicizing ‘Contemporary Art’: Some Discursive Practices in *Gendai Bijutsu* in Japan,” *Positions* 12, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 612.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 612.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.

a relatable corporeal memory of its practice, to locate a new mode of being that counters the developmentalist agitation that permeated Taiwanese society. On the other hand, Cloud Gate is compelled to compete in the field of *contemporary dance* in predominantly Euro-American zones via international festivals, and the troupe has developed its aesthetics accordingly. While the dance-miming of the “eight ways of *Yong*” that I brought up in the beginning of the chapter is aligned with the experience of learning Chinese calligraphy that Taiwanese audiences would have harbored since their school days, the faster writing and the linking strokes used to form cursive scripts, as seen in Chou’s dance, attach the immediate feeling of familiarity to an even more ancient Chinese cultural memory, one in which the art of calligraphy and the calligraphy master’s literary expressions entwine. This memory structure has similarly been passed down and embedded in the Chinese Mandarin education system of postwar Taiwan. Significantly, competition in the field of *contemporary dance*, even in the predominantly Euro-American zones of international festivals, has often called for a choreographic strategy that engages a comparable evocation of local cultures.

### **Calligraphing/Choreographing Contemporaneous Aesthetics**

An analysis of the aesthetics of Cloud Gate’s choreography offers insight into how the seemingly disparate forces of local cultural memory and international engagement—and their intricate subcurrents—are negotiated. I suggest that the choreography of *Cursive* contains within it a dual aesthetic pursuit, engaging two forces that operate alongside each other according to distinct aesthetic logics. More broadly, I propose that this duality, as articulated in the *Cursive* series, is an allegory for the political-aesthetic operation of *contemporary dance*. In the case of the *Cursive* series, the distinct aesthetic logics in question are high traditional Chinese aesthetics and the aesthetics of high modernism.<sup>92</sup>

Taking the example of Chou’s dance, after miming the stroke-by-stroke writing of the character *yong*, she repeats the same movement sequence but in a faster speed. The projection then cross-fades to a cursive script of *yong* with its winding and linked-up strokes (𠄎), while Chou shifts to a more fluid dancing and elaborates on the sense of speed and the twisting of the brush, moving beyond the strict correspondence to the shape of the script. Not only does the dancing replay the kinesthetics of Chinese calligraphy, but also shows the derivative of cursive script—as the faster writing of the standard script. The projection changes once more from the cursive script of *yong* to the wild cursive writing of *wu* (“無”/ 無; nothingness). This last intact Chinese character projected on the stage of *Cursive* semantically signals its own and other complete characters’ literal disappearance in the dance. Meanwhile, Chou dances more abundant phrases, wheeling her arms, jump-kicking, landing with intense solidity, traveling across the space, all potent and fluid. As the dance progressively becomes more elaborate and departs from the strict miming of writing the Chinese characters, the projections on stage also show increasingly fewer intact Chinese characters, instead focusing on partial blow-ups of strokes from the ancient scrolls that emphasize the spacing and the tracing in relation to the dancing

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<sup>92</sup> I take a cue from Chen Ya-Ping’s observation of Cloud Gate’s recent work that some of the traditional Chinese aesthetic engagements present in projects like the *Cursive* series, such as *xu* 虛 (emptiness) or “abstract forces of *yin* and *yang*,” “find a congruent partnership with modernism’s anti-representational proclivity.” See Ya-Ping Chen, “In Search of Asian Modernity: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre’s Body Aesthetics in the Era of Globalisation,” in *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wildschut (New York: Routledge, 2009), 327.

onstage. Later installments of the *Cursive* series do not feature projections of ancient Chinese calligraphy scrolls at all, although they still highlight traditional Chinese calligraphy aesthetics. In a way, the section with Chou dancing from *yong* to *wu* anticipates the larger progression of the *Cursive* series, and I propose that it is in this section that the dance's dual aesthetic pursuit can be discerned.



Chou Chang-Ning dances in front of a projection of the near-standard script calligraphy of the character *yong* in the second chapter of *Cursive* (2001), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Liu Chen-hsiang.



Chou Chang-Ning dances in front of a projection of the wild cursive script calligraphy of the character *wu* in the second chapter of *Cursive* (2001), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan.<sup>93</sup>

The character *wu* signals traditional Chinese aesthetics and is heavily inflected by Daoist philosophy deriving from the text *Dao De jing* 道德經.<sup>94</sup> *Wu* designates the state of no-name, nonlimitation, and nonregulation from which *you* 有, or the state of name, limitation, and regulation, is bred. *Dao* contains both *wu* and *you*. It is the unity of the two—formlessness and difference—that is *Dao* 道 (“the Way”).<sup>95</sup> We have encountered an iteration of its contemporary

<sup>93</sup> The still image is taken from the video recording of *Cursive* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre & Jingo Records, 2003).

<sup>94</sup> The *Dao De jing* is ascribed to Laozi, the founder of Daoism, who is traditionally believed to have lived in the waning phase of the Spring and Autumn Period (551–479 BC) in Chinese history. Current archeological research in China traces the text to a Guodian version on bamboo slips (discovered in 1993) and a Mawangdui version on silk (discovered in 1973). See Keping Wang, *Reading the Dao: A Thematic Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2011).



spin in *X beyond O*. But let us dwell a bit more on this aesthetic-philosophical tradition, with the awareness that philosophy is also a kind of discourse. Rooted in the philosophy expounded in the *Dao De jing*, much of what constitutes the aesthetic object, concern, and pursuit within traditional Chinese aesthetic thinking developed in the Wei-Jin era (魏晉; 220–317 AD), when philosophical discourses experienced a rebirth from their height in the Pre-Qin era (先秦 772–221 BC). Traditional Chinese aesthetic thinking dictates that artists should strive to represent, carry forth, or embody *Dao*, the essence and life force of the universe. Only then can their artworks lend meaning or significance to life. It was believed that aesthetic objects should not be isolated, confined *xiang* 象, or forms and manifestations of matter. A *xiang* has to embody *Dao* in order to become an object of aesthetic appreciation. Thus, aesthetic concerns should not end in the *xiang* itself, but in its transcendence; artists should “pursue *beyond* forms and manifestations of matters” (*quzhi xiangwai* 取之象外) to embody *Dao*. In the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD), aestheticians pushed this further by conceiving *jing* 境, a realm that lies beyond *xiang* (*jing shengyu xiangwai* 境生於象外) and is the space of aesthetic appreciation that best embodies *Dao*.

Based on this aesthetic logic of “getting beyond,” which provides the basis of Chinese aesthetic thinking, Wang Bi’s 王弼 (226–249 AD) thesis of *deyi wangxiang* 得意忘象, or “gaining the meaning and leaving behind (*wang* 忘; forget) the manifestations,” corresponds well with the Chinese aesthetic engagement embedded in *Cursive*’s choreography. In Wang’s construct, meaning relies on manifestations to substantiate it (*yiyi xiangjin* 意以象盡), while manifestations rely on language for their explanation (*xiangyi yanzhu* 象以言著). But language and manifestations are not the objectives. To gain the manifestations the language has to be left behind; so the manifestations should be forgotten once the meaning is gained.

*Cursive*’s choreography progresses from the standard script of *yong* to its cursive script, and then to the cursive script of *wu*, and eventually to a characterless-ness that complies with the aesthetic logic of “getting beyond” in pursuit of higher meaning (*yi* 意), or even the attainment of *Dao*. If we follow Wang, the intact Chinese characters in *Cursive* might be both the language (*yan* 言) and the manifestations (*xiang* 象) that will be forgotten and left behind when/if higher meaning is attained. Along the same lines, the projection of *wu* may suggest that there is *no* (more) language nor manifestations (of language); it may even indicate what traditional Chinese art is striving to attain: the state of nonlimitation that composes *Dao*.

The same section in *Cursive* also embodies the aesthetic logic of modernist abstraction. I would note that while the traditional Chinese aesthetic logic hinges upon “going beyond,” modernist abstraction emphasizes “going inward” into the medium’s specificity. Particularly influential in theorizing abstract modernism in art are the writings of American art critic Clement Greenberg. Beginning with his 1939 essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Greenberg formulated modernist art as the result of avant-garde artists’ pursuit of pure artistic expression, devoid of

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<sup>95</sup> Although in many contexts the word *dao* means close to its common translation in English as “the way,” *dao* in the philosophy of the *Dao De jing* contains qualities and characteristics of the objective-less, moving, changing, primitive formlessness that is the origin of the lives and matters of the universe in Chinese cosmological thinking. As Chinese scholar Yeh Lang clarifies, although *Dao* is formless, it is not something “spiritual” (pertaining to God or Heaven); it is objective-less, in accordance with the working of nature (*Dao fa ziran* 道法自然), and its quality is close to that of the “material.” See Yeh Lang (葉朗), *History of Chinese Aesthetics (Zhongguo meixue shi 中國美學史)* (Taipei: Wenchin Publishing, 1996).

external representations. He refined his ideas and frameworks over the years, shifting from avant-garde artists' withdrawal from ideology to an emphasis on modern art's spontaneous and continual evolution out of art of the past. His basic thesis remained consistent, however. In his 1960 essay "Modernist Painting," he asserted that "the essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence."<sup>96</sup> For Greenberg, the medium-specificity of modernist painting where it exercises its "self-criticism" then becomes the opticality of painting's flatness on the rectangular canvas. In other words, there is a logic of "going inward" into the medium, a withdrawal from external representations to dwell on and exploit (without subverting) the artwork's medium-specific attributes and competence, which, in the case of painting, are emblemized in its "flatness."<sup>97</sup>

The dancing in *Cursive* also sees a gradual withdrawal from external representations to pure movement of the body, thus highlighting dance's own medium-specific competence. The miming of the stroke-by-stroke writing of *yong* gives way to the elaboration of the poetic-kinesthetic of the dancing. The dancing embodies, and indeed *is*, the cursive-style calligraphic motion and sensibilities. It does not *represent* Chinese calligraphy, but instead departs from corresponding to the shapes or meanings of the actual Chinese words projected on stage, as projections of those characters becomes less intact and eventually are reduced to nothing. In the end, the focus of the *Cursive* series, as a dance work, is the dancing.

The two kinds of aesthetic logic explored here share an emphasis on progression—either "going beyond" or "going inward" into the medium. What is compelling is that as the dance unfolds in time, it moves along the trajectories of both aesthetic logics, *a transcendence* (of language and its manifestation) *that is also an abstraction*. Although the recognition of *wu* and its meaning play a part in explicating the theoretical import of the traditional Chinese aesthetics embedded in the choreography, audiences with the requisite aesthetic knowledge engage with the dance in terms of *xu* 虛 and *shi* 實 or *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, concepts and modes of expression within the larger body of traditional Chinese aesthetics, to which the traditional aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy belong.

Given the transnationalized condition of Cloud Gate's performance, while the theme of Chinese calligraphy inevitably exudes exotic novelty for foreign audiences, the *Cursive* series does not seem to be "disloyal" to the aesthetic traditions it claims to draw from (this is in part coconstituted with the audience members whose receptions we will engage in chapter 2). Rather, with the *Cursive* series' investment in and cultivation of a distinctive way of dancing that draws from the kinesthetics of cursive-style calligraphing, it at once taps into local memories and presents a new aesthetic statement about *contemporary dance*. We might expand on Tomii's discussion to consider the multiple senses of "contemporaneity" embodied in the performance of Cloud Gate's *Cursive* series, and indeed find a new way of understanding the complexities of *contemporary dance*. Here it is a pursuit of contemporaneity between the local and the international, as represented in the intertwining of Taiwan's economic development, modern dance aspirations, and international politics. It also performs contemporaneity through the

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<sup>96</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1965), in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 5.

<sup>97</sup> The hegemony of Greenberg's art criticism and his expounding of theories of modernism that extol the optical and the formalist endeavor has been problematized and critiqued by later critics. See, for example, Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

interrelation of two systems of aesthetics (traditional high Chinese and contemporary high modernist) whose parallel progression captures the quality and dynamic of a particular contemporaneity in operation.<sup>98</sup> Finally, it enacts a double move of return-flight, of seeking *chendian* in light of the effects of Taiwan's developmentalist path while aesthetically aspiring to be contemporaneous with, and competitive in, the international realm by reanimating the experience of practicing Chinese calligraphy.

### Between Return and Flight

The opening of *Cursive* features the whole ensemble onstage steadily performing a set of fundamental poses of *wushu* in unison, each dancer lit by a spotlight that casts a clearly defined square glow. Their stances are solid, knees bent, slowly pushing through each pose while breathing deeply. Wearing all black and moving within the square frames of light, the dancers evoke the “square-ness” of Chinese words and their writing on rectangular pieces of rice paper. The careful, contained performance of the fundamental moves of *wushu* in unison also suggests the resolute cultivation of traditional arts (Chinese calligraphy as well as *wushu*) that starts with diligent “practice” (*xi 習*) of the fundamentals. Lin Hwai-Min reflected that in retrospect the performance of *Cursive* shares strong similarities with practicing the standard script of Chinese calligraphy (*kaishu 楷書*) within three-by-three grids (*jiu gong ge 九宮格*) on paper—careful, rule-abiding, and concerned about “proper” composition.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, at the time *Cursive* was created both Lin and the dancers were just beginning to acquire deeper knowledge about Chinese calligraphy in general and its cursive script more specifically, while learning and experimenting with borrowing from the kinesthetics of *wushu* to help relay the kinesthetics of Chinese calligraphy. In contrast to the opening of *Cursive*, the opening of *Wild Cursive*, four years later, calls for the whole ensemble to move fiercely and wildly onstage using a predominantly *wushu*-informed physical vocabulary, as the dancers also shout in different ways along with their forceful exertions. Both Chinese calligraphy and *wushu* take time to attain mastery. From *Cursive* (2001) to *Cursive II* (2003) to *Wild Cursive* (2005), the choreography has moved toward juxtaposing a wider range of dancers' individual expressivities as the dancers have also become more and more skillful in utilizing *wushu* in their dancing. As we just discussed, this trajectory contains within it the logic of abstraction in which dancing itself becomes the emphasis, a shift that parallels the gradual reduction and elimination of the projection of actual ancient Chinese calligraphy scrolls onstage throughout the *Cursive* series. *Wild Cursive* features no more projections onstage. Instead, long strips of specially made rice paper hang above the stage, with black ink slowly dripping down on them to form winding downward streams. The transcendence-as-abstraction seen here parallels the dancers' and choreographer's practice and gradual mastery of the arts they set out to study.

In 2006, the year after *Wild Cursive* premiered, Cloud Gate launched *White X 3 (Bai X 3 白 X 3)*. *White X 3* was a restaging of the company's older piece *White* (1998) with the addition of two new parts. Lin Hwai-Min has mentioned that *White X 3* is also inspired by Chinese

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<sup>98</sup> My focus here is identifying the different aesthetic logics that inform strains of abstract modernist art and traditional Chinese aesthetics informed by Daoist philosophy. Historically, the modernist tradition itself has been inspired by East Asian tradition through processes of appropriation. For discussions on how this influence manifested in American art, see, for example, Alexandra Munroe, ed., *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Lin Hwai-Min, postshow talk after *Cursive*, National Theater, Taipei, September 4, 2009.

calligraphy.<sup>100</sup> In presentation, however, *White X 3* is divested of any reference to Chinese calligraphy. The stage floor and the dancers' costumes are all white, while the exposed stage mechanisms (a half-raised black curtain; half-lowered grids with lights hung on them) and lighting carve out "blackness," including a scene lit from behind that shows dancers in black silhouette peeling pieces of tape from the floor in movements that form angled lines with their bodies. Indeed, it is as if the choreography has extended to the movement of the stage mechanisms. The dance movements are much different from the *taiji daoyin* and *wushu* informed postures and shapes seen previously in the *Cursive* series, featuring instead many straight lines and angular shapes. Although these stylistic differences are striking, Cloud Gate dancers have identified a continuity in their approach to movement, noting especially that *wushu* has remained a significant influence. Senior dancer and Associate Artistic Director Lee Ching-Chun 李靜君 has expressed the ways that *wushu* principles, especially the focus on bones and the bending of joints, internally informed their execution of the overall straight and angular movements.<sup>101</sup> Senior dancer Wen Ching-Ching 溫璟靜 has spoken about how in such postures as crossing elbows in front of her body in moments of *White X 3* she would feel energy lines extending from her body through her palms and curving and linking up around her back. She considered this extension of circular energy to be clearly indebted to her exposure to *wushu*.<sup>102</sup>

Cloud Gate resumed the exploration of Chinese calligraphy in *Water Stains on the Wall* (*Wu lou hen* 屋漏痕; 2010). Lin, inspired by the legendary dialogue between renowned calligraphers Huai Su 懷素 and Yen Zhenqing 顏真卿 in 772 AD, which invoked natural imagery and focused on "water stains on the wall," titled his piece after this anecdote, and set out "to challenge [himself] to reach that aesthetic realm, where art is like nature" (看自己能不能觸及那「一一自然」的境界).<sup>103</sup> In *Water Stains* the stage features a large downward projection of negative images of clouds in motion. The resulting imagery looks like flowing black ink that is also airy, ethereal, and semitransparent; it alters the sense of the stage ground, resembling a pool of ever-flowing black ink in all its different shades. To make the projection visible to the audience, the stage features an expansive 8-degree tilted platform. As such, it poses a further challenge to the dancers to remain stable onstage as they spin, leap, roll, and suddenly pause or sink their bodies toward the ground. The dancers wear wide white pants made of extremely light material that contrasts as well as corresponds to the "black clouds" projected on the ground. The dark "sky" (that looks like a pool of flowing black ink) itself changes from partly cloudy to piled with clouds, and in these transitions the dance's curving lines and alternately fluid and forceful movements again become visible. The choreography alternates and draws contrasts between group performances and solos, the swift and the sustained, the dynamic and the still.

*White X 3* and *Water Stains on the Wall* stage what evolves from the contemporaneous double move of return-flight embodied in the dual aesthetic anticipated since *Cursive*. If *White X 3* embodies the near epitome of abstraction, *Water Stains* seems to embody that of the transcendence. *White X 3* "returns" not only to "pure movement" but also to the stage mechanism

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Lee Ching-Chun, interview by the author, March 29, 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Wen Ching-Ching, interview by the author, June 13, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Program of *Water Stains on the Wall* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2010). Huai Su is said to describe to Yan Zhenqing that when Chinese calligraphy is at its most gratifying point it is as if flying birds are darting out from the trees, or a shocked snake is slithering into the grass, or else meeting the pathway of the cracks on the wall—it is all like nature. (其痛快處如飛鳥出林，驚蛇入草，又遇拆壁之路，一一自然.)

itself; *Water Stains* “returns” to an aesthetic ideal evoked by a legendary anecdote, but its ultimate meaning lies in the creation of varying “states” (*zhuangtai* 狀態) of poetic scenery, and perhaps transcends even dance itself (if dance is an important means of generating such states). Both works also fly toward an ever more nonspecific space-time, departing from the stage filled with projections of ancient scrolls that we see in *Cursive*. While *White X 3* is almost fully abstracted, making even the choreography of the stage mechanisms into absolute forms, *Water Stains* imbeds the ancient subtext but collapses the ancient and the current in a presentation of another type of abstracted (as transcended) sphere.

Before we fall into establishing a dichotomy between absolute forms or “nothingness,” recall how we began this chapter—the learning and the practice of the arts of writing and *wushu*. The move from a staging that is filled with the presentation of ancient writings (the artifacts of “tradition” and of Chinese calligraphic art) to its de-emphasis parallels the move from the standard script to faster (wild) cursive writings, which parallels especially the progression of the dancers’ careful learning and practice of *wushu* to its ever more skillful mastery. What I am trying to direct attention to here is the formation of corporeal knowledge and the making of *dancing* itself—beyond the forms that choreographic logic may yield. While this chapter situates the making of the *Cursive* series and the engagement of Chinese calligraphy (the actual doing and its affective registers) in relation to the larger socioeconomic conditions of Taiwan, later chapters engage with ways the kinesthetics of dance alternately move with or against developmentalist structure of feeling. Moreover, we will also consider how, as Taiwanese dance works are increasingly implicated in newly transnationalized conditions of performance through more sustained participation in international festivals, they may be hooked into momentums that are paradoxical to the attempts to alter developmentalist flow in the local context. In the next chapter, we first return to the training in and corporeal experience of dancing of the *Cursive* series to consider what “flights” of semiotic and affective registers these practices may yield when the performance travels across borders.



*White X 3* (2006), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Liu Chen-hsiang.



*Water Stains on the Wall* (2010), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Liu Chen-hsiang.



*White X 3* (2006), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Liu Chen-hsiang.

## Chapter 2

### The Materiality of the Immaterial: Training and Transnational Kinesthesia

Chou's whole-body performance of *yong* 永 reminds me of how my Chinese calligraphy teacher taught me when I was young. Growing up in Taiwan, I received the Chinese Mandarin education outlined in the previous chapter. Besides having students practice with copybooks at their desks, my teacher would ask us to stand up and use our entire hands to practice writing in the air, imparting us with the sense of twisting, pushing, dragging, and their rhythmic executions. We sang out those actions as our hands mimed the calligraphic writing in bigger gestures before we went back to our chairs, desks, brushes, and copybooks. The experience was very much like a dance. In the habitus of the Sinographic, embodied experiences do not operate along a singular mode of rigid discipline, but are necessarily heterogeneous, both pains and pleasures imbued in the process. Moreover, as I compared my experience of learning calligraphy to Chou's *yong* 永 performance, it also dawned on me that to write *yong* 永 in front of audiences, Chou actually had to dance the character in lateral reverse; the left-to-right stroking of Chinese characters needed to be entirely reversed from Chou's vantage point.

As this chapter proceeds, I focus on the kinesthetic training and experiences of the dancers and consciously consider meanings produced from various stances: between the dancers and the choreographer, between the choreographic intention and audience reception, and between differing audience receptions. Just as Cloud Gate's *Cursive* series aligns the Chinese diaspora, Sinographic practices, and transnational modern-contemporary dance, this chapter probes the ways in which these fields are historically linked and creatively engaged and stretched by Cloud Gate's movements—in the senses of its physical touring across borders and its kinesthetic experiments, which are enabled by specific conditions of possibility. While the previous chapter engages with Chinese calligraphy as a *lieu de memoire* for Taiwanese audiences, this chapter begins by discussing how the dancers physically move in light of their interdisciplinary training and cross-modal experiences. Specifically, I consider the complexity of the “internal,” felt, and thus “invisible” aspects of kinesthesia.

The complexity of these internal, felt experiences of dancing is met with a proliferation of meanings produced by transnational audiences responding to the *Cursive* series. Seen side by side, one wonders how they unevenly correspond to as well as miss each other. Of course, the intention and reception of performance are rarely in a direct mirroring relationship. But given that sustained international touring has become a significant part of Cloud Gate's performance conditions, thinking through the various gaps and overlaps of symbolic and experiential meanings coming from both ends would help us consider the ways transnational kinesthesia exerts an impact. In an article that proposes the concept of “postglobal dance,” Joseph Roach tackles the ways contemporary performance influences the transnational space, observing that embodied movement has become a prominent expression, even a renewed paradigm for performance. “Kinesis is the new mimesis,” Roach pronounces; “as the arts proliferate within the mediated and multicultural languages of transnational space, expressive movement is becoming a lingua franca, the basis of a newly experienced affective cognition and corporeal empathy.

Mimesis, rooted in drama, imitates action; kinesis embodies it.”<sup>104</sup> Besides identifying the transnational conditions of contemporary performance, Roach’s statement reveals the desirability of reconfiguring limits of linguistic and symbolic systems of meaning via expressive movement. To many, this newly invested performance strategy seems to correspond to the nature (and appeal) of “boundary-crossing” within the concept of the “transnational.”

The *Cursive* series seems to be a choreographic response to Roach. From using the body to imitate writing to embodying the kinesis of writing, the *Cursive* series is poised at the thresholds of the mimetic, the graphic, and the kinesthetic. But by using the phrase “postglobal dance,” Roach applies a self-reflexive pressure on agents implicated in the economies of boundary-crossing. The question of “the limits of kinesthetic empathy,” Roach acknowledges, is becoming ever more urgent but is also one that has only begun to be answered.<sup>105</sup> In part, this chapter responds to this need by considering the kinesthetic experiences of the dancers and the kinds of kinesthetic empathy that emerged among the transnational audiences. If we recall the discourses of “kinesthesia,” this consideration also corresponds to the two strains of discourses regarding the internal movement experience felt by oneself and the corresponding kinesthetic feeling inspired in one when watching another person move—but we are now considering their concrete transnational ramifications. The particular transnationalism of the *Cursive* series, in terms of its production and international presentation, also serves as a vital case in dialogue with Roach’s hypothesis.

In addition, to consider kinesthesia in terms of the dancers’ experiences reveals the *material* of a dance work. This is especially compelling as the choreography of the *Cursive* series harbors an aesthetic tendency to strive for modes of the “immaterial” (*xu* 虛) or the “abstract,” and more so as its product exerts powerful impacts on transnational audiences, but the ways it is consumed and interpreted still leave intriguingly uneven matches and gaps with the efforts and experiences of the dancers. Therefore, in investigating questions of transnational kinesthesia, this chapter also brings forward the kinesthetic complexity by going in-depth into their training process, for this *materiality* that lies within the experiential cannot be otherwise accessed. As such, this chapter also acknowledges the dancers’ aesthetic labor and creative agency that entail rigorous physical and mental efforts. As Priya Srinivasan reminds us, it is important to recognize the productive labor of the dancer despite the fact that we are often trained to engage with dance only in aesthetic terms. The body’s materiality is vital to the conditions of producing dance.<sup>106</sup> As we will discover, in grappling with a complex choreographic endeavor touching on the mimetic, the graphic, and the kinesthetic, the dancers make incredible creative efforts in perfecting movement techniques and broaching the body’s physical capacity and kinesthetic evocations inspired through language and calligraphy scripts.

In what follows, I first trace the genealogy of Cloud Gate’s repertoire and training, its particular continuity and shifts, before focusing on the intricacies within the dancers’ kinesthetic formations and training experiences for the *Cursive* series, especially the centrality of *wushu* (Chinese martial arts) training. Of particular note is the multidisciplinary training and cross-modal associations that are significant to dancers’ preparation for the *Cursive* series. Throughout the discussion, I address the transnational conditions of possibility for accessing these training

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<sup>104</sup> Joseph Roach, “Kinesis: The New Mimesis,” *Theater* 40, no. 1 (2010): 2.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).



systems in relation to the themes of Cloud Gate's repertoire, in order to fully understand where the *Cursive* series stands within Cloud Gate's history and its sustained significance to Taiwanese and transnational communities. In short, the transnationalism of Cloud Gate traces a history beyond the creation and performance of the *Cursive* series, and to consider training in relation to the repertoire brings to light this specific kind of transnationalism. I then examine a range of transnational receptions particular to the *Cursive* series in order to delve deeper into the question of transnational kinesthesia and the many paradoxes and fault lines that emerge from it.

### **The Cloud Gate Repertoire and Training Genealogy**

The *Cursive* series can be seen in light of the genealogy of Cloud Gate since the company's founding in 1973 and its goal of creating a kind of modern dance particular to and representative of Taiwan's culture in relation to Europe and North America. This identity construction has interacted with the shifts of identity politics in Taiwan over the past few decades. Cloud Gate has moved from the three-prong training of modern dance (Martha Graham technique), ballet, and Peking Opera movement to a training regimen undergirded by aesthetics of the most recent decade: modern (release-based techniques), ballet, *taiji daoyin*, and *wushu*. Throughout Cloud Gate's training repertoire, the probing of the kinesthetic foundation of movement has been central; the company's movement vocabulary is created from those explorations. Today, *taiji daoyin* and *wushu* are components that differentiate Cloud Gate's movement style from other types of modern dance and were highlighted in the *Cursive* series; the complexity of *wushu* also brought the Cloud Gate dancers' kinesthetic investigation to a much more profound level. To be sure, these identity-related movement explorations are both conscious of and responding to the shifts, politics, and representations of Taiwan within both the local and international realms.

After studying in the United States (from 1970 to 1972), Lin founded Cloud Gate in Taiwan in 1973 with the slogan "Chinese people dance for Chinese audiences." (Under the KMT's political-ideological regime, "Chinese" was the only identity category available for the people of Taiwan.) Lin based his company's modern dance training on Martha Graham's techniques. Besides the Graham techniques, Cloud Gate's early company training also involved ballet and Peking Opera techniques. *The Tale of the White Serpent* (*Baishe zhuan* 白蛇傳; 1975), for example, is the quintessential combination of techniques and aesthetics of Graham-based modern dance and Peking Opera. The work, which premiered in Singapore, reinterprets a famous folktale of Chinese communities; the story is also within the repertoire of the Chinese Opera. Cloud Gate's use of Peking Opera gestures, facial expressions, and props are combined with the strong and flexible use of the body's core and the rendering of the characters' psychological complexity, reminiscent of Graham's techniques and choreography. Encouraging the combination of Peking Opera movement and staging aesthetics was the respected scholar Yu Da-Gang 俞大綱. Indeed, the many artists that collaborated with Lin in the early days of Cloud Gate were interested in creating a modern interpretation of traditional Chinese culture, harkening to the literary modernism vibrant in the 1960s of which Lin was a part before devoting himself to dance.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Han Shih* 寒食 (1974), for example, a solo piece created during this period that Lin danced himself, reinterprets poet Shang Qin's 商禽 modern Chinese poetry that alludes to the story of Jie Zhitui 介之推 (d. 636 BC), with contemporary composer Chou Wen-Chung's 周文中 composition.

The next hallmark of Cloud Gate's repertoire, a continuously restaged piece titled *Legacy* (*Xin chuan* 薪傳; 1978), features a different type of physicality. The work engages with the migratory experience since the seventeenth century of Han Chinese, coming from China's southeastern provinces Fujian and Guangdong to Taiwan; their descendants compose the majority of the Taiwanese population. During the rehearsal process, Lin took the dancers to the Dan-shui River of Taipei to practice lifting and passing on stones at the riverbank to experience and internalize the kind of laboring body that their settler ancestors possessed. Created out of such practices, *Legacy's* dance movements are solidly grounded but enhanced by fierce extensions and leaps that express the struggles and the undying stamina and spirit of the settler ancestors. This piece has been regarded as an important articulation of Taiwan's nationalism. The premier of *Legacy* coincided with the U.S. announcement of halting its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan (Republic of China) and instead starting one with the People's Republic of China. Thus, *Legacy*, which tells the story of the majority of Taiwanese ancestors, spurred passionate nationalist sentiment from the audiences. It was also a time when the nativist movement in literature from the 1960s began to influence other types of arts, and a wide variety of creative works in many genres reflected on Taiwan's diplomatic difficulties.<sup>108</sup> *Legacy* has become a classic in Cloud Gate's repertoire and is repeatedly restaged; as SanSan Kwan notes, the ways the piece has been interpreted have also evolved from recognizing the ancestral connection between Taiwan and China to the celebration of Taiwanese consciousness.<sup>109</sup>

Cloud Gate's 1979 program featured a spectrum of themes and aesthetics that the company had explored, including works drawn from Chinese mythology, "modern dance in leotards," inspiration from the Buddhist murals in Dunhuang in western China, Chinese classical literature, the Peking Opera repertoire, and legends and stories rooted in Taiwan.<sup>110</sup> The movement aesthetics are equally varied, reflecting the matrix of the three-pronged company training. Cloud Gate's subsequent works still drew from a wide range of sources but continued to reflect on questions brought up by negotiations between the Chinese and Euro-American cultures, as well as the influence of the nativist movement during Taiwan's modernization.<sup>111</sup> The

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<sup>108</sup> Chen Da 陳達, the folk singer who wrote the important theme song in *Legacy*, was sought out by prominent composers Shi Wei-Liang 史唯亮 and Hsu Chang-Hui 許常惠 in their endeavor to collect folk music. Folk music had gained popularity among young art lovers, alongside rock and roll. Taiwanese nativism in the 1970s was different from the nationalism of the 1950s and the 1960s, which was under the official political doctrine of anticommunism. According to Chen Ya-Ping, people withdrew their vision from the (mainland) China in memory or imagination to the "China" (Taiwan) in reality; this new nativist cultural movement highlighted local features and the lives of the people in the lower strata of the society, and it started to explore, describe, and construct the history of Taiwan before 1945. See Ya-Ping Chen, "Dancing the History of Taiwan, Dancing the Story of Ancestors—*Legacy*" ("Wu Taiwan de lishi, tiao xianmin de gushi—*Xin chuan* 舞臺灣的歷史，跳先民的故事——《薪傳》), in the booklet for *Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Legend (Yunmen, Chuanqi* 雲門·傳奇), DVD series (Taipei: Jingo International Records, 2003). About modernist literature versus nativist literature in Taiwan at this time, see Sung-sheng Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>109</sup> SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 45.

<sup>110</sup> Program for the performance in the fall season of 1979 (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 1979), 7.

<sup>111</sup> The two pieces created in 1982, *Street Game (Jie jing* 街景) and *Nirvana (Niepan* 涅槃), respectively reflect Taipei under urbanization and the aspiration for the Buddhist state of spiritual transcendence. *Street Game* became the prototype for *The Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984 (Chun zhi ji li, Taipei yijiubasi* 春之祭禮·台北一九八四, 1984), using Igor Stravinsky's famous modernist score to reinterpret the menace of Taipei City under urbanization.

eccentric work *Dreamscape* (*Mengtu* 夢土; 1985) perhaps best discloses the multiple concerns that Lin was negotiating. *Dreamscape*, as its program note describes, “uses one hundred minutes of dance imagery to present the co-existence of and contradiction between the traditional and the modern in Chinese people’s cultural consciousness.”<sup>112</sup> For example, there were five peacocks onstage, and the projection on multiple layers of scrims created a dreamlike atmosphere. The imagery fuses impressions of the “modern” and the “traditional”: Buddhist murals in Dunhuang, the dance of the apsaras (*feitian* 飛天; inspired by the murals of Dunhuang), modern men reading newspapers, models, people struggling in bandages, and a section from Lin’s early work drawn from Chinese modernist poetry *Han Shih* 寒食 (1974). Lin collaborated with the composer Xu Bo-Yun on *Dreamscape*, and parts of the music and the choreography referenced previous works from both of them.

Between 1988 and 1991, Cloud Gate was on a temporary hiatus. The next breakthrough came with the company’s revival in *Nine Songs* (*Jiu ge* 九歌; 1993), which draws from the ancient Chinese literature of the same name, with section titles taken from the original works. *Nine Songs* reimagines the gods and the rituals depicted in the literature; the character of the traveler wears a modern suit and holds a modern suitcase, and a group of men on bicycles ride through the scenes, thus breaking the illusory representation of ancient myths and rituals. The dance and choreography move in another new direction. During the company’s suspension, Lin traveled to Indonesia, India, and mainland China. These traveling experiences became the inspiration for *Nine Songs*. The multicultural movement language in the piece includes Graham techniques, contact improvisation, Beijing Opera postures, Javanese court dance, Japanese *kendo* (a sword-fighting martial art), and Chinese knife-fighting martial arts.<sup>113</sup> The music is equally eclectic, taken from a range of Asian cultural spheres: Tibet, Java, Japan, India, Tsou (a Taiwanese indigenous tribe), and contemporary Taiwanese percussion.

The next piece, *Songs of the Wanderers* (*Liulangzhe zhi ge* 流浪者之歌; 1994), exhibits an even sharper turning point. As Cloud Gate dancer Chiu Yi-Wen 邱怡文 remarked, *Songs of the Wanderers* is “the first slow dance” that includes hallmarks of Cloud Gate’s aesthetics in the years to come.<sup>114</sup> Returning from a trip to Bodh Gaya, India, Lin reread Herman Hesse’s novel that retells the story of Buddha, *Siddhartha* (1922), and thought about creating *Songs of the Wanderers*, seeking to express, in dance critic Lu Chian-Ying’s 盧健英 words, “ideas of ‘impermanence’ (*wuchang* 無常) and ‘eternity’ (*yongheng* 永恆) in a poetic language.”<sup>115</sup>

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*The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢), created in 1983, drew from the classical Chinese novel of the same name; the dancing repaints the glamorous impression of the Grand View Garden (*Daguan Yuan* 大觀園) framed as a flashback of the central-character monk as the young man he once was, surrounded by the prosperity and luxury of his once prestigious family. The 1986 work *My Nostalgia, My Song* (*Wo de xiangchou wo de ge* 我的鄉愁我的歌) features Taiwanese songs written and sung by Tsai Chen-Nan 蔡振南 that recall the nativist sentiment, but at the same time it also harbors Lin’s own “nostalgia” when facing the rapidly changing society.

<sup>112</sup> Program for the *Retrospective of Fifteen Years of Lin Hwai-Min’s Work in 1987* (1987 nian Lin Huaimin wudao gongzuo shiwunian huiguzhan gongyan jiemu dan 1987 年林懷民舞蹈工作十五年回顧展公演節目單) (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 1987), 5.

<sup>113</sup> Ya-ping Chen, “A Cross-cultural Journey of the Body—*Nine Songs*” (“Kua wenhua de shenti lücheng—*Jiu ge* 跨文化的身體旅程—《九歌》”), in the booklet for *Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Legend*, DVD series.

<sup>114</sup> Yi-Wen Chiu, preshow presentation for *Cursive: A Trilogy*, Taipei, July 29, 2009.

<sup>115</sup> Chian-Ying Lu 盧健英, “Wandering along with Rice” (“Sui daomi qu liulang 隨稻米去流浪”), in the booklet for *Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Legend*, DVD series. (Originally published in *China Times* in 1998.)

During rehearsals of *Nine Songs*, the dancers had begun to practice meditation,<sup>116</sup> but while rehearsing for *Songs of the Wanderers*, Lin put meditation at the center of the process, asking dancers to start from there rather than with their modern dance training. The dancers had to readjust to this new method until they gradually “heard the voices within their bodies.”<sup>117</sup> They would close their eyes and let their bodies lead the movements and how they traveled through space; the resulting choreography is grounded, sustained, flexible, and strong. In *Songs of the Wanderers*, the dancers walk slowly with their knees bent, chests hollowed, gliding close to the ground; their energy is in a continuous flow as opposed to outward projections.<sup>118</sup>

Since 1996, Cloud Gate has invited Master Hsiung Wei 熊衛 to teach *taiji daoyin* to its dancers. First used as a restorative technique supplementing other dance training, *taiji daoyin* became the basis of Cloud Gate’s signature dance idiom in *Moon Water* (*Shui yue* 水月; 1998). It was regarded by critic Lu Chian-Ying as “a classic of Lin Hwai-Min’s mature Eastern (*dongfang* 東方) style in the 1990s.”<sup>119</sup> During *Songs of the Wanderers*, the dancers prepared for their movements with meditation and moved through the spiritual journey of the piece to the music of Georgian folksongs amid a stage full of rice. But in *Moon Water*, the dancers perform *taiji daoyin*-based movement as water slowly fills the stage, accompanied by a slowed-down soundtrack of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Six Suites for Solo Cello*. The dance aspires to capture the spiritual ease and transcendence of a Buddhist revelation: “the flower reflected in the mirror and the moon seen in the water are all empty illusions” (*jinghua shuiyue zongshi chengkong* 鏡花水月總是成空).<sup>120</sup>

Conceived by Master Hsiung Wei, *taiji daoyin* combines different schools of *taiji quan* (a Chinese martial art) and *daoyin shu* 導引術 (an ancient *qi gong*) as modern health and recuperation (*yangsheng* 養生) exercises. *Daoyin shu* seeks to direct *qi*, or vital energy (“*dao*” *qi* 導氣), by directing the movement of the body (“*yin*” *ti* 引體). In other words, the cultivation of *qi* in this practice starts with the physical “outside” as a means to direct the “vital energy” “inside.” The movement principle of *taiji daoyin* is based on loosening the nine major joints of the body (shoulder, elbow, wrist, lower spine, upper spine, neck, crotch, knee, and ankle) by slowly making chains of spiraling movements at these joints. While moving, one also tries to breathe more consciously to cultivate sensitivity to the flow of *qi*. All of the motions are spiraling and circular. The loosening (*song* 鬆) of joints in turn enhances movement possibilities and flexibility, and it does not pertain only to the physical, but also to one’s state of mind. *Taiji daoyin* attends to the reciprocity between tension and release, movement and stillness, and inner and outer “space”; the practitioner’s inner microcosm becomes at one with the outer environment according to Daoist philosophy.<sup>121</sup> With years of training in *taiji daoyin*, Cloud Gate dancers

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<sup>116</sup> Chang-Ning Chou, preshow presentation for *Cursive: A Trilogy*, Taipei, August 12, 2009.

<sup>117</sup> Chian-Ying Lu, “Wandering along with Rice.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Program note for *Songs of Wanderers* and *Moon Water* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 1998). The Buddhist phrase *jinghua shuiyue* 鏡花水月 “mirror flower moon water” is very well-known to Taiwanese audiences.

<sup>121</sup> Ya-Ping Chen, “In Search of Asian Modernity: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre’s Body Aesthetics in the Era of Globalization,” in *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wildschut (New York: Routledge, 2009), 316–330; Yatin Lin, “Choreographing a Flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan’s Changing Identity, 1973–2003” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Riverside, 2004; Wei-Jen Lee (李為仁), “A Study on the Relation between Tai Chi Dao Yin and Dance Practice in Contemporary Taiwan” (“Taiji

move with extremely flexible spinal articulation as they spiral in and out from the core of their bodies, circulating their energy along the rest of the joints. They often sink very close to the ground to initiate the chain of spirals. Also quite visually distinct is the spiraling of joints along the arm; these smaller spirals appear like continuous ripples. Nevertheless, it is the internal sensation of the flow of *qi* that is essential to the production of these distinct-looking movements. As Cloud Gate dancer Chou Chang-Ning describes, her *taiji daoyin*-informed dance in *Cursive* (2001) rests on the complex internal sensations within her body: “in a transparent body, a thin stream flows through inch by inch, and its pathway is where the movement originates.”<sup>122</sup>

Since 2000, Cloud Gate has invited Master Hsu Chi 徐紀 to give *wushu* training to the company. The *Cursive* series, which premiered between 2001 and 2010, highlights the merging of *taiji daoyin*, *wushu*, and cursive-style Chinese calligraphy. The incorporation of Chinese calligraphy and *wushu* can best be understood as an extension, expansion, and enrichment of Cloud Gate’s aesthetic exploration since *Moon Water* (preceded by the “Eastern” style of *Songs of the Wanderers*). While *wushu* provides much substance to the kinesthetics of the *Cursive* series, the influence of *taiji daoyin* on the works is still very present, from the internalized use of breathing and directing of *qi* in the regular company class training, to external bodily expressions such as an extremely low stance and the fluid spiraling of spines and arms. For the past decade, the two types of Chinese physical training have been accompanied by training in ballet and modern dance (release-based techniques); the simultaneous impact of all four types of training on the dancers’ bodies forms the basis of Cloud Gate’s distinct movement vocabulary and kinesthetics.

As revealed through this overview, Cloud Gate’s aesthetic explorations have been volatile and varied. The training rarely settles on just one system, and the dancers’ consciously hybridized physicality is closely linked to the themes and politics of a specific work. *Nine Songs* marks a point where Cloud Gate began to reform its previous training regimen, encompassing a range of movement and performance aesthetics drawn from other Asian sources. From the variety of sources for *Nine Songs* to *Moon Water*, which features only *taiji daoyin*, we also see the choreography becoming “purer,” refining one specific technique from which movement aesthetics emerge. The creation of *Nine Songs* happened at a moment when a wealth of heretofore suppressed voices and politics broke out in Taiwan with the lifting of Martial Law (1987). The sections “Homage to the Fallen” and “Honoring the Dead” in *Nine Songs* make reference to instances of political significance such as the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, the February 28 incident (1947), and the massacre in Tiananmen Square. The names of ancient heroes from Chinese history as well as those who died in the February 28 incident are recited in Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, the Hakka dialect, and the language of the Atayal, a Taiwanese indigenous tribe. If *Songs of Wanderers* and *Moon Water* advanced the exploration of an “Eastern” style of movement language for Cloud Gate, *Family Portrait* (家族合唱; 1997) continued to release the political messages expressed in *Nine Songs*. As discussed in the introduction, *Family Portrait* combines oral history and collections of old photographs from all over Taiwan to openly engage and reinterpret the historical voices and memories repressed in the Martial Law era. It also highlights the multicultural composition of Taiwanese residents; the

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daoyin yu Taiwan dangdai wudao shijian yanjiu 太極導引與臺灣當代舞蹈實踐研究”), (M.A. thesis, Taipei Physical Education College, 2007).

<sup>122</sup> Chang-Ning Chou, “My Body’s Trilogy” (“Wo de shenti sanbuqu 我的身體三部曲”) in the program for *Cursive* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2001).

dance movements themselves interweave repetitions of everyday gestures, stylized movements, and theatrical symbolism. Greatly contrasting with the variety of movement styles found in the polyvocal, multimedia collage of *Family Portrait* is the purity of *Moon Water*'s *taiji daoyin*-based choreography. Subsequent works, such as *Bamboo Dream* (*Zhumeng* 竹夢; 2000) and the *Cursive* series, continued in the direction of *Moon Water* by dwelling on a certain "aesthetic realm" (*yijing* 意境) rather than explicit social-political messages. In terms of movement, the *wushu* training, along with the performance of the *Cursive* series, greatly enriched the dancers' aesthetic expression. Unlike *Nine Songs*, which draws from a variety of performance systems from across Asia, both *taiji daoyin* and *wushu* are rooted and accessible in Taiwan. Cloud Gate can invite local masters to teach the dancers for a solid, sustained period of time; the dancers can cultivate both arts in depth.

The gradual elimination of words and the tendency toward abstraction in the *Cursive* series seems to echo how Cloud Gate's repertoire over the years has become more and more likely to generate an aesthetic atmosphere than offer narratives. There is a complex set of factors involved in this evolution, ranging from the choreographers' personal growth to the larger social-political changes in Taiwan. What can be discerned is that the energy for releasing historical tensions seems to have gradually given way to the cultivation of new aesthetic possibility. For Lin, the richness of Chinese calligraphy took up to four works to explore; for the dancers (especially the senior ones), the depth of *wushu* training draws them to further develop their artistic expression.

### **Multidisciplinary Training and Cross-modal Associations**

Indeed, the training undertaken by Cloud Gate dancers in preparation for performing the *Cursive* series is exceptionally rigorous and highly multidisciplinary. Artistic director Lin Hwai-Min invited art historian Chiang Hsun 蔣勳 to give lectures on Chinese calligraphy aesthetics; dancers were made to read ancient Chinese calligraphy treatises and study copies of ancient Chinese calligraphers' scrolls. Contemporary calligrapher Huang Wei-Chung 黃緯中 was also brought in to give Chinese calligraphy writing lessons to the dancers in order for them to reacquaint themselves with the kinesthetic sensations of writing with brush and ink. These writing lessons served as a foundation; later, the kinesthetics of the writing hands were translated into whole-body dance movements. Moreover, the study of ancient treatises and calligraphy writings was approached with an attention to the kinesthetics embedded in the discourse (the imagery of natural phenomena in motion) and the actual writings of calligraphy. At the same time, the company has continued the practice of *taiji daoyin* since 1997 and has introduced *wushu* as a part of its training since 2000. Along with ongoing company classes in ballet and modern dance, Cloud Gate dancers practice a kinesthetic syncretism out of a consciously selected eclectic training that is cross-modal and multisensorial.

Such a rich kinesthetic relay that is "internal" to the dance performance was most vividly revealed during my interview with senior Cloud Gate dancer Wen Ching-Ching. Wen tried to explain to me how certain Chinese words and phrases from the ancient Chinese calligraphy treatises she studied offered rich inspiration for certain kinesthetic qualities in her dance. To illustrate, she said that upon invoking the Chinese word *beng* 崩, as in the phrase *bengshi* 崩石 (the sense of a falling or shattering rock triggered by an enormous force) that belongs to the language of those texts, she felt she "just knew" what their kinesthetic quality was; she had a kind of intuition based on her Sinophone upbringing and (re)immersion in Chinese calligraphy

aesthetic praxis. At the same time, she demonstrated by performing a gesture reminiscent of the first movement of *taiji quan*, “*jingang daochui*” 金剛搗錘 (“Buddha’s warrior attendants pound the mortar”): pounding one’s right fist onto one’s left palm in front of the lower abdomen as one drops one’s weight to come to a firm stance with half-bent knees.<sup>123</sup>

This example reveals the intricacy of the cross-modal relay among calligraphy, language, and physical training. Although the *Cursive* series has a tendency to become more “abstract,” moving toward a higher aesthetic realm (*jingjie* 境界) that is more “immaterial” (*xu* 虛), while leaving behind manifestations (*xiang* 象) of language (with the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of the projection of ancient scrolls on stage), the actual dancing is extremely rich and complex. Most compellingly, language still plays a vital role in the formation of such kinesthetic experiences. Although Lin mentioned that Chinese calligraphy is only “an excuse to dance,”<sup>124</sup> the choreography in the *Cursive* series is not simply physical but is very much informed by and interacts with language.

Of course, these types of body-mind and cultural training are modes of discipline. As Susan Foster has put forward, extending Foucault, dance training produces specific types of body-subjects; the training environment, the exercises, and the instructional language (including the descriptions and metaphors deployed) all contribute to the dancers’ embodied subjectivities.<sup>125</sup> However, within a given framework of training, dancers thus enabled also harbor creative agency. Carrie Noland theorizes the creative potential of kinesthesia as a source of embodied agency that generates forms of innovation or resistance to the normative behavior in a given context. As the cultural conditioning inscribed on our bones and muscles enables us to sense qualitative distinctions in tonicity, this ability to experience different movement qualities also inspires us to “alter the rhythm, sequence, and meaning of our acts.”<sup>126</sup>

Wen’s example of *beng* 崩 and Noland’s explanation of kinesthesia illuminate each other in compelling ways. Noland elaborates that kinesthesia, as an internally felt sensation that the subject “introspects” upon, making sense of what she feels, is vulnerable to the intervention of culture; that is, as conscious *experience*, kinesthesia goes beyond the “inarticulate workings of the nervous system” and is necessarily “mediated by language or by equally culture-specific systems of visual imagery.”<sup>127</sup> In Wen’s instance, specific language evokes kinesthetic sensation and inspiration; this is enabled by her training, during which there may well have been rich and multiple feedback loops involving sensation, instruction, and experiential meaning-making. In practicing *taiji quan* (and any other physical training), artists recursively make meaning of distinct kinesthetic experiences; the kinesthetic experience of “Buddha’s warrior attendants pound the mortar” may have been associated with the falling of a heavy object, thus inspiring the link between the visual and kinetic possibilities of the word *beng*. Within the disciplinary framework of Cloud Gate’s ongoing training and the specific demands in the making of the

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<sup>123</sup> Wen Ching-Ching, interview by author, June 13, 2010.

<sup>124</sup> Lin Hwai-Min, postshow talk after *Cursive*, National Theater, Taipei, September 4, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Susan Leigh Foster, “Dancing Bodies,” in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane Desmond (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 235–258.

<sup>126</sup> Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>127</sup> Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, 10.

*Cursive* series, the dancers' creative agency is in fact a vital source of the *material* for the final product of the choreography itself.

### **Wushu Training and Its Aestheticization**

*Wushu* training, with its particular richness and complexity, has greatly bolstered the embodied intelligence of the dancers that then manifests in their performed works. This is evidenced by how Wen immediately draws from a movement in *taiji quan* to illustrate how she physically interprets the kinesthetics retained in language drawn from Chinese calligraphy discourse. As another example of the Cloud Gate dancers' creative agency, but one directly manifested in performance, in one section of *Cursive*, Chou Chang-Ning dances in black "water sleeves" against a gigantic single character *pan* 磐 (big, solid rock), written by the contemporary Taiwanese calligrapher Tung Yang-Tze in a highly stylized way. Taken from the convention of Chinese opera and Chinese classical dance, the long water sleeves can create vivid lines of motion onstage. But the fabric chosen to make the water sleeves here was much heavier than the fabric used in typical water sleeve dances, where the lightness of the fabric makes the sleeves float easily in the air. Chou's heavier water sleeves created an impression of thick, opulent, black ink strokes. While rehearsing for this section of *Cursive*, it became a challenge for Chou to manipulate the sleeves she was given. She eventually figured out a way to move her heavy water sleeves by applying *chansi jing* 纏絲勁 (silk-reeling force) and the strength of her lower body (*xiapan* 下盤) cultivated from *wushu* training.<sup>128</sup>

This instance itself is quite revealing in terms of how specific physical training is applied to dancing, but there is more to the internal complexity and experience of *wushu* kinesthesia. To help me understand how vital *wushu* training is to the kinesthetics of the *Cursive* series, Lee Ching-Chun, senior dancer and assistant artistic director of Cloud Gate, introduced me to Master Hsu Chi. I attended Master Hsu's class along with some Cloud Gate dancers, and I observed Cloud Gate's company classes in their studio in Dan-shui, New Taipei City.<sup>129</sup> Practicing *wushu* myself, assisted by the many conversations I had with Lee and Master Hsu, helped me tremendously in getting closer to the kind of kinesthetic complexity and intricacy that the dancers have to master in accomplishing the *Cursive* series. By relaying the fundamental principles of *wushu* and some of its training methods and processes, I hope to draw attention to the specific kind of aesthetic labor, and the physical and mental efforts involved, as a vital *materiality* of the dance.

If we consider the conditions for accessing *wushu* training in Taiwan, they yield a specific transnationality tied to the political and migratory history of Taiwan that should be remembered as we tackle the larger inquiry of transnational kinesthesia. Hsu Chi and Hsiung Wei are among the Chinese mainlanders who migrated to Taiwan in 1949 and studied Northern Style *wushu* (*beipai wushu* 北派武術) with the Chinese mainlanders who retreated with the KMT government to Taiwan. Many of these masters held posts in the military, and they based their practice in the training system of the Central Chinese Martial Arts School (Zhongyang guoshu guan 中央國術館) established in Nanjing in 1927. Northern Style *wushu* was promoted in the military training in Taiwan and soon became the dominant practice, with

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<sup>128</sup> Chang-Ning Chou, preshow presentation for *Cursive: A Trilogy*, Taipei, August 12, 2009.

<sup>129</sup> I took *wushu* classes with Master Hsu between January and May of 2010. The actual practice added up to about three months.



Taipei being the center.<sup>130</sup> Also prominent are private schools teaching Northern Style *wushu*, as well as organizations that sponsor contests, forums, and research publications. As mentioned earlier, Hsiung studied different styles of *taiji quan* in Taiwan and later combined the essences of the various styles with knowledge of *daoyin shu* to create *taiji daoyin*. Hsu mastered an eclectic range of Northern Style *wushu* methods (more specifically *taiji quan*, *baji quan* 八極拳, *xingyi quan* 形意拳, *bagua zhang* 八卦掌, and *zhang quan* 長拳) after studying with a number of renowned masters. The *wushu* I discuss in this chapter and in relation to Cloud Gate, particularly the internal principles that I will address later, refers to this body of Northern Style *wushu* taught by Master Hsu.<sup>131</sup>

### Wushu Principles and Their Internal Complexities

One vivid metaphor that Master Hsu has used to talk about the complexity of Chinese martial arts is the composition of the Chinese *long* 龍 (dragon), the mythological creature symbolizing good fortune in the Chinese imagination. The *long* is made up of a diversity of animals; it has a horse's face, an eagle's claws, an ox's nose, a snake's body, a deer's horns, a lion's tail, and a fish's whiskers. Emerging out of practical needs to defend one's life, property, people, or whole village, sophisticated ways of fighting developed into the art of *wushu*. In *wushu*, the physics of issuing power (*fajing* 發勁) when striking with a fist is built on a principle that requires a complex inner working of the body. The intricate routines (*taolu* 套路) practiced in the wealth of *wushu* forms all seek to prepare a fighter for the physical volatility of the final strike. Defense and attack are made at the same time; the whole body is continually turning, twisting, and adjusting spontaneously to the demands of the situation, creating chances for attack, sometimes tricking the opponent with a “leak,” all the while maintaining defense. One does not focus on a single point of attack or defense, but pays attention to multiple things at once; a *wushu* fighter has to develop a highly flexible mentality and focus on more than one area of the body to be able to quickly adjust to new situations in the course of a fight.

*Wushu* stresses *fenzhu* 分注, focusing on multiple aspects of a movement at once, in contrast to *zhuanzhu* 專注, focusing on one thing. The “multiple focuses” require intense concentration. During training, one might repeat the same set of movements beginning at a slow pace and increasing in speed in order to fully familiarize oneself with the details, let go of unnecessary tension (and uses) of the muscles, and also train oneself to have multiple focuses and heightened concentration. The “letting go” of unnecessary uses of the muscles is also about letting go of one's old habits of moving in order to “make room” for training a whole new physics in one's body, since the physics of Chinese martial arts can be quite different—even contrary to—movements for most everyday tasks. The “letting go” is also about letting go of the

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<sup>130</sup> Before the introduction of the Northern Style *wushu* there were various strands of martial arts practiced in Taiwan that mirrored the make-up of Taiwanese residents. The indigenous people of Taiwan had developed their own martial arts. The Southern style martial arts were brought to Taiwan by immigrants from Fujian and later Guangdong and were dominant during the Qing period (1644-1911). During the Japanese occupation, Japanese martial arts were introduced to Taiwan (including judo, kendo, etc.). See Po Liu 劉波, *Four Hundred Years of Development of Martial Arts in Taiwan (Taiwan wushu sibainian fazhan shi 臺灣武術四百年發展史)* (Taipei: Lion Books, 2011). Today, *wushu* competitions in Taiwan involve the Northern style, Southern style, and competition routines (*jingsai taolu* 競賽套路) developed in the People's Republic of China.

<sup>131</sup> The following is drawn from my field notes during my practice and Adam Hsu (Hsu Chi), *Lone Sword against the Cold, Cold Sky: Principles and Practice of Traditional Kung Fu* (Santa Cruz, Calif.: Plum Publications, 2006).

irrelevant thoughts in one's mind that would cause distraction from attaining a "purer" or more highly concentrated mental state. After all, it was for critical, often life-or-death situations that this art was created, applied, and developed.

Much of this complexity is internal. The first time I attended Master Hsu's class at Cloud Gate, he told me the phrase "the brocade garment hangs from the jade tree" (*yushu gua jin yi* 玉樹掛錦衣). Underlying the resplendent imagery is a metaphor for the ideal relationship between one's bones and flesh when approaching Chinese martial arts: the jade tree refers to one's bones, and the brocade garment refers to the flesh that hangs on them. The importance lies in the bones, for the bones are the essential structure that supports everything else in the body, or from which every other part of the body "hangs." In training for *wushu*, one is supposed to focus on sensing one's bones, not muscles. This applies to making all the movements, as well as the issuing of power. In Master Hsu's class, part of the warm-up routine is to stand straight and bounce the body up and down against the ground to help oneself sense one's bones while "shaking loose" the muscles, a method to find the "jade tree" that supports the "brocade garment." The focus on the essential, the structure, the core support of a body (literally speaking, but also a body of knowledge or practice) corresponds to the emphasis on the fundamentals. It is the essentials of *wushu* that Master Hsu teaches to the Cloud Gate dancers. Forms and routines are also taught, but they are taught as a means to practice and deepen the engagement with the principles. After all, what Lin Hwai-Min wants is not to reenact the forms and routines of Chinese martial arts onstage, but to meld the principles of Chinese martial arts with other consciously selected aesthetic and physical traditions. All of these elements are internalized by the dancers through their training to generate a new kind of dance, a new way of dancing onstage.

The issuing of power that is so prized in *wushu* aims for a kind of elastic force (*jing* 勁), as opposed to a straightforward, unidirectional hitting. When making a punch, a spiral is enfolded in the process; one rotates one's arm while punching forward. Moreover, in order to maximize the power a human body is capable of generating, in *wushu*, the punch is not conceived as limited to the arm's motion but involves the working of the whole body. There is a saying that goes "the entire body is a punch/fist" (*quanshen yiquan* 全身一拳). The key to this is to issue power not just from the arm, but from the feet to the upper body. The extended distance adds to the force generated and is similar to trying to throw a ball further by first drawing one's arm back; both methods correspond to the laws of physics. Chinese martial arts practitioners first press their feet into the ground in order to gain a rebounding force that they can then direct to the upper body for attack. They refer to this as "borrowing force from the ground" (*xiangdi jili* 向地借力). In directing the rebounding force to the upper body, "spiraling" is also involved. Ideally, the force should travel in a spiraling route along one's major bones and spine. The spiraling route adds even more distance and thus enhances the power that is eventually being issued. In Chinese martial arts training and practice, *yinian* 意念, or mind-focus, is required to facilitate this internal directing of force. The physical—if internal and largely invisible—twisting of the bones and joints of the body in the spiraling is accompanied with a conscious "imagining" of the spirals. The hardest part—besides being aware of this internal process when it is not outwardly prominent—is to truly transmit the force from the feet along the internal spiraling route without letting it dissipate or break in the middle. When all of that is accomplished, the next level is to accelerate the whole movement in order to enhance the power that is eventually exerted.

This highly disciplined and sophisticated twisting action of the body's joints is also called *chansi jing* 纏絲勁 (silk-reeling force/power). The name comes from traditional agricultural practice. Villagers coil silk around an object such as a small stick to store it after it has been taken from the cocoon. This image conveniently suggests a "spiraling motion," and it has stayed in the Chinese martial arts lexicon. As the body moves forward in space (like a thread of silk), it simultaneously revolves on its own axis (like the spiraling of the silk when being pulled from the cocoon or coiled onto a stick). *Chansi jing* makes a volatile, elastic, and powerful force that fully exploits the flexibility of the human body and is much greater than a physical force that is dependent on muscular strength and speed alone. Another image often used for illustrating this effect is the comparison between a "whip" and a "stick." The power issued in Chinese martial arts is elastic, volatile, multidirectional, and unpredictable, like a "whip"; by contrast, a power issued like a "stick" is stiff, dull, unidirectional, and plain straightforward.

As all the movements basically come from the feet, one needs a strong, solid grounding. The cultivation of a supple *xiapan* 下盤, or lower half of the body, is another important fundamental element in Chinese martial arts. One of the first lessons of Chinese martial arts is to hold *mabu* 馬步 ("horse stance," legs in parallel and bent half way). *Mabu* trains leg strength and the sense of groundedness, as well as mind-focus and endurance, all of which are crucial in real fights. An ideal Chinese martial arts body is relaxed and grounded until the moment of impact when all the accumulated energy is focused and delivered to the target. The *Cursive* series prominently features this initiation of movement from *xiapan*. For example, in the section of *Cursive* where Chou mimes the character 永 (*yong*), even though the first movement of the dance corresponds to the upper dot and first stroke of the character, when Chou performs it she makes a grabbing gesture above her head that she initiates from her lower body—a slight visible bending indicates this initiation.

Master Hsu talked about the sensation of *xie* 洩 that one feels when practicing one's connection to the ground. All martial artists work toward this mode of grounding; in contemporary discussions of *taiji quan*, it is also referred to as *louchen* 漏沉.<sup>132</sup> The characters for both *xie* and *louchen* embody the image of water flowing downward. *Louchen* suggests dripping, leaking, sinking, and sedimentation. *Xie* suggests a greater amount of water releasing and discharging. In practicing *mabu*, the "horse stance," one stands with parallel feet slightly wider than one's shoulders, lowering oneself toward the ground; the movement is far from just bending one's knees. Martial artists must fill themselves with kinesthetic sensations to correctly sustain this seemingly static pose, just like a continuous downpouring of water that keeps leaking, sinking, and releasing from one's body to the ground, even flowing below it. The invisible kinesthetics at the heart of Chinese martial arts training are where the complexity (and marvel) of the practices lie. The cross-modal associations between language, its imagery, and movement are vital in the actual training process, as shown in the dancer Wen Ching-Ching's association between Chinese calligraphy (*beng* 崩) and her kinesthetic experience informed by *wushu*. The language in Chinese martial arts discourse is also helpful in evoking and generating kinesthetic sensations within the artists in training. Language helps one approximate and begin to immerse oneself in the kind of mentality that breeds *wushu*.

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<sup>132</sup> Guan-Cheng Lin 林冠澄, *Explication of the Power Exertion in Taiji as Complementary Yin and Yang (Xiangjie yinyang xiangji de taiji jingfa 詳解陰陽相濟的太極勁法)* (Taipei: Dan-Jann Publishing, 2009).

Master Hsu also sees the unique physics of *wushu* embedded in the aesthetics and philosophy valued by the society where these practices emerge. Writing about the bodily aesthetics shown in some clay figurines (*huishan niren* 惠山泥人) that came from Huishan in Wuxi, in Jiangsu, Master Hsu identifies an equilateral triangle in the composition of the figures: their shoulders are relaxed, their bodies are weighted, their legs are usually slightly bent, and overall there is a sense of stability and close connection with the ground. As a point of contrast, the compositions of many ancient Greek sculptures have embedded inverted triangles: the upper bodies, especially the broad shoulders and thick chests, are the highlights of the figures, making them “stand out” from the environment. Moreover, there is a sense of roundedness and circularity in the clay figurines’ poses seen in the always slightly curved arms, torsos, and legs, which together form an invisible, circular, energy flow. The connection with the ground and the volatility and continuity that this circular motion offers is also embedded in *wushu* physics and philosophy. Even performing a gesture that looks straight from the outside, one should harbor a curving sensibility within (*quyi* 曲意).<sup>133</sup> The *chansi jing* exemplifies this sensibility excellently: the movement’s straight-looking punch is powered by a complex spiraling energy initiated from the feet. Along traditional Chinese philosophical thinking, the *qu* 曲, or the curve, is much valued because it suggests infinite possibilities and continuity, as opposed to the *zhi* 直, or the straight line, which is defined, and thus has a clear limit. This all harkens back to the metaphor for “complexity” embodied by the composition of *long* 龍.

To go through all of these steps thoroughly and attain the degree of complexity that the ideal of *wushu* demands requires tremendous patience and time devoted to the practice. Few people can imagine how difficult it is to “let go” of existing physical and mental habits and retrain oneself to focus on multiple aspects of a movement at once, not to mention mastering the silk-reeling force, or effectively applying the practice to situations of attack and defense. One might recall the state of *chendian* that the practice of Chinese calligraphy as figured in the *Cursive* series seeks to attain. In fact, to really internalize the fundamentals of *wushu*, one has to first slow down to get through all the details and intricacies before integrating them and then to push for accelerated use in the exertion of power (*jing* 勁). In this regard, there is a correspondence of *chendian* to the need of settling one’s mind and body, letting go of external and disparate thoughts and physical habits, and concentrating purely on the cultivation of the art. The need to drill the art of Chinese calligraphy itself is the same as the need to cultivate the quality and impact of issuing power in *wushu*. Although the dilation of time in *chendian* may be associated with a kind of “slowing down,” it is different from a simplistic physical reduction of speed. Nor is the “acceleration” needed in issuing power in *wushu* the same as a brute enhancement of speed.

### Wushu and Dance

The embodied knowledge of *wushu* is fused with the eclectic training of Cloud Gate dancers to fashion an extraordinarily rich expression onstage. One can discern a wide range of kinesthetic capacity in Cloud Gate’s performance: there is acceleration and exertion of *jing* 勁 (the elastic force) drawn from *wushu* training; there is the lightness, fluidity, and meditative quality of *taiji daoyin*; there are extensions, high leaps, and one-foot spins enabled by ballet

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<sup>133</sup> Adam Hsu, “Lively Clay Figurine (Huoshengsheng de niren 活生生的泥人),” *Echo Magazine* (Hansheng zazhi 漢聲雜誌), November 2003.

training. However, circularity is embedded in their overall energy flow, even in sharper and more aggressive movements, or ones that retain a ballet basis. While *chansi jing* in Chinese martial arts is an inner working of the body, a distinctive rotation of joints derived from the idea of silk-reeling can be seen in the spiraling movements in *taiji daoyin*. Extending from the kinesthetic quality cultivated through the practice for and performance of *Moon Water* and the training of *taiji daoyin*, the *Cursive* series punctuates serene fluidity and breathing with vigorous leaps and attacks. The twisting of the brush in Chinese calligraphy also corresponds with this idea of a curve within a straight line (*zhizhong youqu* 直中有曲), a concept much valued in *wushu*. In writing Chinese calligraphy, for example, a rightward stroke always begins with a twist toward the left before the brush is dragged toward the right. Exploring the sensations of embedded curves within straight line movements enabled the dancers to connect the sensibilities and the kinesthetics of Chinese martial arts with Chinese calligraphy.

All these combined training and body-mind cultivation practices influence the dancers on a more philosophical level, beyond the physical or aesthetic. Senior dancer Lee Ching-Chun is an artist who often contemplates the philosophy behind her dancing. Reflecting on her experience of dancing in *Cursive II*, she mentioned a state of freedom that breathing evokes in her that leads to dancing outside the box. Unlike *Cursive*, which aims to capture the sense of rich, black ink strokes, *Cursive II* explores the vibration and circulation of *qiyun* 氣韻 (breath-rhythm-energy) with an overall atmosphere of lightness, clarity, and transparency. Lee explained that dancing *Cursive II* “is like trying to place an egg on a chopstick. You cannot use force to break it (不能把力氣用裂). You cannot ‘lie’ on the music to dance.”<sup>134</sup> Her indirect, metaphoric language points to the qualities of force a dancer negotiates while dancing and the relationship between dancing and music. Breathing helps a dancer to channel energy and bring out subtleties in movements, while dancing overall is like a balancing act, like trying to keep an egg on a chopstick.

Lee is also very much inspired by the wisdom of traditional Chinese calligraphy and *wushu* discourses. For example, she once mentioned two lines back to back from the two respective discourses, which suggests the internal cross-associations she forged. Lee described writing a calligraphy line in the following way: “When the brush is soaked with ink, one writes according to the propensity of the thing; when the brush gets dry, one writes according to the rules” (*bi run zou shi, bi ku zou fa* 筆潤走勢，筆枯走法). She then mentioned a line from the *Book of Taiji Quan* (*Taiji quan jing* 太極拳經): “The force may come to an end but the thought goes on; if the thought comes to an end the spirit can take over” (*jing duan yi bu duan, yi duan shen ke jie* 勁斷意不斷，意斷神可接). These two lines inform her approach to dancing, which hinges on her attitude and use of energy, and certainly is not confined to the physics of dance alone. When one is fully charged with energy, like a brush fully soaked with ink, one can dance and let the energy flow according to the *shi* 勢, the inclination or propensity of things at the moment; there is a kind of freedom in it. When one’s energy has “dried up,” like a brush that has been writing for a while, one adheres to the rules. This metaphorical observation harkens back to the fundamental elements (*fa* 法) in both arts. Moreover, a sense of continuity is also addressed.

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<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Chang-Yu Cheng 成章瑜, “I Think, I Dance. Dancer of Life: Lee Ching-Chun” (“Wo sikao, wo wutiao. Shengming de wuzhe: Li Jingjun 我思考，我舞蹈。生命的舞者：李靜君”), *Performance Arts Review* 140 (August 2004): 50–57. (Original text: “跳「行草貳」，就像試著吧雞蛋放在筷子上，不能把力氣用裂，不能「躺」在音樂上跳舞”；“「懂」了之後，身體的「框」就不見了，身體是自由的。”)

The central point in the second line discloses the value of continuity at the level of generating and exerting force, as well as the importance of continuity for a particular body-mind, holistic state in which thought and “spirit” come together to renew one’s force in fighting. Linking with the first line, the “rules” also sustain the continuation of dancing, writing, and fighting. When rehearsing for *Cursive*, Lin Hwai-Min asked the dancers to study pieces of known Chinese calligraphers’ writings with the goal of creating dance pieces based on those writings. Lee was interested in challenging herself to explore the full range of expressive possibilities, to imagine dancing like a brush fully soaked with ink, or a brush that has been writing for a while and is drying up. What would it be like to dance like the brush when extremely dry? What sustains and continues the energy of dancing then?

The last questions are essential and extremely profound for Lee’s dancing at large and for the *Cursive* series in particular. Vital to the *materiality* of the *Cursive* series, aesthetic labor, in addition to recognizing the body as the material, is about a holistic process of the corporeal, kinesthetic, cognitive, and even philosophical experience cultivated over time. In a way, this dimension of complexity is almost impossible to appreciate by just watching the performance onstage. Indeed, as foreshadowed in the beginning, as we examine the receptions from transnational audiences, there are intriguing correspondences as well as gaps between the experiences from the dancers’ end and those expressed by the audience members. Probing kinesthesia has taken us to backstage, to the rehearsal rooms, to the training fields, and even to the dancers’ minds to bring to light the complexity of the dancers’ experiences, but in what follows I examine the international reception of the *Cursive* series to engage with the question of “affective cognition and corporeal empathy” within the transnational community. Rather than regretting any kinds of “misses,” I suggest that the receptions are actually illuminating for us to track the limits of the particular transnational performance demonstrated by the transnational kinesthesia of the *Cursive* series.

### **International Reception**

The touring itinerary of the *Cursive* series has ranged from cities in Taiwan, to Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Berlin, Bolzano, Melbourne, New York, Chicago, Berkeley, and beyond. I examine a range of international receptions of people from different backgrounds. Audiences’ oral responses or written reviews reflect various degrees and types of affective recognition and corporeal empathy. From these reviews, we can create a dialogue between audience responses and the dual aesthetic logic of the *Cursive* series, as well as compare audience experiences to the dancers’ kinesthetic and philosophical experiences.

When Cloud Gate performed its *Wild Cursive* as part of the Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2006, a fellow graduate student from Taiwan shared with me his tremendous appreciation for *Wild Cursive*; he thought the piece superbly embodied the poetics of writing Chinese calligraphy. He had been interested in the aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy, without being an avid practitioner. However, an American colleague who, like me, is focusing on dance studies at UC Berkeley complained to me about how the whole piece lacked variation to her. Similar opposing views appeared in American reviews of Cloud Gate’s *Wild Cursive* tour that year. The review from *Voice of Dance*, for example, describes in a quite refined manner Cloud Gate’s distinct movement vocabulary and how it affected the viewer kinesthetically. The reviewer wrote: “The phrasing tends to the extremely voluptuous; no dancer seems to shift directions without letting the movement suffuse the torso; you sense a current of

energy running through the performers as the force compels them into a pliant and smooth recovery. The entire body often seems engaged; my attention was often directed to their wrists that looked volatile, even gelatinous [...]. Throughout, the flow takes your breath away.” Nevertheless, the reviewer does quibble at the very beginning that “the only theatrical quality missing...is erotic tension.” Rather than a criticism of what was actually happening onstage, this commentary reveals how viewers’ personal desires can play a great part in the viewing experience and that viewers do not simply receive and respond to what is happening in front of their eyes. Fishing for the “purpose” of the dance but failing to hook one, despite the explanation provided by the program notes about the basics of Chinese calligraphy and Cloud Gate’s dance training, the reviewer attributes this lack of purpose to his not being exposed to the preceding pieces, *Cursive* and *Cursive II*. In the end, the reviewer concludes, not unlike my colleague’s complaint, “The movement vocabulary does not command a variety wide enough to sustain the piece through its length.”<sup>135</sup>

Unlike this criticism of the lack of variety of movement, a review published in *Theatre Journal* offers unreserved praise for the piece based on a different perception of the movement vocabulary: “*Wild Cursive* brought the calligrapher’s unkempt brushstrokes to life through a stunning palette of movement invention.” The author labored to create vivid descriptions of the dance with metaphors such as “zen-like concentration,” “cat-like precision,” and “strong and stable like old trees with deep root systems in the ground.” The world of the dance is “delightfully postmodern” in its reference to and transcendence of different dance styles from both “Eastern and Western traditions.” The author is thoroughly enamored of the world of the dance, especially the visual element of the vertically hung rice paper with its downward flow of ink, and how the environmental soundscape complements the visual elements of the choreography and the set. Watching the dance, the author could well imagine what a “kuang cho” [*kuangcao* 狂草, “wild cursive”] calligrapher’s experience might be.<sup>136</sup>

People who are familiar with Chinese culture and calligraphy seem to appreciate *Wild Cursive* more than audiences with lesser knowledge. However, even reviewers with knowledge of Chinese culture and a long-time immersion in dance may not appreciate the qualities of movement present in the piece. For example, praising *Cursive* after seeing its performance in Seoul, Kim Young-Oak, a renowned Korean scholar of Chinese culture, writes about the effect the projected ancient Chinese calligraphy scroll had on him. He was delighted in seeing the character of *yong*, in both the near-standard and the cursive script, and identified them as taken from the legendary Wang Xizhi’s writing. He also expressed his corporeal and affective reaction to recognizing the character *wu* 無 and its meaning (“nonlimitation” or “nothing”): “I was tightly gripped by the perfect movement on stage. Together with the cursive script of *wu*, I breathed, not thinking about myself until I was completely taken over by *wu* (‘無化’).”<sup>137</sup> He claims that he does not like *Cursive* just because he is a specialist in Chinese culture, but his writing is indeed

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<sup>135</sup> Allan Ulrich, “A Mesmerizing Venture,” *Voice of Dance*, October 24, 2006, <http://www.voiceofdance.com/v1/features.cfm/859/Dance-Review-Cloud-Gate-Dance-Theatre-of-Taiwan-I-Wild-Cursive-I-859.html> (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>136</sup> Christina Tsoules Soriano, “Wild Cursive,” *Theatre Journal* 60, no. 2 (May 2008): 310–312.

<sup>137</sup> Young-Oak Kim, “Chinese Artistic Soul Is Awakening—Review after Cloud Gate Dance Theatre’s Performance in Seoul” (中國藝術魂魄正在甦醒——「雲門舞集」漢城公演觀後), *The Munhwa Il-bo*, March 11, 2003. Korean to Chinese translation by Chu Li-Hsi 朱立熙. (Chinese text: 我像是被舞台上完美的動作緊緊抓住，跟著草書「無」字一起，無我地呼吸到被「無化」.)

filled with expressions of his knowledge and love of Chinese culture. He barely mentions the qualities of the dance movements (which also require training and immersion); instead, his review reveals how his knowledge of Chinese calligraphy greatly affects his reception of the dance.

The program note for *Cursive*'s performance in Tokyo, written by Miyazato Tsukasa, is one of the most serious attempts at interpreting *Cursive* based on knowledge of premodern East Asian cultures. Miyazato introduces and interprets *Cursive* through an amalgam of aesthetic, religious, and philosophical references. He sees *Cursive* as embodying the magical, incantational dimensions of ancient pictograms, while also noting the flow of *qi* and the concept of vein (*mai* 脈) in the discourse of Chinese painting and calligraphy. He locates the representation of mandala from esoteric Buddhism in the square pools of light that situate the dancing bodies onstage; he also references Daoist religious thought when describing the dance's lines, pointing out their similarity to the lines written on Daoist talismans and charms. He reads the dance against the intact and partial Chinese characters projected onstage, such as *yong*, *wu*, *zai* 載, and *ren* 人, but also takes into account the red seals and the empty space of the specific calligraphy scrolls that contain the words.<sup>138</sup>

Generalizing from the previous examples, we can say that the encounter between an audience member and a performance produces meaning that circulates in and re-informs every dialogical moment of the interaction. Each audience takes away what most engages them with the dance performance; this includes how they interpret the piece, as well as their feelings of kinesthetic or philosophical empathy with the dancers. To be sure, aesthetic value judgment is conditioned by acculturation. This is not a new insight, but to actually examine a range of responses is still illuminating. The reviews of the *Cursive* series reveal that within the "transnational" field, there are certainly regional differences in how the works are understood and appreciated, which reflect the individual viewers' backgrounds and concerns. These are enabled by specific historical conditions. Calligraphy and the Sinoscripts evoke cultural memories and affinities from East Asian audiences (appealing perhaps more to literati/elite members); we should bear in mind that it was the regional order of the premodern Chinese empire that enabled such a common cultural practice in East Asia. Taiwan, of course, is implicated within this regional history, but as chapter 1 discusses, the legacy of Chinese calligraphy in Taiwan bears a unique history and context, and so does the Northern Style *wushu* in Taiwan addressed in this chapter. We find that part of Cloud Gate's transnational appreciation comes from tapping into and reconnecting existing shared experiences. However, it is true that the experience of Chinese calligraphy is more widespread than *wushu*. Indeed, both *wushu* artists and dancers are only small groups within Taiwanese society and abroad. East Asian reviewers, or those who are versed in Chinese culture, are more able to engage with Chinese calligraphy than with dance.

The other international reviewers of dance engage via their own cognitive frameworks; the degree of sophistication they can reach is almost incomparable to the experience and effort of the dancers (this is probably true of critics of most dance performances. Probing kinesthesia in terms of the dancers' internal felt experience of the movement allows us to get in touch with this

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<sup>138</sup> Tsukasa Miyazato, "Black and White Textual Variation, The World of Mandala" (黑白變奏文字 曼荼羅世界), in *Program for the Performance of Cursive in Tokyo* (Taipei: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2004). Japanese to Chinese translation by Wu Chi-Wen 吳繼文.



level of complexity and reengage the *materiality* of dance in terms of the aesthetic labor behind the performance onstage. There is a saying in Chinese that “one minute on stage takes ten years of practice” (台上一分鐘，台下十年功). The enormous conversion in terms of time between the works onstage and offstage, and between what is visible in performance and invisible within it, well captures the distance between audience members and performers. The “practice,” or *gong* 功, in relation to this time conversion for performers, describes the relationship between practice and artistry, but can also point to the labor of performance. One minute of performance that has an affective, “immaterial” impact takes ten years of practice that involves tremendous kinesthetic and mental effort. Besides, performing onstage takes corporeal effort to continually bring the performance into being. As Shannon Jackson noted, although the performed effect may be affective and immaterial, “the inseparability of such [performance] forms from the body of the laborer in fact makes them feel hypermaterial.”<sup>139</sup> However, as the earlier discussion reveals, this type of aesthetic labor produces a *materiality* that does not stop at recognizing the work done by the performers via their concrete, physical being, but encompasses the corporeal, kinesthetic, cognitive, and even philosophical experience cultivated over time.

Our investigation of kinesthesia in terms of the dancers’ internal felt experience of movement also brought us to consider the sources and genealogy of the training that in turn brought to light what made the dance company transform in a particular way, as well as the conditions of possibility allowing it to access and incorporate specific training systems in a specific locale. As the previous discussion shows, the sources of the training and the thematic concerns in Cloud Gate’s works also reveal a transnationality that is closely related to the sociopolitical discourses that affect Taiwan. The senior dancers whose experiences are discussed here in fact have been through different phases of Cloud Gate’s training and performed in different repertory works—both as participants in creating new works and performers restaging older works. Therefore, there is another dimension of the dancers’ kinesthetic experience that takes further consideration of the continued growth and renewal of their corporeality and personal philosophical outlooks over time.

As Roach alerts us to the increasing emphasis on the “kinesis” in contemporary performance that has come to exist in a transnational space, this chapter responds by delving into the two strains within the discourses of “kinesthesia” and uncovering the transnationality of both strains in the case of Cloud Gate’s performance. This approach also provides ways to assess the limits—and perhaps also the “excess”—of affective cognition and corporeal empathy that emerge within the transnational. As we examine the uneven matches and gaps between the production and the reception of performance, these limits and excess that can perhaps exist only as perpetual paradoxes can push us to think in more refined ways about how semiotic and affective economies operate within the transnational. Moreover, we should probably rethink the boundaries of local and international in terms of different international sites within historical regional interrelations, and how those sites produce different cultural tastes that are sometimes dependent on social class. As we move more consciously to the transnational framework of performance and analysis, in the next chapter, I look at two transnational Chinese choreographers whose works also intersect with cursive-style Chinese calligraphy. This additional analysis will further complicate discussions of choreographic politics within the transnational dance community. If we recognize the existence of interpretive and empathetic

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<sup>139</sup> Shannon Jackson, “Just-in-Time: Performance and the Aesthetics of Precarity,” *The Drama Review* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 19.

limits and excess, perhaps we can begin to approach performance politics within the transnational in terms of degrees of translatability and acts of nontranslation. The next chapter extends these questions as it consciously grapples with the decomposition and restitution of “Chineseness” in relation to the economies of forces and power in which they are enmeshed.

### Chapter 3

#### Fluid Sinographies: De-/Reterritorializing Chineseness through Dancing, Painting, and Calligraphy

In the section of Chinese choreographer Shen Wei's *Scroll* (*Huajuan* 畫卷) performed as part of the opening ceremony at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, a dancer stepped onto a huge canvas that had been placed on top of a gigantic LED screen, which unfolded in the fashion of an ancient Chinese scroll. Solemnly walking a few steps, he then took a deep breath and lunged to the ground, rolling, swishing, and swiftly pivoting himself by the hand, knee, and upper torso. Wearing an ink-soaked sock on one hand, he drew continuous circles across the canvas. More dancers stepped in, moving in various group and solo formations that added similar circular lines to the canvas. The performance ended with a dancer pivoting his torso in a full round on the ground, forming a large circle that completed what turned out to be a rendition of a natural landscape: mountains, rippling water, and, as the culminating element of the design, a prominent sun in the upper right corner.

The spectacular interplay of dancing, painting, and calligraphy demonstrated in *Scroll* revamps the basic concepts and movements of Shen's earlier piece *Connect Transfer* (2004), which he staged with his New York-based company Shen Wei Dance Arts. In both performances, dancers leave circular lines on a canvas as they roll across it in continuous elliptical motions. Yet while in *Scroll* these lines ultimately form a landscape painting, in *Connect Transfer* the pattern they create remains abstract. Similarly, while *Connect Transfer* explores the "tracing of energy,"<sup>140</sup> *Scroll* subjugates the dancers' momentum to a preconceived picture. Considering these works in progression, one might say that in *Scroll* the nationalist politics framing the work's performance have penetrated its aesthetic, harnessing the potential energy of the dancers' movements to create a monumental landscape that showcases national prowess for a domestic and global Olympic audience (this does not mean, however, that *Connect Transfer* is free of politics). This choreographic evolution, rehearsed in the earlier work's title ("connect transfer"), prompts us to ponder the ways energy is connected and transferred and consider the contemporary performance of "Chineseness" as a transnational phenomenon. While very few, if any, interpretive ambiguities exist in *Scroll*, the abstraction of *Connect Transfer* makes it hard to pin down. Likewise, while "Chineseness" is clearly delineated in a specific way in *Scroll*, in *Connect Transfer* it remains disarticulated, and therefore elusive, resting primarily in allusion.

Upon hearing of my study of the intersection between dance and Chinese calligraphy as seen in Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's *Cursive* series, many people make an association with *Scroll* as seen in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. Indeed, *Scroll* has reached a far wider global spectatorship via its relay in mass media and Internet streaming. Their association, however, does recall a broader genealogy of transnational Chinese performance. In fact, the sense of motion expressed in Chinese calligraphy has been explored in the work of numerous

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<sup>140</sup> Lewis Segal, "That'll Leave a Mark: Shen Wei Dancers Will Turn the Disney Hall Floor into a Painted Canvas," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2007.

choreographers of Chinese descent who have an attachment to this cultural practice.<sup>141</sup> Whereas the previous two chapters discussed the making of Cloud Gate's *Cursive* series in Taiwan and examined some of its international receptions, this chapter engages the transnational field of performance and the intersection between dance and Chinese calligraphy. The relationship among dancing, painting, and calligraphy in Shen Wei's choreography also resonates with New York-based dancer Yin Mei's *Cursive* (2006), alternately titled *Wild Grass* and *Ink/Body/Paper/Scents* in different iterations. In this chapter, I consider the performance series choreographed by Shen Wei and Yin Mei, in dialogue with those by Lin Hwai-Min, to rethink the performance of "Chineseness" that breaks from monolithic interpellation but is plural, decentered, and in motion, shaped by and participating in the economy and forces of power in the transnational.

Among the most popular ways to show the motion expressed in Chinese calligraphy explored in the work of transnational Chinese choreographers is to deploy "water sleeves" (*shuixiu* 水袖), a common element in the Chinese classical dance repertoire. In such performances, dancers manipulate the unusually long sleeves to create winding patterns in the air. The three performance series depart from this reliance on existing codified dance techniques to offer their own reinterpretations. While Shen and Yin both have dancers (in the case of Yin, herself as the solo performer) carry ink with their bodies in some way to leave ink traces on a piece of canvas or paper laid on the ground, Lin's choreography intersects with painting in that he is aspiring to relay the aesthetic ideal of "breath-rhythm-vitality-motion" (*qi yun sheng dong* 氣韻生動)<sup>142</sup> first expounded in the fifth century as one of the six principles for Chinese painters to follow.<sup>143</sup> As Chinese painting and calligraphy belong to a shared legacy of literati culture, their aesthetics are similar.<sup>144</sup> The painting-like quality is most dramatically seen in *Water Stains on the Wall* (2010). As mentioned in chapter 1, *Water Stains* features a large downward projection of negative images of clouds in motion, thus forming a gigantic picture of dancers moving as if amid different kinds of flowing black ink. Moreover, incorporating and transforming dancing, painting, and calligraphy, all three performance series reside within and skillfully manipulate the lines between the representational and the nonrepresentational, specifically the ambiguous zone that lies where "Chineseness" (expressed and engaged as Chinese calligraphy or Chinese painting) ends and "abstraction" begins. I read these three series of performances as *counterpoints*, for as the spectrum of their differences is revealed, their contrasts also make distinct the particular forces that shape their political meanings.

Taking a cue from the territorial quality of the painting represented in these dances, I consider the transnational performance of "Chineseness" in dialogue with what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari conceptualize as deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In fact, the three series also involve modes of decomposition and reconstitution. In engaging the work of Deleuze

<sup>141</sup> For example, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in New York, H.T. Chen & Dancers in New York, and Assembly Dance Theatre in Taiwan.

<sup>142</sup> Lin Hwai-Min, postshow talk after the performance of *Cursive*, National Theater, Taipei, September 4, 2009.

<sup>143</sup> Xie He 謝赫 (479–502 AD) expounded six principles of painting in his writing *A Record of the Classification of Painters of Former Times* (*Guhua pinlu* 古畫品錄); "breath-rhythm-vitality-motion" is the first principle.

<sup>144</sup> Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (815–907 A.D.) in his writing *Famous Paintings Through History* (*Lidai Minghua Ji* 歷代名畫記) presented the idea that "Chinese calligraphy and Chinese painting share the same origin" (*shuhua tongyuan* 書畫同源).

and Guattari I do not seek to apply theory to practice (the two may be aptly viewed as dichotomies). I consider their notions compelling in relation to the three performances series as such formulations underscore the dynamic process of identitarian reformation at the same time that interdisciplinary art making is taking place. This chapter is also influenced by recent discussions in Chinese studies problematizing the homogenizing forces of racial and national discourse embedded in the terms “China” and “Chineseness.”<sup>145</sup> These performances facilitate the volatility of “Chineseness” by differently invoking and disavowing Chinese calligraphy, or breaking down, transcending, or dissolving it through their curious slide into (Chinese) painting. As such, they set “Chineseness” in motion, rejecting the possibility of one definitive categorization as they navigate and negotiate the multiple forces framing contemporary transnational culture.

### **De-/Reterritorialization**

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that phenomena, as assemblages of events and circumstances, form spatial relations and movements. From these assemblages emerge lines of flight that escape existing horizons to form new territories. Deterritorialization via lines of flight indicates the creative potential of an assemblage, or territory, to effect the transformation of other assemblages or of itself. Deterritorialization always accompanies processes of reterritorialization, but rather than returning to the original territory, these new spaces combine deterritorialized elements to form new connections. Deleuze and Guattari’s construct spans art, music, literature, philosophy, and politics. A vital example cited in their writings is the way Olivier Messiaen’s use of birdsong in his musical compositions transforms both the territories of the musical instrument (piano) and the birdsong itself.<sup>146</sup> I would suggest that such de-/reterritorialization processes also take place in the performances considered here, in that the territories of dancing, painting, and calligraphy are broken down, transformed, and reconstituted to become new areas of artistic expression.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization, de-/reterritorialization is simply a process of creative movement in a given assemblage. But it can take on a negative connotation, such as when de-/reterritorialization involves the creation of a distinct “face” or a marked “landscape” in which “bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out, deterritorialization pushed to a new threshold—a jump is made from the organic strata to the strata of significance and subjectification.”<sup>147</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s portrayal conjures a dark vision of oppressive disciplining of the body and restrictions on organic, creative transformations. While it is desirable to imagine the possibility of escaping from undesirable disciplines and restrictions, such a possibility perhaps exists only in the *movement* of phenomena (as constant lines of flight) and can hardly be pinpointed in a given performance of a specific place and time. It is perhaps even harder to isolate a specific moment in which people or things are free of significance and subjectification.

Deleuze and Guattari’s notions are apparent in the performance of *Scroll*, and they can

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<sup>145</sup> Fran Martin and Larissa Heinrich, eds., *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006); Shumei Shi, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>146</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 310–350.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

illuminate other performances as well. As the evolution from *Connect Transfer* to *Scroll* unfolds, the energy that resulted in a series of abstract, circular lines is channeled to form a clear representation of a specific landscape, which must be considered in light of its highly politicized context: the state-directed, intensely nationalistic Olympic opening ceremony. In approaching such a territorialization, however, it is not the ideology but rather the implicit or explicit power structures that are crucial for Deleuze and Guattari: “*Very specific assemblages of power impose significance and subjectification,*” they note, and “it is these assemblages, these despotic or authoritarian formations, that give the new semiotic system the means of its imperialism” (italics in the original).<sup>148</sup> While the authoritarian quality thus invoked is clearly present in the performance of *Scroll*, Deleuze and Guattari’s attention to “economy and the organization of power” can also be applied more broadly. Engaging the three performance series on these terms, I extend a concern with the “economy and the organization of power” to consider the motor power and energy of dancing bodies as revealed through analysis of the choreography and creative conditions of each performance.

### Dancing and Writing

In staging dancing as painting and as calligraphy, the three performances enter into current discourse in dance studies about ephemerality and the politics of visibility inherent in performances that explore the relationship between dance and writing. As mentioned earlier, Susan Foster has pushed for the consideration of the body’s inscriptive agency, proposing to think of a written body that also writes; other scholars have delved into the tensions that have emerged between dancing and writing. Mark Franko, in his study of baroque court ballet, argues that burlesque ballet’s departure from “textuality”—at a moment when the graphic emulation of texts, as in geometric ballet, had been abandoned but court dance had not yet been subsumed by theatrical performances—correlates to aristocrats’ efforts to negotiate autonomy from the monarch. Further, he links “textuality” with the ideology of repetition that marks both its recuperation in early twentieth-century marionette theater and reconstruction practices of baroque dance practiced today.<sup>149</sup> Echoing these longstanding tensions between dancing and writing, both Shen Wei and Yin Mei talk about the “tracing” or “recording” of motion in their choreography, while Lin Hwai-Min has cited the Buddhist saying “like dream, illusion, bubble, and shadow” (*ru menghuan paoying* 如梦幻泡影)<sup>150</sup> to describe the transient quality of live dancing. In this regard, André Lepecki’s investigation into the ways the ephemerality of dance drives a desire to “capture” it becomes most relevant. Pondering the origins of “choreography”—defined as the writing of movement as well as written notations of dance—within the Western Enlightenment tradition, Lepecki notes that dance critics today still voice an anxiety over the ephemerality of dance first expressed by European court dance masters, and dance notations, manuals, and modern photology continue to struggle against expressions of this complex.<sup>151</sup> In this line of thinking, it is only by writing that the “ephemeral dance” gains significance, while the scripting (down) of dance also suggests an authoritative imposition or fixation that (violently)

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 180–181; italics in the original.

<sup>149</sup> Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>150</sup> Lin Hwai-Min, postshow talk after the performance of *Cursive II*, National Theater, Taipei, September 10, 2009. The Buddhist line comes from the *Diamond Sutra*.

<sup>151</sup> André Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance,” in *Of the Presence of the Body*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 124–139. Lepecki cites contemporary dance critic Marcia Seigel as an example.

regulates, alters, or displaces the dance and the dancing bodies.

### ***Connect Transfer: Dancing and Writing in Symbiosis***

The choreography of *Connect Transfer* invites reconsideration of the tensions between dancing and writing that haunt the discourse surrounding the ephemerality of dance. The piece begins with dancers making bodily contact as if to transfer their energy along a chain of movement. Their gestures are composed, almost sculptural; we do not see the lavish full-body touching and weight-sharing of contact improvisation, but rather contact that is quite calculated and occurs mostly on their limbs. The carefully composed connections made by the bodies project a clean, geometric alignment that morphs into faster flows of movement, dancers dancing and painting at the same time. In continuous circular motions they swish, swirl, flip, and roll across the floor. They pivot and rotate upon different joints, rarely stopping in any static pose as one circle leads to the next, one way of pivoting extends into another. Most of the time they remain close to the ground, leaving traces of ink on the canvas as they dance along. With the continuous movement of dancers across the stage, layers of circular lines are added on top of one another, resulting in a large painting of overlapping lines, mostly in black and with different colors in between.

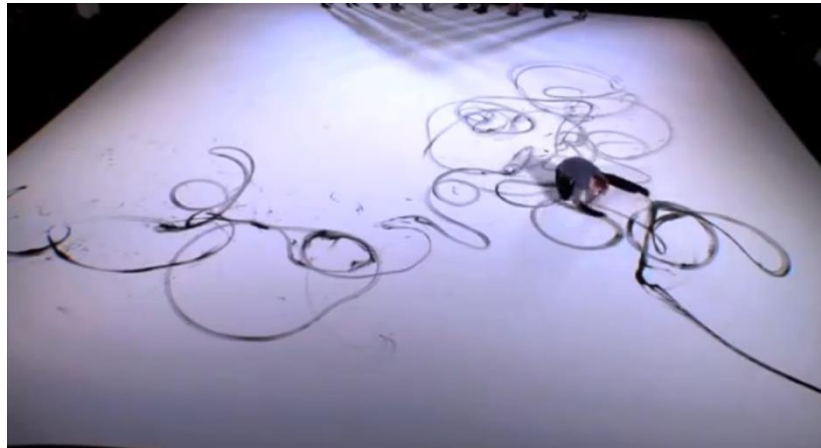
While the first part of the dance was composed and sculptural, emphasizing the dancers' vertical poses, the second part dissolves it with the continuous flow of circular energy across a horizontal plane. When Shen characterizes *Connect Transfer* as a "tracing of the dancers' energy," he underscores the central concern being the force that *drives* dancing. In the choreographic progression of the performance, this concern becomes increasingly prominent, reorienting the established choreographic parameters that have emphasized formal poses and visualist aesthetics. Deidre Sklar has noted that the visually driven aesthetic of ballet has often relegated other modes of sensory experience, especially kinesthesia, to the periphery.<sup>152</sup> This tendency is not exclusive to ballet, yet ballet's influence on contemporary dance training throughout the international dance world, and the fact that the performance of ballet has been a formative experience for many dancers, including those in Shen Wei Dance Arts, shows its importance. The shift from verticality (the convention of ballet and other concert dance choreography) toward horizontality, as well as the emphasis on making the dancers' "energy" *visible*, represent a profound choreographic reorientation away from the aesthetic shaping of dancing bodies.

Of course, the emphasis on "tracing" via literal line-making also recalls current discourse surrounding the ephemerality of dance and the desire for its capture. While it may be tempting to see *Connect Transfer* as an instance of a contemporary performance following the legacy of such a "capture," a closer look reveals deeper nuances. The line-making that results from this performance is not simply a matter of following, or "chasing after" the body's movements, as the word "tracing" may suggest. At times the dancers also deliberately draw smaller but faster circles over the canvas with their hands, materializing an intentional concentration of the circular energy amid the ongoing circular motion that their bodies generate, extend, and spiral through. At times the lines seem to trace the dancers' movements, yet at other moments the act of drawing appears to power the dancing. The performance fluidly interweaves and interchanges between the two modes. Dancing and painting are folded into each other; one unfolds alongside the other.

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<sup>152</sup> Deidre Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia," in *Migrations of Gesture*, ed. Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 85–112.

I suggest that the lines are ultimately a tracing of not only the circular energy that animates the dancing but also the interwoven and symbiotic force that connects dancing and painting to create a kind of co-growth. Indeed, we might well think of the lines left on the canvas as a kind of newly de-/reterritorializing expression. Dancing breeds painting and vice versa. *Connect Transfer* thus revises the relationship between dancing and painting (and writing) as divided and opposing, as one passing away and the other capturing it. This invites a rethinking of how we might approach the question of dance’s ephemerality. The “energy” that drives the symbiotic dancing-painting (and dancing-writing) leaves its own traces and then becomes something else—a piece of abstract painting in this case, rather than documentation (as in notations, manuals, or photology) from which to retrieve, reconstruct, capture, or fix a dance.



*Connect Transfer II* (2006), performed by Shen Wei Dance Arts.<sup>153</sup>

That *Connect Transfer* performs a symbiosis of dancing and painting may owe much to Shen’s own investment in both arts.<sup>154</sup> He was exposed to Chinese calligraphy and Chinese water-ink painting in childhood, and at the age of sixteen he began to explore Western oil painting, including abstract expressionist techniques that resemble the kind of painting performed in *Connect Transfer*, which one reviewer explicitly linked to the action paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912–1956).<sup>155</sup> During the 1980s, when Shen reached his teenage years, China witnessed a surge of interest in Western thought and art practices. In the realm of art, translations of Euro-American art history and theory books were published alongside philosophical texts such as those of Heinrich Wölfflin, Ernst Gombrich, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Albert Camus, and T. S. Eliot.<sup>156</sup> A new generation

<sup>153</sup> Still image taken from the video excerpt on the company’s YouTube channel [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGeXID-1Pd0&feature=share&list=UU6wXtZ\\_DUUqSlcvFHvS9PxA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGeXID-1Pd0&feature=share&list=UU6wXtZ_DUUqSlcvFHvS9PxA) (Accessed May 14, 2013)

<sup>154</sup> Shen Wei began training as a Chinese Opera performer at the age of nine, following the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). He later received Western modern dance training in Guangdong Modern Dance School, the first modern dance institution in China, and he became a founding member of Guangdong Modern Dance Company, China’s first modern dance group, in 1990.

<sup>155</sup> Phyllis Goldman, “Shen Wei Dance Arts: Connect Transfer,” *Back Stage*, August 6, 2004.

<sup>156</sup> Hung Wu, “A Case of Being ‘Contemporary’: Conditions, Spheres, and Narratives of Contemporary Chinese Art” (2008), in *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, ed. Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 397.



of artists became interested in exploring Western artistic movements, such as Surrealism, Postimpressionism, and Abstract Expressionism, departing from the Mao era's focus on Socialist Realism.<sup>157</sup> As Chinese artist Xu Bing (b. 1955) has suggested, much of the creativity of the generation of artists that emerged in the 1980s can be attributed to what they did not know: "Unfettered by undue comprehension of the workings of the Western art world, and still largely oblivious to the concept of art as a commodity, they threw themselves body and soul into expressing themselves in a way they thought suitable to this ideal world of pure freedom."<sup>158</sup> Shen's interest in Western painting developed in conjunction with this 1980s post-Mao burgeoning of creative energy and curiosity regarding Euro-American modern art.

In 1995, Shen went to New York to study modern dance under the sponsorship of the Louis-Nikolais Dance Lab. Five years later, he formed his New York-based company Shen Wei Dance Arts. Shen's interest in exploring intersections between dance and painting was evident prior to the creation of *Connect Transfer. Near the Terrace* (2000), for example, was inspired by the works of Belgian surrealist painter Paul Delvaux (1897–1994). In this piece, dancers are transformed into visually striking creatures as they move slowly and poignantly in front of a flight of stairs. Upper torsos fully exposed, they wear long gowns in grayish blue that trail behind them from the waist down. At the end of the piece, one of these otherworldly creatures glides down the stairs on their back, head first. In *The Rite of Spring* (2003), the black stage was smeared with geometric lines and wild brush strokes in shades of gray; dancers dotted the stage, animating this pictorial ground to the rhythm of Igor Stravinsky's famous score, here stripped of its story of human sacrifice to foreground formal dialogues.

*Connect Transfer* is not a departure, then, but a continuation of this interest in the relationship between dancing and painting. Rather than representing a painting-like atmosphere or animating a painted stage environment, the dancers actually paint as they dance. Premiering at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center in New York, the piece was conceived to be performed on proscenium stages. Its second iteration, *Connect Transfer II* (2008), was performed at the Judson Church in New York, where the audience sat on all sides of the stage. This arrangement placed spectators and dancers on the same plane, exploring a level of audience interaction more common to installations held in museum or gallery spaces, and perhaps extending the push for "horizontality." In *Undivided Divided* (2011), a dancing-painting performance like that in *Connect Transfer* was staged in a decidedly installation-like presentation at the Park Avenue Armory in New York. The audience roamed the space where each dancer occupied a square panel on the ground covered with paint; the dancers became gradually soaked in color as they moved and rolled on the panel, making more paintings. In one corner of the space, dancers rolled across a long strip of canvas, leaving circular lines in a gesture reminiscent of *Connect Transfer*. Elsewhere in the Armory, a concurrent exhibit projected images of Shen's paintings next to photographs of his dances, attesting to his interest in exploring and bridging the art forms.

### ***Scroll and the Beijing Olympics Wish***

In contrast to *Connect Transfer*, the dancing in *Scroll* results in a clear landscape painting framed within an unfolding Chinese scroll. The choreographic orientations of the two dances are also divergent. While *Connect Transfer* performs a "tracing of the dancers' energy" in which

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<sup>157</sup> Julia M. White, Introduction to *Mahjong: Art, Film, and Change in China*, ed. Julia M. White (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 2008), 11–15.

<sup>158</sup> Julia F. Andrews, "Post-Mao, Postmodern," in *Mahjong*, 35.

dancing and painting are symbiotic, *Scroll* subjects dancing to the creation of a predetermined image in the grand opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, an event that is both national and international.

The Olympic Games have never been apolitical, despite the fact that the charter of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) defines the “Olympic spirit” as free from references to statehood, supportive of peace and human dignity, and against discrimination based on race, religion, politics, or gender.<sup>159</sup> The Olympics have always been enmeshed in international rivalries and politics, with the opening and closing ceremonies often becoming nationalistic spectacles staged for the benefit of domestic and international audiences.<sup>160</sup> Dong Jinxia has asserted that the Beijing Olympic Games, in addition to articulating a narrative of nationalism, *demonstrated* the nation’s modernization and technological development. Beijing had applied to the IOC in 1991 to host the 2000 Olympic Games. Although the city did not win the bid at the time, the preparations undertaken on a national scale—from the building of infrastructure to a rise in per capita GDP and the development of information technology—eventually led to the IOC’s decision to hold the games in Beijing in 2008.<sup>161</sup> As Dong notes, “the rapid development of modernization in the 1990s laid a foundation for Beijing to successfully launch the Olympic bid in 2001, which in turn would speed up the modernization process.”<sup>162</sup> Modernization continued to flourish after Beijing won the bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, from the construction of additional infrastructure to developments in tourism and the service industry. In regard to the opening ceremony, Dong concludes that “the compulsory rituals [...] were incorporated into China’s own narratives of nation, refiguring these universalist moments as displays of national character, pride, power and progress.” Further, “the blending of tradition with cutting-edge technology helped create a special moment for Chinese people to restore their national grandeur, erase past memories of defeat and ensure present memories of success.”<sup>163</sup>

Indeed, the ceremony’s theme, the “Four Great (Technological) Inventions” of ancient China (paper, moveable-type printing, gunpowder, and the compass), aimed to blend the traditional with modern technology (LED screens, computerized lighting systems, etc.). The ceremony thus sought to articulate the *continuity* of Chinese technological advancement from the ancient to the present and beyond, revisiting the past while declaring great aspirations for the future. The festivities included large-scale group performances by hundreds of thousands of uniformed performers; in addition to the playing of the *fou* 缶 (a kind of ancient musical instrument reimagined and remade in this context), there was a dance that resembled the workings of moveable type and a demonstration of *taiji quan*. Confucian thought was also selectively highlighted to serve the nation’s self-positioning in light of its recent economic rise. One dance formed the Chinese character “harmony” (*he* 和), spelling out the welcoming and

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<sup>159</sup> Kevin Caffrey, “Olympic Politics in Beijing: Games But Not Just Games,” in *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory. Chinese Challenge in the “Chinese Century”*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Jinxia Dong (London: Routledge, 2009), 57–75; Rodanthe Tzanelli, “Mediating Cosmopolitanism: Crafting an Allegorical Imperative through Beijing 2008,” *International Review of Sociology* 20, no. 2 (2010): 215–241. The Olympic Charter published by the IOC has been in force since 2007 and is available at [http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en\\_report\\_122.pdf](http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf)

<sup>160</sup> Jialing Luo, “Betwixt and Between: Reflections on the Ritual Aspects of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics,” *Sport in Society* 13, no. 5 (2010): 771–783.

<sup>161</sup> Jinxia Dong, “The Beijing Games, National Identity and Modernization in China,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 16 (2010): 2798–2820.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 2802.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 2808.

harmonious spirit central to the positioning of the Beijing Olympic Games and echoing the “peaceful rise” theory that had been expounded by the Chinese Communist Party since 2003.<sup>164</sup>

During the ceremony, *Scroll* began after a film introducing the invention of paper. In the piece’s opening moments, the attention of the spectators was drawn to the stadium floor, on which a gigantic LED screen had been installed. The images on the screen created the effect of a huge Chinese painting scroll rolling open at both ends. At its center was a large canvas stage. As symbols taken from historical Chinese crafts and paintings were set to motion on the screen, rimming its edges with high-tech moving lights, dancers in all black plunged into dancing across the stage, painting circular lines over the canvas that ultimately formed a landscape with a sun in the upper right corner. The performance featured much dancing in unison, with pairs of dancers swirling over the ground in perfect synchronicity to draw identical circular patterns. Despite the circularity of the choreography seen in both works, the dancers’ movements in *Connect Transfer* never attempted to achieve this kind of synchronicity. In *Connect Transfer*, each dancer claimed the pattern he or she created, even standing up after swirling across the stage to receive applause from the audience for their individual feats. The multiplicity of authorship that this implies is paralleled in the amount of interpretive space allowed by the performance. The abstract painting formed at the end of *Connect Transfer* can have numerous interpretations, while the coordinated movements in *Scroll* result in a singular representation of the sun against mountaintop, clouds, and water.

The significance of the venue for *Scroll*—the Olympic opening ceremony—cannot be underestimated as we attempt to grasp the shifts in Shen’s choreography. In *Connect Transfer*, a shift to horizontality ultimately dismantles the choreography of the dance’s earlier movements and challenges the convention of verticality in concert stage presentations. For the Olympic ceremony, where the audience was seated on all sides of a sports arena at increasingly elevated levels, the performance was designed to be viewed from a higher position looking downward. Like the spectacular, large-group horizontal formations presented alongside it, *Scroll* created a landscape that served and reinforced this viewing position. It also suited the perspective of most of the cameras at the ceremony, which were positioned to shoot from above. Thus, the viewing economy of the two-dimensional flat screens of the television and computer further reified the horizontality of the choreography, offering a transmission-oriented spectacle for a global viewership.

After the dance ended, the painted canvas stage was lifted above the ground. Floating vertically in midair, the finished picture met the eyes of the audience, facing the side of the stadium where Hu Jintao 胡錦濤, then president of the People’s Republic of China, and other important officials were seated. The painting’s elevation reinforced the displacement enacted by the use of highly disciplined dance movements to fix an image. Although when the dance began the painting was couched in the celebration of China’s invention of paper, it later functioned to project a nationalistic vision of an environmentally conscious future. At the conclusion of the ceremony a group of Chinese children came on stage to color the landscape—which the dancers

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<sup>164</sup> Julia Lovell, “Prologue: Beijing 2008—The Mixed Messages of Contemporary Chinese Nationalism,” in *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory*, 8–28. See also “China’s Peaceful Development Road,” *People’s Daily Online*, 22 December 2005, available at [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200512/22/eng20051222\\_230059.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200512/22/eng20051222_230059.html) (accessed April 5, 2013): “China persists in its pursuit of harmony and development externally; the two aspects, closely linked and organically united, are an integrated whole, and will help to build a harmonious world of sustained peace and common prosperity.”

rendered in contours formed by black ink lines—while narration in the background proclaimed the nation’s “green” vision. The environmental damage and pollution that come with China’s industrial and technological development have raised concerns in the global community, and this performance staged an attempt at reconciling progress and sustainability. As a gesture of reconciliation it also resonated with the formation of “harmony” in the moveable type dance. The goal was to reassure the audience that the rising nation of China was “peaceful” and not unaware of being regarded as a threat by other countries. The “displays of national character, pride, power and progress” throughout the opening festivities were informed both by the way China wished the world to view it and by the country’s awareness of how it has been viewed within the international community.



*Scroll* (2008) in the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympic Games.<sup>165</sup>

An editorial in the British newspaper *The Guardian* found the ceremony both “magnificent and unsettling” and pondered what was behind the “fearsomely disciplined dancing or the precision kitsch,” while also self-consciously questioning what London would do to open the 2012 games.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, Olympic opening ceremonies offer an additional field of competition for the hosting cities. For the individual choreographer, participating in even a portion of these events means endless negotiations. Shen has discussed the deliberations surrounding whether to

<sup>165</sup> Still image taken from the video recording of *2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony* by China Central Television (New Taipei City: Wutai duomeiti Ltd. 五泰多媒體股份有限公司, 2008)

<sup>166</sup> “Olympic Games: The Torch Passes,” *The Guardian*, August 9, 2008.

make his choreography for the games more “artistic” or more “entertaining.”<sup>167</sup> In an interview with the *New York Times*, he expressed that “for the Olympics [he is] trying to push things, make things more abstract, more international, to make sure things aren’t too Chinese, not too many dragons or red lanterns or ribbon dances.” He further commented, “Maybe it’s their tradition, but we need to grow, and China is not that way anymore.”<sup>168</sup> Shen arranged *Scroll* for fourteen dancers, all of whom performed in a much more fluid style than was seen in the uniform rigidity of *fou* players and the representations of apsaras, moveable types, Confucian disciples, and fifteenth-century Chinese maritime explorers also featured at the opening ceremony.<sup>169</sup> In this divergent presentation style we see a will toward the abstract that belies the literality of the landscape created over the course of the dance. It is interesting to consider this abstract tendency in relation to that seen in Cloud Gate’s *Cursive* series. For Cloud Gate, what matters is not abstraction for abstraction’s sake, but rather what abstraction has the potential to *do*. In discussing the notion of abstraction, Stephen Park notes that “it will not do to simply locate abstraction, to speak of abstraction *in* something, rather we must also consider its origin, in other words, abstraction *from* something.”<sup>170</sup> In the *Cursive* series abstraction makes the borders of “Chineseness” ambiguous, enabling a particular political valence for Cloud Gate; in the context of *Scroll*, the “abstract” is explicitly linked to the “international” and attributed a different kind of agency attempted in face of the legacy of the modern performance institution in China, whose distinct invention of “tradition” informed by Chinese socialist politics is revamped for the display of a newly invented vision of the nation in light of its own rise in the era of globalization.<sup>171</sup>

### ***Cursive*—From the Auto(bio)graphical to the Material**

Yin Mei’s *Cursive* poses a counterpoint to the works of Shen Wei and Cloud Gate. Like Shen, Yin was born and spent her formative years in China, and she has been based in New York since 1985. In her *Cursive*, as in *Connect Transfer*, the movements of the dance create an abstract painting. Whereas *Connect Transfer* features circular motions performed by a group of dancers, Yin’s *Cursive* is a solo performance in which she rolls and spreads her body in different ways. The resulting painting is composed of multidirectional streaks of ink, in contrast to the distinct type of circular line seen in *Connect Transfer*. Like Lin Hwai-Min’s choreography for Cloud Gate, Yin explicitly references cursive-style Chinese calligraphy. She first titled her performance *Wild Grass*, a literal translation of the Chinese phrase *kuangcao* 狂草, a term that refers to wild, cursive-style Chinese calligraphy. Later, she titled the same performance *Cursive*, the English word that has been used to refer to this style of Chinese calligraphy. In another

<sup>167</sup> “Interview with Shen Wei,” Dance Channel TV, available at <http://www.dancechanneltv.com/interview-with-shen-wei/> (accessed January 10, 2013).

<sup>168</sup> Julie Bloom, “Before the Games Begin, He Has Moves to Make,” *New York Times*, July 6, 2008.

<sup>169</sup> The Ming dynasty official Zheng He 鄭和 (1371–1435 AD) led seven maritime expeditions between 1405 and 1431 from the southeast coast of mainland China to cities in Southeast Asia and along the rim of the Indian Ocean. His travel reached almost as far as the Mozambique Channel.

<sup>170</sup> Stephen Park, “Abstraction,” in *The University of Chicago Theories of Media Keywords Glossary*, 2003, available at <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/abstraction.htm>, accessed on April 5, 2013.

<sup>171</sup> For a study of the institution of Chinese dance in the legacy of Chinese socialism and its contentions in the postsocialist era see Emily Wilcox, “The Dialectics of Virtuosity: Dance in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–2009” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011).

iteration, she changed the title to *Ink/Body/Paper/Scent*, breaking the performance down to its material and sensory components rather than foregrounding an invocation of Chinese calligraphy.

Yin was trained in Chinese folk dance and performed in Henan Province Dance Company in China in her youth. She went to the United States in 1985 to study modern dance, and in 1995 she formed her own company, Yin Mei Dance, in New York. Her past choreography exploits very strong symbolism that is intended to, as she has explained, evoke mystery and dream space.<sup>172</sup> Much of her past work comes from a very personal source, especially her memories of a traumatic childhood during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and various intercultural encounters. In her brand of dance-theater works she has used objects ranging from fans, green tea, masks, and swords to installations by other artists. Her performances often include poetic speech that emphasizes nonlinear modes of storytelling.

Yin's *Cursive* stands out from her choreographic trajectory. While the works she created before and after deploy an abundance of symbolic theatrical devices, the primary gesture in *Cursive*—the use of her body as a paintbrush—offers a much simpler distillation of form and concept. Whereas in some of her earlier works Yin incorporated speech, *Cursive* is exclusively about movement, with no additional layering of language. And, although she has collaborated with visual artists on previous projects,<sup>173</sup> in *Cursive* Yin Mei is at once the dancer and the visual artist. Since premiering in 2006 under the title *Wild Grass*, *Cursive* has been performed in various museum and gallery spaces in New York and different cities in the United States. In her first iteration of the performance, accompanied by Joe McPhee on trumpet playing a series of sustained notes and airy sounds, Yin, clad in a black, one-piece dress, begins by slowly crawling, rolling, and wiggling around a long, white piece of paper that has been spread out on the floor. As the performance unfolds she brings in a sponge fully soaked with ink and, holding it close to her body, pushes it back and forth across the paper as she continues her dance. Every movement leaves additional smears, splashes, and tiny puddles of black ink behind. At times she breaks out of her trance-like state to make eye contact with the audience before returning to the solitary, focused process of bodily calligraphy. The resulting paintings are exhibited in the same venue.

Although *Cursive*'s minimalism stands out within Yin's body of choreography, the piece in fact has a rich network of fascinating personal, conceptual, and philosophical underpinnings. Yin has explained that its format was directly inspired by the work of Tang dynasty Chinese calligrapher Zhang Xu 張旭 (675–750 A.D.), who is noted for his wild cursive. This reference reflects Yin's longstanding interest in the discourse of Chinese calligraphy, which has deeply influenced her practice of dance and choreography. These pursuits in turn are linked to her ongoing personal quest for the meaning of life—manifested in her studies of the philosophical views put forward in the *I-Ching*. On a material level, she is also interested in Chinese writing, and particularly the writing of her family name in a specific ancient Chinese script. Her strong interest and even obsession with personal history and its rootedness in broader familial and cultural contexts provides a base for the purported abstraction and minimalism seen in *Cursive*. In this regard, Anurima Banerji's concept of the "paratopic," a private, secreted dimension of personal meaning and self-making that exists *alongside* the public presentation of performance art, echoes the personally inflected meaning of Chinese calligraphy that is crucial but invisible

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<sup>172</sup> Yin Mei Dance website, <http://www.yinmeidance.org/> (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>173</sup> Such as Xu Bing in *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies* (1988), Cai Guo-Qiang in *Asunder* (2001), and Gu Wenda in *Nomad: Tea* (2002).



*Cursive* (2006), performed by Yin Mei. Photo courtesy: Yin Mei Dance.

within the seemingly abstract presentation.<sup>174</sup> This interconnection reveals new dimensions of the relationship between dance and text, and it demonstrates that an understanding of the particular pathways by which an immigrant artist accesses the language and aesthetic and philosophical discourses of her native country are key to grasping the newly transnational terrain of today's contemporary art world.

### *The “Auto(bio)graphical”*

While the majority of Yin's oeuvre can be characterized as autobiographical, *Cursive* does not enact ongoing performative self-makings by (re)narrating/composing personal stories, but instead literally imprints her body onto a surface that will be directly integrated with her corpus of performance works.<sup>175</sup> The three “clouds,” or ink daubings, that repeatedly appear on the paper during her performances of *Cursive* both register her “choreography”—a sketch of the pathways and movements that provide a loose structure of the performance—and serve as what she regards as her “autograph.”<sup>176</sup> As the autograph is closely linked to her interest in personal history (which is embedded in family history), it is “auto(bio)graphical” in that the signature contains a gesture toward her personal life. As Yin explains, her interest in Chinese calligraphy derives from her interest in Chinese writing, and her interest in Chinese writing centers on her

<sup>174</sup> Anurima Banerji, “Paratopias of Performance: The Choreographic Practices of Chandralekha,” in *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory, and The Global*, ed. André Lepecki and Jenn Joy (New York: Seagull Books, 2009), 346–371.

<sup>175</sup> Alison Lee Bory, “Dancing with My Self: Performing Autobiography in (Post)Modern Dance” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 2008).

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Yin Mei by the author, November 6, 2012.

fascination with the ancient writing of her family name, Yin 殷, when she was studying her family genealogy. The character *yin* in the script of ancient bronzes (*jinwen* 金文) looks like two birds mating—one small and one large, “with big claws like a phoenix,” Yin has noted. This vivid image evokes for her something mysterious about life and its origins. Her fascination with this ancient pictograph is enhanced by her interest in the *I-Ching*, which she has studied since 1999. She has written the character *yin* all over her notebooks (as seen in Figure 2 in which she makes a circle out of it). The imagistic quality of this particular symbol also aligns with her overall interest in drawing pictures—she has mentioned that she often draws pictures as a basis for her choreography. Her performance of *Cursive* becomes “auto(bio)graphical” because from the outset she treats the dance as a “square word” (*fangkuai zi* 方塊字, a term connoting the perception of Chinese characters as square in contrast with the lettering of other languages).<sup>177</sup> The dance results in an “auto(bio)graph” not in the literal lettering formed by her body but in the structure she selected for the Chinese characters that guide her movements.



Figure 2. The character *yin* in an ancient script written by Yin Mei on her notebook.  
Photo by the author.

Yin’s interest in Chinese characters and writing soon developed into an interest in Chinese calligraphy. The *Treatise on Calligraphy* (*Shu pu* 書譜) by Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (646–691 A.D.) has influenced her own dancing and choreography, and she has incorporated elements of its teachings in her courses on modern dance, composition, and improvisation at Queens College, where she is a professor in the Department of Drama, Theater, and Dance. The *Treatise* discusses ways of manipulating the brush and exerting various amounts of force, speed, and pressure to create different kinds of strokes. Engaging writing as a *dynamic* rather than *static* process, the *Treatise* deploys highly evocative imagery of natural phenomena. In one frequently cited passage, for example, a stroke is compared to the heaviness of clouds crawling across the sky, or the light movements of a flying cicada’s wings, the two strikingly different images back

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.



to back forming a sort of juxtaposition (*huo zhong ruo beng yun, huo qing ru chan yi* 或重若崩雲，或輕如蟬翼). Yin stresses, however, that the *Treatise* serves as a kind of *inspiration* rather than as a choreographic directive, and she asserts that her interests lie not in demonstrating the aesthetic properties of Chinese calligraphy but in interpreting them through bodily performance.

Indeed, the calligrapher Zhang Xu has influenced Yin not simply through the style of his calligraphy but through its strong *performative* qualities. Known for his unrestrained character, Zhang would often use his hair as a brush to write deliriously over the walls when he got drunk. Yin has characterized such behavior as “emotional, and real.” “He has transcended the concern for ‘what’ to write.” Yin continued, “I do not need you to understand what I am writing. It is his energy, *qi*, and its effect on his audience. He must have an audience with whom he interacts, and that feeds him something in turn, so he has a lot of room for expression; there is a kind of grandeur in it.” In reimagining the scene of Zhang’s writing, Yin identified qualities shared by “performance art” today, including the co-presence of the performer and the audience and the affective interactions and feedback between them. “What I like to see is something like performance art. I soaked my body with ink, and my body became the brush,” Yin said.<sup>178</sup> Yin drew on the interpretive framework of traditional Chinese discourse to identify an infectious *qi*, or energy, that exudes from the writing act to encompass both the writer and the onlookers. It is precisely such a force that informs the performance format of *Cursive*.

Working on “performance art with [her] body, as opposed to performing the aesthetic of Chinese calligraphy,” Yin nevertheless regarded herself as following the guidance of the *Treatise*. “I simply follow what the *Treatise on Calligraphy* says—anywhere can be the start,” she said. “I do not need a start. As long as there is a point I can start. My start can be any verb used to describe the action of writing in the *Treatise*.”<sup>179</sup> In pondering the ways her dance is informed by the flow of *qi*, she notes its reactive nature. For example, when rolling over into an ink puddle, she would spread it out in different ways. The resulting ink prints, she noted, not only trace the body’s physical movement but also serve as a “recording of the *qi* field” (*qi chang de jilu* 氣場的記錄). This recording, she explained, “does not rely on a camera, and is also unlike [some people’s rigid, rule-abiding approach to] Chinese calligraphy, which is a ‘recording’ in a controlled state; *it is completely relaxed*. What I am doing is to spread out my *qi* in a natural way. I think this can better express the spirit of wild cursive.”<sup>180</sup> Within a loose structure of playing with the “square word” and her autographical intent, Yin did not subject herself to premeditated movements choreographed to exactitude. The ink puddles that formed as she rolled over the paper led her to spread the ink out in various ways, following the natural tendencies of her body and, she would add, the natural flow of *qi* that informs and accompanies her every movement. Thus, Yin’s solo dance made intimate links between the history and discourse of Chinese calligraphy as well as her own professional and artistic life as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher.

### *The Material*

If the title *Cursive* is laced with a sense of the “auto(bio)graphical,” the alternate title *Ink/Body/Paper/Scents* calls attention to the materiality of the performance, including the

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Yin Mei by the author, November 6, 2012.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

olfactory sensation created by the ink. Yin pays attention to her materials in the way a painter does, and she has noted that unlike in Western oil painting, in which paint can be applied to the canvas in layers and alternately built up or scraped down, in Chinese painting, “as soon as the Chinese ink enters the rice paper, they become one.”<sup>181</sup> The performance of *Cursive* is meant to last for fifteen to twenty minutes, and preventing the ink from spilling or running out before the dance is completed can be a challenge. Yin’s solution was to sew sponges of varying textures and densities underneath her dress, and this allowed her to create different effects with the ink. She introduced further variations by pressing the sponges against the paper at different angles and with varying amounts of force. She also experimented with a range of painting surfaces, from butcher paper to photography backdrop paper and even plastic. Rice paper, the material on which Chinese calligraphy is traditionally written, turned out to be too costly. The speed with which rice paper absorbs the ink also made it difficult for Yin to spread the painting process out across the length of her performance.

As I have established, Yin set out to create a performance work with her body, not to illustrate the aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy, yet the impact of those aesthetics on her performance cannot be denied. The alternate titles Yin has applied to *Cursive* since its conception may alert us to the particular conditions of a Chinese immigrant artist in the United States. The first title, *Wild Grass*, is a literal translation of the *kuangcao* Chinese calligraphy enacted in the piece. For the English-speaking audience it inflects an allusion to cursive script—a universal writing style—with a tangible sense of exoticism, creating a disjuncture that echoes the friction often generated when passing distinctive cultural practices to new contexts. In this case, Chinese calligraphy is transformed and recontextualized through its presentation in the English-speaking world of metropolitan New York, and the practice of writing with brush and ink is likewise transformed and recontextualized through dance. The title *Cursive* adopts the English translation of the cursive script or the related style of Chinese calligraphy (*caoshu* 草書, which encompasses *xingcao* 行草, or “running cursive,” and *kuangcao*). Moreover, *Cursive* elides the foreignness of the title *Wild Grass*; it is a term that is easier for native English speakers to recognize, register, and invoke. In addition to drawing attention to the materiality of the performance, the title *Ink/Body/Paper/Scent* dissolves any specific reference to the work’s calligraphic origins. While the title *Cursive* invokes, interpolates, and subjects interpretation of the work to the parameters of the distinctly Chinese practice of calligraphy, the title *Ink/Body/Paper/Scent* breaks this reference down to the form’s constituent materials and sensory experiences animated by Yin’s dance. This emphasis on materiality underscores the extent to which Yin’s dance marks a departure from its original cultural reference; in doing away with the traditional rice paper in favor of a medium that could extend the spread of the ink across the span of a fifteen- to twenty-minute performance, Yin has transcended tradition to create a highly compelling range of performative and visual effects.

### “Chineseness” in Motion

The three performance series pose inscription versus ephemerality and at the same time transform “Chineseness” by implicitly or explicitly referencing Chinese calligraphy and in different ways and degrees go beyond the literal illustration of Chinese calligraphy’s form and motion. Treating dancing as painting calligraphy positions dancers as writers who are vital in the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

dancing/writing process. This method is also a new way of approaching “choreography” within the hybridized genre of modern concert dance, and it stands apart from the depersonalization that is the European legacy of choreography as the art of writing dance. In addition, it rejects the idea of the body as a medium for collective or individual psychic expression, a sentiment that dominates much modern dance, instead finding a parallel in American modern dance educator Margaret H’Doubler’s choreographic vision of treating body as instrument.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, the three performance series engaged here reinforce “the modernist model of single-authored creations”<sup>183</sup> that modern dance companies like Shen Wei Dance Arts and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre basically follow, in which the separation between the choreographer and the dancer persists. In earlier iterations of *Connect Transfer*, Shen not only coached the dancers but also danced himself, a relatively more direct transmission of kinaesthetics from the choreographer to the dancers than in Cloud Gate, where dancers are trained in and creatively synthesize different systems under the rubric set by Lin. Perhaps it is only in solo forms, as in dances such as Yin’s, that the *personal* is allowed the most eccentric inflections.

With Chinese calligraphy variously cited and reconstituted in interrelation with (Chinese) painting, and with performances moving on different levels between the literal and the abstract, “Chineseness” is constantly re-engaged and redefined here according to the conditions and politics of each performance—or, their “economy and the organization of power,” as Deleuze and Guattari have outlined in their discussion of de-/reterritorialization. That Cloud Gate has garnered international recognition—with the *Cursive* series reaching ever greater milestones in recent years<sup>184</sup>—compels the company to adopt the role of “cultural diplomat” for the politically embattled Taiwan, adding another layer to the politics of (in)visibility that the company’s work engages through the meeting of writing and dancing. *Taiji daoyin*, *wushu*, and traditional Chinese practices that are essential in fashioning the distinct dance aesthetic explored in Lin’s *Cursive* series are also accessible in Taiwan due to its status as part of the postwar Chinese diaspora.

Whereas *Cursive* sets out to negotiate between local and international, *Connect Transfer* is definitively produced in and for the international dance world. Shen has spent much of his time in New York and did not present any work in China until the rehearsals for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. Shen’s choreographic trajectory reflects his interest in both dancing and painting, especially Western modernist painting, which attracted Chinese artists at a particular postsocialist moment. Yet along with the other performances staged in the Olympic opening ceremony, *Scroll* was an effort to articulate China’s vision of itself as a rising global economic power to an international audience. Rather than insulated and underdeveloped as narrated in the legacy of Western colonial discourse, the China of the Beijing Olympics boasts a history of impressive technological advancements, onto which the nation’s present aspirations for progress and power are mapped. In progressing from abstract movements to perfectly synchronized dancing that results in the creation of a landscape painting, the performance posits a specific and singular delineation of “Chineseness.”

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<sup>182</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreographies and Choreographers,” in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 98–118.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>184</sup> Lin Hwai-Min was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the *Movimentos* Festival in Germany (hosted by the Volkswagen Group) in 2009. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre was invited to present *Cursive: A Trilogy* (the first three installments of the *Cursive* series) in the festival that year to accompany Lin’s acceptance of the award.

Despite the clarity of the final image in *Scroll*, abstraction is a strong force shaping the way all of the works considered here engage the remaking of Chinese calligraphy and notions of “Chineseness.” As Park notes, abstraction contains a sense of “paring away,” or “purification,” in which the particular is “lifted out and examined in its reified form,” that facilitates a move away from its original context and pushes toward the universal.<sup>185</sup> It is not enough to locate abstraction; we must consider its origin. Abstraction *of* something is the point. If abstraction enables Cloud Gate’s *Cursive* series to move across national borders, the ways in which Shen introduced abstraction into the Olympic opening ceremony enabled him to leverage the multiple levels of control expected by the Olympic Committee while also working *away* from those forces. In the case of Yin’s *Cursive*, abstraction at once performs and conceals personal identity. It is via the “abstract” form that Yin imprints her paradoxically undisclosed “auto(bio)graph” for the public. In *Cursive*, her interest in Chinese writing and calligraphy is intimately tied to her personal history and becomes part of her corpus of auto(bio)graphical performances, forming a “paratopic” dimension *alongside* the public presentation of performance art. Such a dynamic relates to the ways immigrant performers negotiate cultural belonging. Yin studied *taiji quan*, the *I-Ching*, and discourses of Chinese calligraphy after moving to the United States. This body of traditional Chinese knowledge is fused with her personal identity and activities as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher, even if the choreography does not disclose it and it is not mentioned in publicity or program notes. Such (dis)articulation and lack of translation form an intriguing dialectic that is compounded by the performance’s title changes, which chart its movement between modes of translation across varying levels of foreignness and familiarity. Eventually, breaking her performance down to the constituent materials also breaks it apart from the interpretative framework of “Chinese calligraphy.”

Working among dancing, painting, and calligraphy, the three transnational Chinese choreographers considered here set “Chineseness” in motion. They reconfigure the relationships among these three art disciplines and their Chinese registers, stretching, transforming, rearticulating, disarticulating, concealing, or breaking down “Chineseness.” Dance is a potent site of investigation for transnational Chinese studies. I have been attentive to the interwoven aesthetics and politics embedded in these distinct choreographies, as well to as their particular creative and receptive conditions. By probing the nuances of the unique “economy and the organization of power” at play within each performance’s respective disciplinary-cum-identitarian de-/reterritorialization, this chapter destabilizes assumptions about “Chinese” “dance.”

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<sup>185</sup> Park, “Abstraction.”

## Pause

### *Kinesthetics of Dance and Kinetics of Modernity*

Recent dance studies discourses have engaged with the politics of movement as a potential critique of the “kinetics of modernity.” Building on German political philosopher Peter Sloterdijk’s thesis that modernity is a “kinetic impulse,” a “pure being-toward movement,” dance scholar André Lepecki locates political agency in dances that perform what he designates “still-acts.” “Still-acts” practice self-critique by disrupting the flow of movement, or what might be understood as essential to Western concert dance, which is seen to be born of and perpetuate “the kinetic impulse of modernity.” In Western concert dance Lepecki sees an ideological continuity from Romantic-era *ballet d’action* to American critic John Martin’s 1930s treatise on modern dance and to present-day journalistic dance criticism.<sup>186</sup>

In Sloterdijk’s theorization of the “kinetics of modernity,” the automobile is considered to embody its central ethos of “pure being-toward movement,” a phenomenon he terms “automobilization.” In this framework, progress, the kinetic ethos of modernity, is “movement toward movement, movement toward increased movement, movement toward an increased mobility.”<sup>187</sup> Such “modern ‘dynamism’ has contributed toward preserving the mindless rigor among super-mobile forms, whose wish is ‘the art of automation’—and who aim “to start operations in order to be operating, to start up in order to keep running at any cost.”<sup>188</sup> Moreover, Sloterdijk writes, the art of automation “does not make any fundamental distinctions between intelligent machines and human agents. When the kinetic self-starts operations and takes the initiative, it becomes the central agency of the self-operated operation by its ‘own’ power.”<sup>189</sup> Sloterdijk links the accomplishment of this art of automation to modern society’s drive toward “complete automobilization,” which has resulted in the elevation of the automobile as the allegorical emblem, or even the “sanctum,” of modernity, comparable to the pinnacle of Christian religious ideals:

[It is] a circumstance in which every adult self moves itself at the wheel of its self-moving machine. Since in modernity the thought of the self without *its* movement is impossible, the I and its automobile belong together metaphysically like the soul and body of one and the same movement unit. The automobile is the technical double of the

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<sup>186</sup> André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Lepecki borrows the concept of the “still-act” from anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis; see Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994).

<sup>187</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, “Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-intensification,” in *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory, and the Global*, ed. André Lepecki and Jenn Joy, trans. Heidi Ziegler (New York: Seagull Books, 2009), 5. Petra Küppers, from a disability studies perspective, discusses ways in which disability performance challenges the flow and rhythm of the public space in modernity; she reread Walter Benjamin’s observation about the *flâneurs* who walked turtles in the arcade, saying that “the [disability] performance is the reiteration of the seemingly familiar in a bracketed, framed format; a conscious placement of one’s body into the visible, tangible scene of a show. Similar to the slow walk of the turtle walker disrupting the flow of the city, creating a different rhythm, the performances [...] often insert their difference as a matter of formal elements, rather than new, or ‘positive’ images. They question ways of doing, ways of knowing, as time slows or space expands.” See Petra Küppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

<sup>188</sup> Sloterdijk, “Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-intensification,” 7.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

always active transcendental subject.[...] Therefore, the automobile is the sanctum of modernity; it is the cultural center of a kinetic world religion; it is the rolling sacrament that makes us participate in something faster than ourselves. Whoever is driving an automobile is approaching the divine; he feels how his diminutive I is expanding into a higher self that offers us the whole world of highways as a home and that makes us realize that we are predestined to a life beyond the animal-like life of pedestrians.<sup>190</sup>

As discourses in dance studies began to reflect on the political implications of “movement”—the basis of dance—within the context of modernity’s kinetic ethos of progress, emblemized by the automobile, the Volkswagen Group launched an annual international dance festival, titled *Movimentos*, in its Autostadt (“Car City”) in Wolfsburg, Germany.<sup>191</sup> Taiwan’s Legend Lin Dance Theatre (*Wugou wudao juchang* 無垢舞蹈劇場) was invited to perform in the inaugural *Movimentos* Festival in 2003. Inspired by the automobile, the inaugural *Movimentos* Festival explored acceleration and deceleration. Legend Lin was considered representative of deceleration with its unique aesthetics of *huan* 緩 (at once at ease, deeply rooted, tranquil, and slow). The other companies invited from around the world—Grupo Corpo (Brazil), Dance Theatre of Harlem (United States), and Ballet Nacional de España (Spain)—were situated toward the other, faster end of the spectrum of velocity. That an automobile company is consciously engaging with the concepts and practices of movement via its own international dance festival begs renewed critical consideration of the divide between theory and practice, academic and other modes of discourse. It is particularly significant that as international festivals inevitably represent world cultures, *Movimentos* also maps the global reimagining of modernity and speed. The *huan* aesthetics of Legend Lin coupled with its works’ premodern, ritualistic atmosphere—a striking effect in the context of an international festival hosted by a Western European automobile company—attained a kind of renewed Orientalist reification; this reification does not rely solely on symbolic registers but rather on a reframing of the tempo of dance.

The following two chapters of this dissertation center on the choreographies of Lin Lee-Chen 林麗珍, artistic director of Legend Lin Dance Theatre, as they intersect with Lepecki’s and Sloterdijk’s theorizations. In them, I attempt to engage with the relationships between modern dance in Taiwan, transnational dance performance conditions, and the experience of modernization. The insertion into dance of various modes of the “still-acts” that Lepecki examines “[deploys] different ways of slowing down movement and time.”<sup>192</sup> In Lepecki’s words, “the still *acts* because it interrogates economies of time, because it reveals the possibility of one’s agency within controlling regimes of capital, subjectivity, labor, and mobility.”<sup>193</sup> He further states that “the undoing of the unquestioned alignment of dance with movement initiated by the still-act refigures the dancer’s participation in mobility—it initiates a performative critique of his or her participation in the general economy of mobility that informs, supports, and reproduces the ideological formations of late capitalist modernity.”<sup>194</sup> Continuing the discussion in chapter 1 of “catching up” as the structure of kinesthetic feeling driving Taiwan’s development, I will argue that Legend Lin’s *huan* aesthetics model what Lepecki has identified as “ways of slowing down movement and time” via still-acts. However, as Legend Lin’s work is

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

<sup>191</sup> *Movimentos* Festival website, available at <http://www.movimentos.de/> (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>192</sup> Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 15.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 16.

transplanted in the context of international festivals, new representational problems arise. I contend that the *huan* of Legend Lin should not be considered the embodiment or performative enactment of an imagined constant essence of the Eastern race as seen from the Western eye, but rather a reflection of the internal negotiations powering Taiwan's development. If, within the framework of *Movimentos*, Legend Lin appears to embody the (stock) traits of premodern, "Eastern" spirituality in its resistance to the pursuit of speed and progress, my discussion complicates this picture by considering how the kinesthetic permutations of Lin's choreography in various guises and stages celebrate, complicate, and critique Taiwan's developmentalist pursuits. I further contend that engaging with the *huan* of Legend Lin on its own terms not only reveals its points of contrast from "slowness" as conceived as a physical or mechanical reduction of speed (as exhibited by cars) but also highlights its singular political implications.

The following chapters also contain a discussion of the "economy of mobility," figured in contemporary dance in relation to modernity, velocity, and ways of slowing down movement and time in a transnational framework. Building on these ideas, I uncover the complexities of the "slowness" of Legend Lin's work in terms of its distinct kinesthetics of *huan* and in tracing back to what historically precedes and informs the aesthetic gestures. In chapter 4, I look at some of the works Lin Lee-Chen created in the 1980s, before she formed Legend Lin Dance Theatre and developed her current aesthetic pursuits. These earlier works articulate telling responses to Taiwan's modernization in the nation's rapid "catch-up" phase of development. In chapter 5, I look more closely into the aesthetics of Legend Lin Dance Theatre, which, in trying to connect and narrate Taiwanese cultural history and memory, also perform a response to Taiwan's modernization, but from a particular perspective shaped by the 1990s and beyond, as the developmentalist "catch-up" era has gradually drawn to a close. Building on Lepecki's work, I further engage with the "economy of mobility" by considering the economic conditions of performance, the festivals themselves, and the ways dance companies from different parts of the world are enlisted in international festivals. This is to say that I examine the "economy" of participating in such events. From there I also reengage the discourse of "Eastern Body Aesthetics" (*dongfang shenti guan* 東方身體觀) in Taiwan prominent in the late 1980s and 1990s, and the concerns that have shaped the construction of movement aesthetics, identity politics, and community memory in Taiwan, as other means of complicating the political kinesthetic of contemporary dance.

## Chapter 4

### Kinesthetic Velocities: Mediating Development in Early 1980s Taiwan

Legend Lin Dance Theatre has garnered an international reputation in recent years, with its hallmark *huan* 緩 aesthetics that feature a slowed down, meditative quality in a mythical and ritualistic atmosphere. For those who have come to know Lin Lee-Chen and her choreography via the works of Legend Lin, it may be a surprise to find that Lin's previous choreography boasts a style that is drastically different, yet still compelling. In this chapter, I demonstrate that engaging with her earlier works in relation to the socioeconomic conditions of Taiwan at their time yields a more complicated picture than simply seeing Legend Lin as performing an "Eastern Body Aesthetics" much welcomed by the international dance world. Particularly, this chapter brings to light how the kinesthetic permutations of Lin's choreography in various guises and stages celebrate, complicate, and critique Taiwan's developmentalist pursuits, and that Legend Lin's aesthetics should be seen in this context.

Between 1982 and 1983, Lin choreographed three pieces that ranged from dance in a mainstream film to a modern concert dance piece. These works offer a way to ponder how arts respond to, articulate, and mediate the experience of Taiwan's development, particularly regarding how an accelerated pursuit of progress became the dominant "structure of feeling" in Taiwanese society. As this and the next chapter unfold, we will see that these particular three works also articulate drastically different tempos and temporality from Lin's choreography for Legend Lin Dance Theatre (1995-present). In terms of tempo, the two phases of Lin's choreography reveal a broad contrast between the fast and the slow—her early 1980s choreography was swift and dynamic, while the works of Legend Lin are much more calm and sustained. In terms of temporal setting, the early phase works reinterpret their contemporary 1980s Taiwanese society via stylized movement, such as the gesticulation of fashionable urbanites, while the works of Legend Lin retreat to a mythical, prehistorical space-time, performing a desire to transcend history (and thus elide historical specificity). Lin also began to have a more elongated "production rate" with Legend Lin—the three works examined next were choreographed between 1982 and 1983, while the three works (all of an epic scale) launched by Legend Lin were developed over the span of nineteen years, from 1995 until today. In Lin's earlier phase, she drew on the techniques of her training—ballet, jazz, and *minzu wudao* choreography; in her Legend Lin phase, she conceived a distinct kinaesthetic-philosophical system different from the extant modern dance vocabulary, bearing the mark of the "Eastern Body Aesthetics" (*dongfang shenti guan* 東方身體觀) prominent in the Taiwanese performing arts scene in the 1990s.

Significantly, the negotiation between local structures of memory and competition within the Euro-American international (high art) dance world also figures in Legend Lin's works. However, unlike the dual aesthetics of the *Cursive* series, the choreography of Lin performs another set of inflections of the "contemporary." We can locate momentary echoes between Cloud Gate's dance works and Lin's choreography in both phases of her career. But while Cloud Gate seems to have morphed into a different mode (exemplified by the kind of "contemporaneity" seen in the *Cursive* series), Lin and her Legend Lin Dance Theatre continue to dwell on a particular kind of temporality today, in ways that persist in reversing developmentalist



temporality as a continual acceleration toward the future. The following discussion fleshes out post-1980s conditions in relation to the complexity of Lin's choreography, which already includes temporal acceleration and deceleration, compression and elongation. This discussion will give a basis for our engagement with Legend Lin's aesthetics and its shifting meanings in the transnational in the next chapter.

## Four Shots: Similarities and Differences

### I.

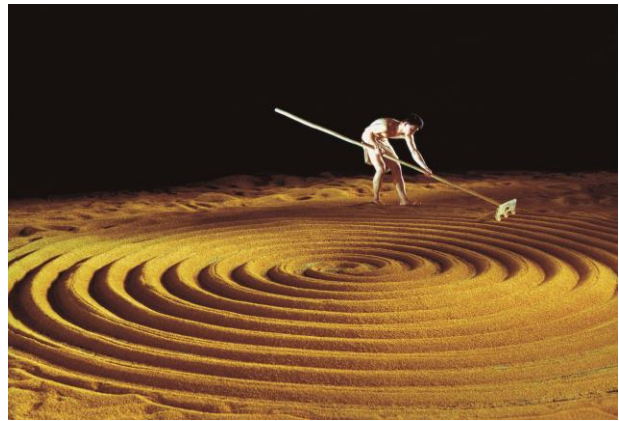
In 1984, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre made the work *Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984* (*Chun zhi jili: Taipei yijiubasi* 春之祭禮·台北一九八四). Using Igor Stravinsky's renowned modernist score to interpret Taipei city's urban life, the piece ends with the dancers' bodies standing in front of an enormous projected image of cars, their front lights beaming glaringly. Symbolizing modernization and the urban experience of Taipei in 1984, the cars appear to be menacing and threatening to the human bodies rendered powerless in front of them. *Rite of Spring, Taipei 1984* presents the confusion and chaos that Taipei city dwellers experienced in the midst of its rapid development.

### II.

In Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's 1994 piece *Songs of the Wanderers* (*Liulangzhe zhi ge* 流浪者之歌), inspired by Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* (1922), a dancer playing the role of the prayer stands still over the course of the entire one-and-a-half-hour performance, raw rice continuously cascading down on him from above. The other dancers spend the dance wandering, sometimes in agony or confusion, but eventually in rejoicing, having attained spiritual revelation. The presentation evokes a premodern if indistinct space-time; the dancers are wrapped in very simple pieces of clothes and their skin is largely exposed. The cascading rice eventually fills the whole stage, and the piece ends with a lone dancer slowly, quietly, and resolutely raking the rice into concentric circles, like the landscaping seen in Japanese Zen gardens.



*Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984* (1984), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Chang Chao-tang.



*Songs of the Wanderers* (1994), performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Photo by Yu Hui-hung.

### III.

A glamorous song-and-dance scene unfolds in the 1983 film *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (“Dai cuo che 搭錯車,” “Taking the Wrong Car”). Against the rock song “The Same Moonlight” (“Yiyang de yueguang 一樣的月光”), an instant hit at the time because of the popularity of the film, the heroine, a young up-and-coming pop music star, dances energetically with her chorus of dancers across the broad cement streets of Taipei, as well as over one of the city’s iconic monuments. The dance scene portrays the heroine’s career take-off and makes the urban landscape more dynamic and celebratory. This and other equally striking dance scenes in the film were choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen.

### IV.

In 1995, Lin Lee-Chen launched *Mirror of Life* (*Jiao 醮*, meaning “ritual” in Daoist religious practices) and formed Legend Lin Dance Theatre soon afterwards. In place of the spectacular dance feats that characterized her previous choreography, *Mirror of Life* features steady, slow walking performed with an intense inward focus, as if the dancers are sinking into deep water. The work is framed with the rituals of the Ghost Festival (*zhongyuan pudu 中元普渡*) after the custom of Taiwanese Minnan 閩南 community. The Taiwanese Minnan community can be traced back to Fukien, a south eastern coastal province of mainland China; the majority of the Taiwanese population now comes from Fukien. The piece ends with the burning of a water lantern onstage against the chanting of the Buddhist *Heart Sutra*. It recalls the mixture of Buddhist and Daoist religious practices in Taiwan through the unique ritual of consoling the unmourned “wandering” souls of the dead.



Figure 3. Still image from *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983) directed by Yü Kan-Ping.<sup>195</sup>



*Mirror of Life* (1995), performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Photo by Chin Cheng-Tsai.

The four shots just presented reveal two sets of synchronic and diachronic similarities and differences. They underscore a series of recurring images that punctuate the development of Taiwanese modern dance across the 1980s and the 1990s. The 1980s works both make reference to modern cities, streets, and transportation. The dance in *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* aligns the excitement of the young female’s rise to commercial success with the dynamic presentation

<sup>195</sup> Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJw2O4ayBvs&feature=share&list=PL569086EAB0ABCE0A> (accessed May 10, 2013).

of the modern cityscape, while Cloud Gate's *Rite of Spring, Taipei 1984* evokes humanity's enormous shock at being threatened by the ruthless machines of modernization that cars represent. When it comes to the mid-1990s, however, we regularly see images that conjure the ritualistic and the pursuit of more profound or spiritual meaning, be it by way of reinterpreting the story of the Buddha who embarked on a journey in search of the true meaning of life, or by actively reengaging the historical memory that underlies the ritual of the Ghost Festival, which searches for the individual's place within the *longue durée* of the community's "life." In short, these four shots illuminate key concerns of Taiwanese modern dance from the 1980s and 1990s. Works from this period exhibit a narrative shift where the choreographers aren't just reacting to contemporary life but backing away from it, distancing themselves from a definition of life in terms of "worldly" gains and success toward a search for more profound meaning, evoking a more spiritual and premodern temporality.

I also borrow the expressive modes of film as "shots" to anticipate my engagement with Lin Lee-Chen's choreography in two Taiwanese films in the early 1980s. While these "shots" help me to address the key ideas in Taiwanese modern dance in the 1980s and 1990s, in the pages that follow I also conduct a rereading of the films from a dance perspective, with an awareness of how dance's kinetic effect releases the aesthetic and experiential complexity within the "shots." Besides the two sets of synchronic and diachronic echoes and contrasts between the two phases of Lin Lee-Chen's choreography, a relevant but unique continuity and departure also coalesced in two shots. Towards the end of *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*, the dance features a heterosexual duet in which the male dancer tightly holds the female dancer by her waist. She dangles backwards against his thigh as he leans his upper torso on top of hers (see Figure 3). This sensuous pose was seen again in Legend Lin Dance Theatre's second work, *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (*Huashen ji* 花神祭, 2000) (see Figure 4). The similarity between these two duets reveals a certain kinesthetic continuity that underlies Lin Lee-Chen's dance aesthetics throughout her career, as further engaged in the next chapter. The three works I discuss in this chapter are poised at the high point of Lin's early career and the beginning of her less active years; they are dance scenes from the films *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983) and *Kidnapped* ("Dai jian de xiaohai 帶劍的小孩," "The Kid with the Sword," 1983), as well as the concert dance piece *Who Am I* (1982).



Figure 4. *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (2000), performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre.  
Photo by Chen Dian-Mo.

By the 1980s Lin Lee-Chen had made her mark as a choreographer within the existing institutional framework of dance in Taiwan. During her study in the Dance Department of Chinese Culture College (1968–1972), the first dance department in higher education in Taiwan, she actively choreographed and presented works with fellow classmates.<sup>196</sup> Between 1973 and 1977, her choreography of mass dance for her junior high school students won consecutive championships in the annual Taiwan Province Junior High School Modern Dance Competition. In 1978, she presented her personal concert *Don't Forget Your Umbrella* (*Buyao wangji ni de yusan* 不要忘記你的雨傘) in Taipei, which showcased a number of her dances and led to critics lauding her as “an extraordinary choreographic virtuoso in the Taiwanese dance world” (台灣舞蹈界的編舞奇才).<sup>197</sup> In 1982, she choreographed *Who Am I* (*Wo shi shei* 我是誰) for the Seven-One Concert (Qiyi wu zhan 七一舞展),<sup>198</sup> a showcase of new modern dance choreographers held by the National Council of Cultural Affairs; this was her last concert modern dance piece until 1990. The years between 1982 and 1990 have been regarded as a moment of “hiatus” for Lin Lee-Chen, although she was invited to create *minzu wudao* 民族舞蹈 (Chinese ethnic dance) pieces for the Chinese Youth Goodwill Mission between 1988 and 1991, as well as providing choreography for a few films.<sup>199</sup>

*Papa* and *Kidnapped* were a part of the emergence of Taiwan’s “New Cinema” (*xin dianying* 新電影) in the early 1980s. Both films responded to the experience of Taiwan’s modernization and urbanization, and Lin’s dance scenes visually and kinetically punctuate those interpretations of Taiwan’s modern life in compelling ways. *Who Am I*, unlike the dance scenes for the films, consists of Lin’s articulation of her questions about her own identity at that time, as the title reveals. Although the three pieces are similar in movement vocabulary and largely different from the temporality of the Legend Lin works, I would note that *Who Am I* contains a sense of loathing for the world that contrasts with the kind of energy and optimism in some of the signature scenes of *Papa*. In fact, I would suggest that *Who Am I* seems to prefigure the desire to “slow down” that Legend Lin persistently explored.

### **Taiwan New Cinema and *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983)**

Although *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* and *Kidnapped* may have participated in the broader phenomenon of Taiwan New Cinema, they differ in many ways from some of the better known films within this discourse. Released in the same year as *Papa* and *Kidnapped*, *The*

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<sup>196</sup> Prior to receiving institutional training, Lin took dance classes at a local dance studio in her hometown Keelung, a northeastern harbor city in Taiwan. She also took workshops with American modern dance educator Eleanor King when King made short visits to Taiwan in 1957 and 1967, and she was much inspired by Paul Taylor Dance Company’s performance when the troupe toured to Taipei in 1967.

<sup>197</sup> Ying-Pi Chiang 江映碧, “Sketch of the Artist—Lin Lee-Chen” (藝術家素描林麗珍), for the dance category of the National Culture and Arts Award by the National Culture and Arts Foundation, Taiwan, in 2005; see [http://www.ncafroc.org.tw/Content/award-prize.asp?ser\\_no=43&Prize\\_no=%A4E&prize\\_file=Prize\\_Desc](http://www.ncafroc.org.tw/Content/award-prize.asp?ser_no=43&Prize_no=%A4E&prize_file=Prize_Desc) (accessed February 24, 2013)

<sup>198</sup> The concert is named after the year marked according to the Republic of China calendar used in Taiwan, in which the first year is 1911, when the ROC was established after the Qing empire fell by revolution.

<sup>199</sup> For a thorough review of Lin Lee-Chen’s choreography prior to the founding of Legend Lin Dance Theatre, see Lan-Lan Mo (莫嵐蘭), “The Theatre Performance of Metapsychosis Phantasma: The Analysis of the Footwork Aesthetics of Legend Dance Theatre (轉生心像之劇場演現：探析無垢舞蹈劇場的步行美學)” (MA thesis, National Taiwan University of the Arts, 2009).

*Sandwich Man* (“Erzi de da wanyu 兒子的大玩偶,” “His Son’s Big Doll,” 1983) exposed social problems and garnered much more attention for Taiwan New Cinema; in fact, the debates about censoring the film brought the term “New Cinema” into wider public discourse.<sup>200</sup> One of the directors for *The Sandwich Man*, Hou Hsiao-Hsien 侯孝賢, and another Taiwanese director, Edward Yang (楊德昌), made films that earned critical acclaim in international art film circles and brought Taiwanese film into international scholarly discourse, reshaping the Taiwanese film community’s sense of belonging and their historiographical placement in international culture.<sup>201</sup> *Papa* differs from this line of films in both style and domestic box office performance. Its use of more “accessible” forms combining melodrama, pop music, and dance spectacles, which were also innovative at the time, won enormous popularity among Taiwanese audiences, and the film was screened in theaters eight times in the same year. *Kidnapped* was less commercially successful than *Papa*, poised between commercial production and the director’s own artistic edge. If the popularity of *Papa* corresponds to the desire and support for development embedded within the film, as discussed below, the slightly odd and darker tone in *Kidnapped* reveals another way to interpret the impact of Taiwan’s development. Lin Lee-Chen’s choreography, in interacting with the narrative styles of these two films, carves out compelling dimensions within each film’s interpretation of Taiwanese urban and technological growth. The two films and their dance scenes also reveal the variety of divergent and convergent currents in all of the arts in Taiwan at that time, in addition to the styles and concerns more frequently attended to in the discussions of Taiwan New Cinema, such as the quiet long-shot, the rural, and the jaggedly urban that constitute modes of realist representations.

It is worth taking a moment to review the central facets of Taiwan New Cinema in order to understand the place of dance films within it. In general, Taiwan New Cinema explored themes and styles that departed from earlier film culture in Taiwan. In the 1960s and 1970s, cinema in Taiwan was dominated by the state-sponsored, pedagogically oriented Healthy Realism, as well as various commercial endeavors (studio genres such as martial arts films and dynastic films, or romantic films based on Qiong Yao’s writings) and Taiwanese dialect films (*Taiyu pian* 台語片, emerging in the 1950s and gradually declining in the 1970s). A prominent shared interest of New Cinema was the assertion of indigenous perspectives much informed by “nativism” (*bentu zhuyi* 本土主義), the idea of returning to a native Taiwanese cultural and historical experience (distinct from the previous national narrative under the Chinese Nationalist government’s ideological framework).<sup>202</sup> *The Sandwich Man* (1983), for example, was a trio of short films by three directors drawing from writer Huang Chun-Ming’s 黃春明 native-soil literature (*xiangtu wenxue* 鄉土文學) published in the 1960s. Rather than posing sharp binaries

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<sup>200</sup> “The Taste of Apples,” directed by Wan Jen as an episode of *The Sandwich Man*, criticized the U.S. presence in Taiwan; this caused the state censor to demand a re-editing of the whole segment. The controversy stirred fervent debate and was dubbed the “Apple-Paring Incident” (削蘋果事件). It was out of the heated discussions regarding film arts and politics that the term “Taiwan New Cinema” was coined. See Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 113; June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 55–56.

<sup>201</sup> Hong Guo-Juin addressed how Taiwan New Cinema gained attention and placement in Western film historiography and the relative dismissal of those films made before 1982. His book in part complements this “historiography of absence.” See Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*.

<sup>202</sup> Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 251.

between Taiwan and China, as Emily Yeh and Darrell Davis note, this nativism resulted in works that explored cultural experiences that were specifically Taiwanese as well as intra-Chinese references.<sup>203</sup>

*Papa* involved screenwriter Wu Nian-Chen 吳念真, who also wrote the script for *The Sandwich Man* and played a vital role in the making of Taiwan New Cinema. Wu collaborated with director Yü Kan-Ping 虞戡平 on this film to materialize his populist vision that “could actually reach audiences.”<sup>204</sup> Although the popular format attracted a negative reaction from some film critics, *Papa* was a rare film that had a huge box office success, while also being one of the first films that depicted discharged Nationalist soldiers and their diasporic life within Taiwan. Besides involving Wu, *Papa* was also a pioneering attempt at making a commercial pop musical film, gathering many talents from Taiwan’s 1980s pop music circles.<sup>205</sup> Wu also wrote the lyrics for the theme song, “The Same Moonlight.” Box office success aside, the film won all the music-related awards in that year’s Golden Horse Awards, a major Chinese language film awards ceremony and festival founded by the Government Information Office of Taiwan in 1962, with entries coming from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Southeast Asia. “The Same Moonlight” has been regarded as a milestone in the history of Taiwan’s popular music due to the newly developed rock-musical element in the song.<sup>206</sup>

*Papa* tells the story of an orphaned girl and her adopted father in the landscape of a developing Taiwan. Ya-shu 啞叔 (“Uncle Mute”), a deaf-mute Nationalist (KMT) soldier rescues baby A-mei 阿美 from a garbage dump in a neighborhood made up of makeshift illegal constructions in Taipei. Ya-shu makes a living and raises A-mei by retrieving and selling used wine bottles. A-mei grows up to become a talented singer and later a promising star in the entertainment world. Ya-shu, by contrast, is left behind in the old neighborhood, which is eventually demolished by the government, and Ya-shu is forced to leave. Towards the end of the film, Ya-shu has a stroke while watching a live relay of one of A-mei’s performances on TV. A-mei hears the news and leaves in the middle of her concert but arrives too late, only catching one last glimpse of Ya-shu before he dies in the hospital. The film ends with A-mei making another stage performance, singing a song inspired by the tune Ya-shu plays on his trumpet signaling his arrival to pick up used wine bottles. Titled “Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?” (“Jugan tang bei bo 酒罈倘賣沒”), with the very phrase sung in Taiwanese in the refrain, the song expresses longing and lamentation for “You” who provides love and a *home* for “Me,” a confession from the “prodigal daughter” who returns home to her papa too late.

Emily Yeh describes the film as articulating Taiwan’s need for and embrace of development, and how the film focuses on societal elements that do not fit in development ideology, such as Ya-shu and his old neighborhood, and how such elements are eventually extinguished. She discusses the ways in which “future” is the central thesis in *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*: “Looking forward, Taiwan has to become a developed modern country; looking backward, although family, friendship, old relationships and things are nice, they cannot be

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 73.

<sup>205</sup> The musicians involved folk-pop singer-songwriters Luo Da-Yo 羅大佑, Li Shou-Chuan 李壽全, Hou De-Chien 侯德健, and Chen Chih-Yuan 陳志遠.

<sup>206</sup> The film also brought the singer Su Jui 蘇芮, who was scouted out for contributing to the film’s soundtrack, to a distinguished place in this history.

transformed into capital and the drive for modernization. Development, besides its hegemonic ideology of industrialism and capitalism, also means the need to sacrifice the people, things, and relationships that were originally in place.”<sup>207</sup> In *Papa*, Ya-shu has a stroke and dies. A number of his neighbors also perish, and many objects and relationships are destroyed over the course of the film: a neighboring makeshift housing unit is burned in a fire; the whole of a village is demolished to implement urban renewal plans (in reality, the site where the story of *Papa* is set was really demolished and turned into Daan Park 大安森林公園 in Taipei in 1992); Ya-shu’s good friend dies when fighting against the forced bulldozing of his house; A-mei parts with Ya-shu and her composer boyfriend to embark on a new commercial musical career.

Yeh uses the words *xiang qian kan* 向前看 that puns “looking forward” with “looking towards the money” in colloquial Mandarin to punctuate the alignment of capitalism and modernization, as the word for “forward,” *qian* 前, puns with the word for “money” (*qian* 錢). That development and progress are defined in capitalist terms is deeply woven into the social-linguistic fabric; the existence of a forward/future/fortune-looking ethos requires the elimination of the backward, the past, the poor, and the lowliness. Yeh writes that “A-mei’s ‘selling out’ is not simply about a love for fortune and a hatred of poverty. It is the product of ‘development’ as a hegemonic notion. What she betrays is not just her father, but also her upbringing and her community; in other words, the painful memories of Taiwan’s development throughout the 1960s and 1970s.”<sup>208</sup>

Yeh presents the song *The Same Moonlight* as a sort of guilty repentance for the choice of development and desertion of the past that the film perpetuates.<sup>209</sup> She notes the semantic friction and even contradiction between the music, the lyrics, and the film image: towards the end of the film, as Ya-shu has his stroke, is sent to the hospital, and eventually dies, the extra-diegetic music of “The Same Moonlight” starts to play, with the lyrics expressing regret for the loss of old friends and the change of environment sung to the rather upbeat pacing of the pop-rock score. The singer voices the poignant lyrics as we watch Ya-Shu die:

Since when have all my childhood friends left me?  
 Since when have I become unfamiliar with the people surrounding me?  
 The crowdedness makes us more and more distant  
 The quiet earth cries silently at night

Who can tell me?  
 Who can tell me?  
 Did we change the world,  
 Or did the world change you and me?

Since when have the frogs’ croaks and the cicadas’ sounds become memory?  
 Since when has the home town become so overcrowded?  
 With tall buildings towering all around

<sup>207</sup> Yueh-yu Yeh 葉月瑜, “Noise Reduction: Rock’n Roll in Chinese-Language Films” (“低調魔音：中文電影與搖滾樂的商議”), in *Phantom of the Music: Song Narration and Chinese-Language Cinemas* (歌聲魅影：歌曲敘事與中文電影) (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing, 2000), 200. Translation of the quote is mine.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. Translation mine.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 197.

And neon signs making the night so harsh

The same moonlight  
Shines on the same Hsin-dian River  
The same winter  
Brings the same cold rains  
The same dust  
Is blown by the same wind  
The same smiles  
The same tears  
The same days  
The same you and me<sup>210</sup>

In questioning when the series of changes have happened and whether “we” are truly the agents of the world’s changes, the lyrics evoke the intimate, familiar scenes of Taipei—the moonlight on the Hsin-dian River, the frogs’ croaks, the cicadas’ sounds, the wind, the cold rain, and even the dust. Amid the encroaching change of things represented by the high rises, the neon lights, and the detachment felt about the people surrounding “me,” the refrain poignantly asserts and reclaims the *sameness* of things, particularly the human experience and relationships, as “the same smiles/ the same tears/ the same days/ the same you and me.”

Critical discussions in Taiwanese popular music have reflected on the paradoxical futuristic aspirations embedded in songs like “The Same Moonlight”. These discussions echo Yeh’s reading of the film as affirming Taiwan’s development, as well as restating emerging concerns in the New Cinema for creating more concrete and realistic film environments. The lyrics of “The Same Moonlight” create a “realistic” view of the concrete and specific “Taipei” and “Hsin-dian River” in contrast to the vague idea of “China” or the “Dragon’s descent” in previous nationalistic preoccupations.<sup>211</sup> Moreover, they often deploy contrasts between modes of the modern and the traditional via those between the city and the countryside (that is home), and the industrial and the agricultural. Indeed, these songwriters belong to a generation whose experiences cross between memories of the agricultural lifestyle and the complex and fast-changing way of city life, which “Taipei” emblemizes. Yet despite all the longing for, irony of, or resentment toward modernization, the popular songs simultaneously generate future-oriented projections. The use of rock musical elements in “The Same Moonlight” well demonstrates this paradox, inhering and elaborating on the values and traits commonly identified with the rock form: modern, progressive, Western, youth, freedom, and rebellion.<sup>212</sup> Commenting on the

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<sup>210</sup> Translation is from the original film’s English subtitle. The Chinese lyrics: 什麼時候兒時玩伴都離我遠去/什麼時候身旁的人已不再熟悉/人潮的擁擠 拉開了我們的距離/沈寂的大地 在靜靜的夜晚默默的哭泣/誰能告訴我 誰能告訴我/是我們改變了世界/還是世界改變了我和你/什麼時候哇鳴蟬聲都成了記憶/什麼時候家鄉變得如此的擁擠/高樓大廈 到處聳立/七彩霓虹把夜空染得如此的俗氣/一樣的月光 一樣的照著新店溪/一樣的冬天 一樣的下著冰冷的雨/一樣的塵埃 一樣的在風中堆積/一樣的笑容 一樣的淚水/一樣的日子 一樣的我和你。

<sup>211</sup> Song writer Hou De-Chien 侯德建 wrote *Dragon’s Descent* (Long de chuanren 龍的傳人) in 1978 upon the break of the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Taiwan. The nationalism thus spurred still drew from the legacy of the KMT’s identity category, even if the incident did provide provocation for reflecting on the national identity of Taiwan.

<sup>212</sup> Miao-Ju Chien 簡妙如, “Popular Culture, Aesthetics, and Modernity: A Historical Reconstruction of 80s and 90s Taiwanese Popular Music (“Liuxing wenhua, meixue, xiandaixing: yi bajiulingniandai Taiwan liuxing yinyue de



semantics of the rock music in the film, Yeh notes that it “shows how the ‘car’ that is wrongly taken (*da cuo che* 搭錯車, the Chinese title of the film) does not want to stay in the slow lane, taking passengers that are supposed to be gradually forgotten.”<sup>213</sup>

Yeh’s comment about the car wanting to switch to the fast lane as opposed to staying in the slow lane recalls the developmentalist ethos of speed and movement discussed in chapter 1. This experiential dimension is now further linked to and amplified by the rock form. Moreover, the echoes between strains of Taiwanese film and music at this time also reveal an essential connection between the changes in the Taiwanese national imagination and the country’s experience of modernization. Bearing in mind Yeh’s linking of the rock form with speed, movement, and development, I would add that in the section of the film where Yeh locates the semantic friction between the music, the image, and the lyrics, the way the sounds and the images are aligned there creates an effect similar to fast-paced choreography. The flash of images of Ya-shu’s shock-hospitalization-death is *dancing* to the excitement of the upbeat music. The potential if perhaps unwitting irony aside, this editing repertoire in fact rehearses a previous song-and-dance scene performed to the same music “The Same Moonlight,” like a reprise with a variation within the “singing” of the entire film. I suggest that reconsidering this scene in light of the previous scene, and analyzing the *choreography* between the sound, the image, the lyrics, and the dance, would open up ways to deepen the discussion about the articulation and mediation of experiences of “development” in Taiwan at this time. This new analysis focusing on the choreography of sound, image, lyrics, and dance can also be applied to the ending of the film and the performance of “Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?,” further revealing particular ways the revision of the Taiwanese national imagination is intertwined with interpretations of modernization in the film.

The revision of the Taiwanese national imagination in *Papa* operates by way of *displacing* the KMT’s line of nationalism with the reassertion of A-mei’s filial piety for Ya-shu at the end of the film. In other words, besides reconciling with the choice for development, the reassertion of moral virtues also performs a negotiation of moral truths in light of the crumbling myths of KMT nationalism. This is in fact what is central to the melodramatic imagination within which the film operates. As Linda Williams notes, citing Peter Brooks’ study, the need for “moral legibility” compels the historical emergence of a melodramatic mode of representation. If in the European context, melodrama’s historical origin has to do with “the assigning of guilt and innocence in a post-sacred, post-Enlightenment world where moral and religious certainties have been erased,”<sup>214</sup> then *Papa* presents moral virtues in a changing Taiwan as filial piety in place of the distrust towards the KMT’s official nationalist doctrine.

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lishi chonggou wei li 流行文化，美學，現代性：以八、九〇年代臺灣流行音樂的歷史重構為例”) (Ph.D. diss., National Chengchi University, 2002); Peter Wicke, *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology*, trans. Rachel Fogg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Motti Regev, “Rock Aesthetics and Musics of the World,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 14, no. 3 (1997): 125–142.

<sup>213</sup> Yeh, “Noise Reduction,” 31. Translation mine.

<sup>214</sup> Linda Williams, “Melodrama Revised,” in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 59. Williams cites Peter Brooks’s study of the historical origins of the nineteenth-century melodramatic project whose roots can be traced to the French popular theater, see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).

In an interview with Yü Kan-Ping, the director of *Papa*, Yu disclosed his intention for the film's Chinese title *Da Cuo Che* "Taking the Wrong Car." He explained that "taking the wrong car" is a metaphor for the "fate" (*mingyun* 命運) of those who come from different places but end up living in the same neighborhood. They are caught within an uncontrollable turn of fate as if they have "taken the wrong car." Yu is possibly alluding to the Chinese mainlanders who moved to Taiwan with the KMT, especially given the specific background of Ya-shu as a discharged KMT soldier, as well as some of the other vivid portrayals of Ya-shu's neighbors who are also Chinese mainlanders coming from different parts of China.<sup>215</sup> In Yu's rhetoric, not only is "fate" uncontrollable, but it is also "irreversible" (*buke ni* 不可逆). As Yu reflects on it, *Papa* is a film that at once commemorates a passing era and presents the tension between the inevitable change in the urbanizing process and the helplessness one feels caught within such changes.<sup>216</sup>

Williams also notes that a key feature of melodrama is "its compulsion to 'reconcile the irreconcilable.'" <sup>217</sup> Yu's "commemoration of the passing era" reveals the film's desire to reconcile with the irreconcilable and irreversible course of history. Ultimately, "fate" becomes a framework through which the tragedies are interpreted. *Papa* in fact begins with a flashback voice of A-mei recounting the whole story as Ya-shu encounters and picks up baby A-mei from the garbage dump, and A-mei's extra-diegetic narration explicitly links her "fate" as the "abandoned" child to Ya-shu's as the discharged soldier who ended up living in Taiwan for the rest of his life. While the return to "home" is impossible for Ya-shu in those years of political antagonism between China and Taiwan, and the strict restrictions imposed on their citizens' communications, a new sense of "home" is poignantly cried for via A-mei's performance at the end of the film.

To serve the "dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths," Williams elucidates that melodrama deploys "a dialectic of pathos and action,"<sup>218</sup> inviting audiences to feel sympathy for the hero who is also a victim; the narrative leads to a climax where the hero's moral virtue, or "innocence," is ultimately recognized by the audience and other characters. In light of the intertwined negotiations with development and national imagination in *Papa* (that collapses with "fate"), I would argue that the song-and-dance scenes in this film at once further the *kinetic* articulation of the modern and enhance the melodramatic pathos of A-mei's renewed "innocence" at the end.

### The Same Moonlight: *Dancing from a Village Girl to a Cosmopolitan Superstar*

Speaking about the first time the performance of "The Same Moonlight" appears in *Papa*, Yu explained that he was approaching the scene as if making a music video, and that this section depicts a "theme" via "The Same Moonlight." "The advantage of music is that it does not have to be confined to a certain space and time," Yu comments, "and that this section does not show

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<sup>215</sup> Historically, the mass migration of Chinese mainlanders to Taiwan with the KMT upon its defeat in the Chinese Civil War included some five hundred thousand military personnel who ended up living in similar villages (some legally and some illegally) throughout Taiwan. Originally treating their stay in Taiwan as temporary, they did not expect to end up living in Taiwan for the rest of their lives.

<sup>216</sup> Yü Kan-Ping 虞戡平, "The Backstage Story of *Papa*, *Can You Hear Me Sing?*" ("搭錯車幕後故事"), Taiwan Public Television Service (Gonggong dianshi 公共電視), available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=sReIKqtPXz0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=sReIKqtPXz0) (accessed January 23, 2013).

<sup>217</sup> Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 75.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

happenings progressing in time.”<sup>219</sup> So what is the “theme” of this section that Yu was talking about? Seen from the image in the diegesis (which is edited to the musical beats), it is the process of A-mei turning from a village girl to a cosmopolitan superstar. In fact, although the “music video editing” that Yu refers to transcends the way events unfold in realist storytelling, nonetheless, taken as a whole, the images in this section narrate the progression of A-mei’s career development ultimately moving towards stardom. The dance of A-mei and her chorus that compose the diegetic images and how they are shot and edited also follow this “narration.”

Before this section begins, A-mei has just signed the contract with the record producer. She is made to change her name and move out of Ya-shu’s place to live in upscale housing as a way to publicize her as coming from an “upper class family.” She comes home saddened to say goodbye to Ya-shu, but at the same time much looking forward to her upcoming performance schedule. At this moment, the electronic guitar prelude of “The Same Moonlight” sounds, ushering in the extra-diegetic music to which the ensuing shots are edited. Along the running beats and the guitar solo, the image cuts to the rigorous dance training that A-mei starts to undergo in the studio. It continues to cross-cut between her studio training, Ya-shu’s collecting of wine bottles in the village, A-mei’s composer ex-boyfriend, and her excitement upon moving into her new home.

As the singing begins with the first line “Since when have all my childhood friends left me?” the image cuts to a wide, flat road where A-mei and the dancers emerge at the horizon marching and dancing to the beat of the music. From then on, every cut to the next shot reveals a growth of scale in terms of the dance and the space where the dance takes place. The dance moves from the wide street to against a high rise building, to a grand plaza at night, to an indoor concert stage. A-mei’s clothing is also getting more elaborate, from plain dance leotards, to fancier T-shirts, to an impressive long gown, and finally to a stylish black dress. As the music comes to an end, the diegetic and the extra-diegetic recombine to present A-mei singing in the concert with a spectacular ending enhanced by fireworks.

If the happenings in this music video section do not unfold along realist storytelling lines, they nevertheless *progress* along the logic of development, an important “theme” of this section. This development of A-mei’s “career take-off,” after rapidly cross-cutting between Ya-shu, the ex-boyfriend, and studio rehearsal, enters into a continual expansion and “upgrading” of space. In terms of location, the images present the accomplishment of modernization of the city space—the wide cement road, the tall buildings, and the newly built plaza. The wide road is Zohngzheng Bridge, the very bridge that crosses over the Hsin-dian River that connects Taipei with its outskirts. Lin and the filmmakers had the dancers march from the horizon at the far end toward the camera and finally leap in the air, throwing their props in the sky. Such a continual movement progression that animates a spatial expansion leads to a sort of narrative explosion (“A-mei’s career take-off”) and thus underscores the kind of spatial-kinesthetic that is vital to the experience and drive for development. As to the dance in the plaza at night, it was shot in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, which was built in 1980. As Lin Lee-Chen recalled, in her intention at the time, this place was the best space for outdoor performance in Taipei.<sup>220</sup> In this scene, A-mei, assuming the persona of a “star,” is surrounded by dancers running across the space; their long gowns billow in the wind, exuding a sense of grandeur that

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<sup>219</sup> Yu, “The Backstage Story of *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*.”

<sup>220</sup> Fieldnote, November 27, 2009.

corresponds to the grand expanse of the plaza, further enhanced by the crane shot that overlooks the scene.

In retrospect, this image documents the residue of authoritarian ruling in Taiwan. Although the scene was intended to present the spectacular conglomerate of an urban, modern, and fashionable dance-musical performance, a kind of “new” liveliness that surpasses the old order, it also uses the memorial of a past autocrat as its backdrop. Perhaps forming yet another belated irony in the semiotics of the film, this instance of semantic friction, echoing other such moments throughout the film, demonstrates the confusion of cultural and political sentiments and desires in Taiwan at this time. Lin was adept at creating large-scale group dancing, as a five-time champion choreographer of mass dance in state competitions during the 1970s. Additionally, the choreography in this section traces the aesthetics of the *minzu wudao* movement as well as other outdoor patriotic performance spectacles from authoritarian times. Although tracing choreographic modes of a past era, the dance movements, following the rhythmic flow and musical climax of *The Same Moonlight*, sport stylized strutting punctuated by hip-swings and shoulder-twists, especially in the ending segment that takes place on the concert stage, in which fast, sleek, sharp spinning and high kicks abound. This “jazzy” touch associated with pop music, to be sure, would not have been seen in nationalistic ceremonies. The dancers move identically and in repetitions that powerfully accumulate the kinesthetic energy until its final explosion; this sort of building energy recurs in Lin’s choreography extending into her Legend Lin phase. The



Still image taken from *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983).<sup>221</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr3VpfOOVmE&feature=share&list=PL569086EAB0ABCE0A> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEEmjCcaifU&feature=share&list=PL569086EAB0ABCE0A> (accessed May 10, 2013).

kind of dance spectacle staged in front of a nationalistic monument may recall the performance aesthetics in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games that we discussed in chapter 3. But I would note that the variegated choreo-imagistic currents that contribute to the making of *Papa* are different in intention and context from the Beijing Olympic Games. The clear delineation of national prowess in the Beijing Olympics, embedded in the context of the development of China today, is resolutely intended and controlled throughout its performance process. By contrast, although the nationalistic monument appears in this shot, *Papa* is filled with a more overtly contradictory semiotic profusion.

The expansion of space animated by the dancing highlights the articulation and mediation of the modern as dynamic rather than static. Not only does the diegesis of the image feature dance, but the moving image also *dances*. Discussing music videos and the medium-specific attributes, Michel Chion brings up the frequent union between dance and video art, noting that the connection “may well be due to the dance’s concern with speed of movement. For just as the dancer can arrest movement on a pose, video can play with speeds of movement and freeze the image without changing the image’s nature.”<sup>222</sup> Chion is mainly talking about video as opposed to film for its medium-specific difference: while “film may have movement *in* the image [...] the video image in itself, born from scanning, *is* pure movement: a movement that is more prone to visual verbiage, since it has no inertia to combat.”<sup>223</sup> Although *Papa* is shot on film, it attempts to assimilate a music-video mode of presentation, not only through images rendered more dynamic by their dance content, but also amplified by the rhythmic editing synched to the music. Images are shot and assembled with a variation of camera angles, from close-ups to wider shots, as well as with traveling and crane shots.

From the animation of a modern Taipei to the polished staging of the song-and-dance performance in an indoor concert, we are also shown how bodies and the multisensory effects attached to body-based performance are turned into ever more refined commodities through the logic of profit-making and mass consumption. The commodification of kinesthetic effects features a certain kind of spectacle of “feminine sexiness.” By the end of this transformation, A-mei no longer wears blouses and long skirts as seen in the previous scenes but struts in a glittering tight dress. The TV relay of A-mei’s performance reveals how technology and mass media enable and accelerate the commodification of song-and-dance performance as they efficiently reproduce, circulate, and facilitate the consumption of performance. A-mei’s performance also moves from more place-bound spaces to a kind of transcendence. She moves from identifiable spaces in the city to the indoor stage where the audience and the generic proscenium could be almost anywhere, holding the same packaged stage performance, as later in the film when A-mei performs in her Southeast Asian tour. The indistinctiveness of the stage can represent anywhere from Hong Kong to Singapore to Malaysia. The image of the airplane take-off well allegorizes this spatial transcendence as the next developmental stage after the spatial expansion aligned with roads and ground vehicles. This scenario not only performs a prelude to the coming phase of intensified movement across geographical spaces that characterizes globalization, but also a projection of Taiwan’s continued economic and cultural interactions with, and growing ambitions for, the markets in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>222</sup> Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 162.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, in this section where the dance, the space, the shots, the editing, and the rock music work together in generating the experience of development as dynamic expansion and forward movement, only the lyrics create an opposite temporal flow that collides with the progression of everything else. As the intermedial narration works to articulate what is happening in the now while also projecting towards the future in a celebratory tone, the lyrics perform melodramatic regret in a retrospective mode. The beginning of the dance on the Zhongzheng Bridge is matched to the beginning of the singing; as the dancers march forward towards the camera, the singing goes, “Since when have all my childhood friends left me? Since when have I become unfamiliar with the people surrounding me?” and so on. The semiotic break widens when we hear the lyrics “the quiet earth cries silently at night” while the image shows vigorous dancing outdoors in the broad daylight. As the song gets to the theme line “the same moonlight shines on the same Hsin-dian River,” the scene cuts to the dance in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall at night. Opening and stretching out her arms, A-mei sings the ten lines that all begin with the phrase “the same.” While the lyrics keep piling on what are the “same,” the image performs its complete opposite: change and movement that make nothing stay the same. The chorus of dancers swiftly and continually thread across the space, forming highly dynamic body-and-fabric currents surrounding A-mei, who is pitched against a background formed by performers constantly waving lights at the staircases of the Memorial Hall. One thinks of Linda Williams’ note that “melodrama’s larger impulse is to reverse time, to return to the time of origins and the space of innocence,” and that the “main thrust” of melodramatic narrative “is to get back to the beginning.”<sup>224</sup> It does seem that the lyrics, in lamenting the loss and claiming “the same,” are voicing the desire to go back to the beginning where “innocence” still remains. Yet, development (as “fate”) is irreversible; the currents of dancing and light-waving are non-stop. I would suggest this whole section effectively encapsulates the internal conflict that drives melodrama, the desire to reverse the irreversible, and dance kinesthetically amplifies the conflict between moving forward and the desire to go back to the beginning. The section ends with A-mei’s performance on the concert stage, which then cuts to its relay on the small TV-screen in Ya-shu’s living room, where he is watching A-mei on TV with the neighbors. The audience of the film experiences the series of images as dynamic expansion; they travel swiftly with the characters through time and space, but in the end they return to the humble space of Ya-shu’s living room, where the image of A-mei is broadcast through the TV screen. Though the television screen itself is close to Ya-shu, A-mei is now hugely distanced from him and the environment in which she spent her childhood.

#### The Same Moonlight: *Reprise*

When “The Same Moonlight” reprises towards the end of the film, the melodramatic conflict becomes more explicit and intense. The images in this section are also edited to the musical beats of “The Same Moonlight.” However, whereas a major thematic thrust of the previous section is the process of development performed as a consistent dynamic expansion, throughout this final section, the images are constantly cross-cutting between A-mei’s song-and-dance performance in a concert, to flashbacks of moments from A-mei’s childhood under Ya-shu’s care, to Ya-shu’s tragic stroke-hospitalization-death.

The section begins with A-mei at the start of her concert performance. Wearing a grandiose, all-silver dress, she slowly chants the opening lines of “The Same Moonlight,” at the

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<sup>224</sup> Williams, “Melodrama Revised,” 74.

same time dancing sensuously with a bare-chested male dancer (one of the dance images that I described in the beginning). As the song turns to the rapid tempo of rock, the film cuts to Ya-shu watching the TV relay of A-mei's performance in his living room. Along with the elaborate electric guitar solo backed by pacing drum beats, the film shows a series of quick flashback images of what Ya-shu and A-mei have been through since her childhood. The music continues, traversing the diegetic and the extra-diegetic as the film now cross-cuts between Ya-shu and A-mei's stage performance. Synched to a heavier beat of the music, the film shows Ya-shu gripped by a sudden stroke, collapsing on his living room couch. He is then put in an ambulance that speeds through the streets of Taipei at night. When he arrives at the emergency room, he is placed in a hospital bed, and treated by the doctor and nurses, but gains no prospect of recovery. As the song and A-mei's performance end, her neighbor rushes to the concert hall to inform A-mei of the emergency. A-mei then rushes to the hospital, only to catch the last sight of Ya-shu before he dies.

This section also reintroduces the collision of temporal flows between the lyrics and the rest of the film's elements. The same lyrics that voice regret in retrospect are sung against images of Ya-shu's stroke-hospitalization-death, events that will eventually cause A-mei to regret some of her life choices. However, unlike the previous section where there is a continual, uninterrupted spatial-kinetic expansion, Ya-shu's emergency is interjected by competing narrative threads: the concert and the flashbacks. On top of such temporal and narrative collisions, we also experience the spatial leaps between the mundane (Ya-shu's living room, the village life) and the spectacular (the glamour of the stage on which A-mei performs). The pathos created by the regular collisions between the mundane and the spectacular in modern life is clearly seen in A-mei's tear-streaked face when she sees Ya-shu take his last breath. Central to the creation of pathos in melodrama is the sense of loss or being "too late" for the "rescue," which is also relevant to melodrama's larger impulse to reverse time. Whether the rescue is successful or not, creating a "teasing delay of the forward moving march of time" has been a means in melodrama to accentuate the "too late," enhancing the impact of the final emotional release.<sup>225</sup> In this section, the temporal and narrative collisions coupled with the leaps between the mundane and the spectacular likewise create a sense of "delay" for A-mei's "rescue" of Ya-shu. While the previous section already embeds the conflict between the desire to "develop" and to go back to the "beginning," in this penultimate section the conflict becomes more intense, ending with the irreversible tragedy. Immediately following this section, by performing the song "Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Bottles?" at the film's end, A-mei stages a release of pathos while also "retrieving" her "innocence."

### *Reconciling the Irreconcilable*

A-mei's final performance of "Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?" is no longer presented like a music video, but only as A-mei's concert performance. The union of sound and image within the diegesis no longer creates collisions of temporal flows like the previous sections and seems to echo the melodramatic desire to reconcile the irreconcilable. Indeed, the attempt at creating an effective retrieval and staging of innocence in this section is obvious. The lyrics' emphasis on "You" (Ya-shu/the parent) that raises "Me" (A-mei/the child) and that gives "Me" a "home" extols the moral virtues of filial piety and personal familial roots about which A-mei poignantly sings and dances.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

Continuing from the previous scene where A-mei finally arrives at the hospital but is still too late, she cries painfully over Ya-shu's body. At this point, the opening notes to "Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?" seamlessly start to play, and the image is cut to the concert stage where A-mei is going to perform. The introduction of the song features the chorus singing in the lofty style of Bel Canto, repeating the line "does anyone want to sell some wine bottles," while the dancers slowly walk onto the stage along with the singing. Both A-mei and the dancers wear long white dresses, and A-mei wears an additional white robe. The dancers also carry a long piece of white gauze onto the stage. This slow march in all-white conjures a sense of purity and elegiac solemnity (people wear white in Taiwanese funerals); in fact, this scene contains striking similarities to the opening scene of Lin's later ritualistic work, *Mirror of Life*. When it comes to the main musical theme, it shifts to the strong rhythmic pacing typical of pop. The dancing picks up the pace accordingly and A-mei is shown snapping to the musical beats. At the end of the song, the Bel Canto singing of the line "Does anyone want to sell some wine bottles?" comes back again repeated over and over, while the dancing features continuous swirls of the upper bodies accentuated by the hand waves. The continuous upper body swirls evoke the quality of a trance; it is as if the bodies are driven by some great external force or caught within deep grief. The image also momentarily cuts to shots that show A-mei's friends in the audience wiping away their tears.

One might dwell on the possible implications of A-mei and Ya-shu's relationship, when A-mei is a Taiwanese girl (her name "A-mei" is written on a note left within the baby bundle and "A-" is a prefix specific to Taiwanese names) and Ya-shu is a Chinese mainlander at the margins of Taiwanese society. And, of course, the signature line of the final song, "Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?" is sung in Taiwanese. However, the melodramatic emphasis on the literal father-daughter relationship and "home" expounded from that literal familial bond almost overtakes the reading of national allegories. One of the things that made this film bear political consequences has something to do with the songwriter Hou De-Jian of "Does Anyone Want to Sell Some Wine Bottles?" He left for mainland China in 1983 against KMT's policy at the time, and the song was thus banned by the Government Information Office and taken off the film's soundtrack album. This instance attests to the fact that although certain cultural and political desires were allowed to be voiced within the gradually liberalized Taiwanese society, certain political boundaries were still firmly drawn and guarded. Finally, although the final scene attempts at a melodramatic pathos to retrieve A-mei's innocence, the rhythmic pacing in the middle of the song seems to contradict the supposed sentiment of pathos. This also reveals the complexity and volatility of pop culture and how commercial stakes are not confined to the representation within the film, but exist also in the film itself as a product surviving in the economy and politics of circulation and consumption.

### **Facades: *Kidnapped* (1983)**

If the primary dance piece in *Papa* serves to amplify the sense of glamour and energy, as well as rendering the cityscape of the rapidly-modernizing Taipei more dynamic, the dance in *Kidnapped* seems to probe into the interior, the subconscious, the space of the psyche beneath the surface of society's changes. Framed as a fashion show, the choreography features dancers strutting in and out of the space, reminiscent of the urbanites' postures in *Papa*; the dancers also languidly crawl upon and roll over the geometric racks scattered in the performance space. Their faces are covered with white paint, leaving only the rims of their eyes and mouth untouched; the



make-up design creates a haunting mask-like effect, echoing what seems to be the film's motif: facades and their peeling-off.

*Kidnapped* (1983) was directed by Ke I-Cheng 柯一正, who is also among the directors of Taiwan's New Cinema. The film revolves around the kidnapping case of Xiaowei, son of Chang Ruo-fen and Chou Xing-ren, who live in a nice housing area of Taipei, a marker of their financial well-being in the midst of Taiwan's economic take-off. Xiaowei is actually "wrongly" kidnapped, being mistaken for his neighbor's son, but the investigation of this case exposes the problems that underlie the relationship between Chang and Chou and the very idea of "family." At the heart of the matter is the changing gender performance that comes with urbanization and the emergence of the "career women" at odds with traditional designations of gender roles. Chang is a talented fashion designer and perhaps altogether much more successful than Chou. Chou left Chang and their child in extreme dejection after losing much money for his company due to a bad business decision he made. In fact, he had been feeling inferior to his wife for a long time, which led to his affair with another woman who is much more ordinary and less threatening. Upon Chou's disappearance, Chang hired a private detective and learned that her husband had been having an affair; she then stopped the investigation and lived with the disappearance of her husband for four months without reporting it to the police. When the police officer comes for the kidnapping case and discovers the additional disappearance of Chou, Chang seems to care more about maintaining the facade of "family" for her son—a father, a mother, and a house—than actually trying to solve the problem between her and Chou.

Unlike the music video presentation in *Papa* in which the music bleeds in and out of the diegesis, *Kidnapped* cross-cuts the dance scene with an officer's investigation of Chou's girlfriend at her apartment. Chou's girlfriend lives in a small, unbecoming apartment complex, quite a contrast to the Chang and Chou's spacious house. It turns out she is not sheltering Chou, nor is Chou the kidnapper of his own son as some kind of revenge on Chang. However, the conversation between the officer and Chou's girlfriend does slowly reveal Chou's internal anxiety, insecurity, and feelings of inferiority, which are at the psychological root of the problems in Chang and Chou's relationship. The cross-cutting between the dance scene and the investigation poses a series of contrasting dualities that can be understood as either interiority versus facade or revelation versus concealment: the girlfriend's apartment bathed in daylight versus the darker space of the fashion show venue; the questions, answers, and the inference carried out in words and logical thinking versus the affective stimulant of dance, stylized costumes, and make-ups; the closet in the girlfriend's apartment where she and Chou used to hide and make confessions to each other versus the public dance-fashion show with a mask-like make-up design.

The dance seems to respond by playing up multiple kinds of "inversions." The dance scene in fact begins with an "inversion." Chang, as both the fashion designer and the choreographer of the show, instructs the dancer/models to inverse the use of space just before the show, making the audience sit on the stage while the dancer/models perform in the auditorium. A few structural pieces are placed over the performance space, racks with defined lines, angles, and frames that recall the steel scaffolds of construction sites all over Taipei, of which the film also features many shots. The bodies moving among these racks and structures evoke the experience of bodies walking and living in Taipei city with construction happening everywhere. The dancers strut in; the females all wear high-heels, swinging their hips and twisting their shoulders in each step. Their swift, swaggering walks with shoulder twists amplify the clothing design that features

big shoulder-pads in the fashion of the “power suit” that emerged in the 1980s with the very image of the “masculinized career woman.” The electronic, synthetic music they dance to sounds dark and a bit eerie. The dance is imbued with an overall coolness, corresponding also to the mask-like make-up. While maintaining neutral but proud looks on their faces, the dancers alternate between moving in fast, sharp bursts and frozen postures. A series of quick spins and leg kicks is followed by a slow and coolly held leg split; quick strides are followed by a standstill in which dancers only slowly inhale and exhale, staring, and rolling their heads and shoulders from one side to the other. As the performance builds, the dancers climb onto, crawl, and roll languidly over the racks in different poses. They swing their upper backs and heads in a snapping motion; they also languidly roll their heads and raise their arms, stretching and dangling their bodies over the frames as a male dancer embraces a female dancer tightly from behind.



Still image taken from *Kidnapped* (1983), directed by Ke I-Cheng.<sup>226</sup>

Among the set pieces, there is a tilted box frame built like a table with a bench attached to it, evoking the image of a picnic table, or even a dining room table that could be associated with the idea of “family life.” The slanted nature of the table-like frame evokes structural instability and even distortion. It also seems to echo the larger motif within the film that something is “not right,” that the “structure” which is supposed to provide stability is not functioning. It corresponds to what is gradually being exposed in the police investigation. Together with the mask-like make-up and the cool put-on attitude, the dance scene overall seems to poke fun at the interior-exterior relationships and the peeling-off of facades that characterize the investigation. The bodies crawling and dangling over the frames seem to perform another destabilization, intrusion, or violation of the structure.

The framing of the dance scene as a fashion show is folded into the plot of *Kidnapped* since Chang is a fashion designer. However, the highly stylized choreography is completely different than the realism of rest of the film. Unlike the music-video editing in *Papa*, when *Kidnapped* intercuts between the dance scene and the investigation, there is not a common element that brings together the contrasting images in the way the song *The Same Moonlight* functioned in *Papa*. While the intercutting can be read as two simultaneous happenings taking place in different spaces, it also shows the dialectic between the interior and exterior via the contrasting symbols and modes of representation within the two narrative threads. The

<sup>226</sup> Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEEmjCcaifU&feature=share&list=PL569086EAB0ABCE0A> (accessed May 10, 2013).

investigation does not offer direct clues from the kidnapping case or any answers about where Chou is, but instead it reveals more and more the psychological root of the problems between Chou and Chang. The dance scene navigates between focusing on structures, facades, and erotic desires. The steel structures themselves are exposed and rendered unstable in their appearance in the dance scene. Meanwhile, the dancers themselves are wearing their mask-like make-up as their bodies deliberately pose, sensuously roll, and embrace, suggesting intimacy and internal desires, complicated again by the masks “worn” at all times. The film does not end like *Papa* with a “reintegration” between music, image, and dance advancing the desire to retrieve innocence. Instead, the sense of “lacking” something remains unresolved; although the child is found at the end, the father/husband is still missing. Confronting the changes that happen in the midst of development directly, *Kidnapped* pries open this psychological black hole via dance, but leaves its characters still haunted in their everyday lives at the film’s conclusion.

### **Looking Backward: *Who Am I* (1982)**

In 1982, Lin was invited by the Council of Cultural Affairs, along with nine other Taiwanese choreographers, to present a short work at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei. The resulting piece titled *Who Am I* shares a similar set of movement vocabulary with the dance scenes in *Papa* and *Kidnapped*. However, *Who Am I* looks almost like slow-motion portraits of the characters of the two films, anticipating the slowing of movement in Legend Lin’s works. In fact, Lin mentioned that the movement principle of her current Legend Lin phase was first explored during the making of *Who Am I*. Unlike the triumphal dance seen in *Papa* against the first singing of “The Same Moonlight,” *Who Am I* is a much darker piece exuding a strong sense of dejection and annihilation.

The dance begins with a solo dancer sitting on a bench that is flipped sideways. Facing away from the audience, she holds with one hand a bamboo stick that is vertically tied to the bench. Against Joan Baez’s singing of “House of the Rising Sun” (1960), she swings her head backwards and begins to dance. Along with the musical beats, her dance alternates between a fierce opening up of the body—head raised, torso opened, pelvis extending forward, and arms extending backwards—and a kind of deflated, dangling, and inward-clutching posture. Her hand clutches tightly to the thin, long, bamboo stick at all times. She does a backbend and then lifts herself up along the arc of the bamboo. She then crosses to the other side, her body collapsing sideways to a carefully sculpted shape.

As the opening solo ends, the music switches to a mix of piano, organ, and human screaming, all overlapped and distorted. A group of dancers enters, walking with their pelvises pushed forward, each step accented with a shoulder-roll. The steps recall the struts that appear in the other two films but are much slower and more sustained. Their costumes are made of synthetic materials that have a shiny, plastic effect. The dance overall comes across as cold, detached, proud, and self-absorbed. The dancers raise their arms high, turning their heads sideways and touching their own bodies. They walk two steps, and fiercely throw back their upper bodies on the third. The solo dancer is dancing by herself within the group, as if engulfed by the forces of their cold, detached bodies posing in “sexy” shapes.

Indeed, much of the choreography in this section features antagonism between opposing forces: intimacy versus detachment and the individual versus the group. In a heterosexual duet framed in the group dance, the male dancer supports, touches, and tightly holds the female dancer from behind; at the same time, the solo female dancer does the same movement as the

female dancer in the duet. This juxtaposition renders a kind of “lack” or reemphasized solitude on the solo dancer’s part. The male dancer leans closely onto the female dancer’s torso as she backbends and slides onto the floor. But after a few embraces on the floor, he steps away and leaves her, too, by herself, giving a sense of emotional emptiness and abandonment despite the erotic engagement of the bodies that just happened. In another part, the solo dancer dances a short sequence by herself; a female dancer joins her halfway but then leaves to merge with the movements of the group. At the end, the solo dancer goes back to the bench, one hand clutching onto the bamboo, dangling her body backwards until the other dancers leave the stage and she collapses.

Lin mentioned that *Who Am I* was inspired by a discarded bench on the street that she came across one day. The bench was still in a good condition, but Lin felt sad for its being abandoned just because it was old. She picked up the bench and choreographed the dance with it. She also kept this bench in her kitchen and spent many of her afternoon breaks—the “unproductive” time within capitalist working ethos, as it were—having a cup of coffee on it by herself. A highly personal piece as the title reveals, the sense of loneliness and dejection in *Who Am I* demonstrates the profound futility and frustration that individuals can feel amid currents of change as one ages and against the backdrop of rapid urban development. In the dance, there seems to be a sort of dependence and mirroring between the bench, the thin bamboo stick, and the lonely woman. The alternation between the fierce opening up of the body and the kind of deflated, dangling inward-clutching evokes repeated struggles for life that nevertheless end with exhaustion, frustration, and dejection. The solo dancer holds the bamboo stick throughout the whole first half, and yet the thin stick appears as unsteady as the dancer herself. At one point she steps onto the bench, tilting her head, torso, and one leg toward the bamboo, as if leaning onto it, while the curve of the stick also echoes her now curvilinear posing. Although the bamboo is resilient and not easily broken, she nevertheless is repeatedly brought down to collapse. The deserted bench is the garbage, the “useless” object under capitalism, the detritus left out by “development”; the solo woman, dependent on the “useless” bench and the weak bamboo, seems to also embody what is left behind from capitalist development.



*Who Am I* (1982), choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen.<sup>227</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Still image taken from the video recording of the dance work. Video courtesy: Legend Lin Dance Theatre.

The emotional woe within such loneliness, desertion, and frustration corresponds to the tone of “House of the Rising Sun.” The song is a woman’s confession. The lyrics describe how in New Orleans there is a house called Rising Sun (understood as a brothel), where many poor women like the confessor live. She was “young and foolish” and thus “led astray,” but she wants to tell her baby sister not to do what she has done and “shun that house in New Orleans,” while she is going back to “spend [her] life beneath the rising sun.” There is an irony between what the imagery of the “rising sun” typically evokes—dawn, hope, and upcoming brightness of life—and the house of the Rising Sun referred to here, which is “the ruin for many a poor girl.”

Joan Baez’s vocal against the acoustic guitar is genuine, soulful, and pure but not without sophistication; the wooden bench and the bamboo are also handcrafted from natural materials. This natural, earthy quality poses a drastic contrast to the monstrosity and artificiality of the electronic synthetic sounds, the shiny materials, and the cold lighting in the second half of the dance. “Sexy” gestures and heterosexual eroticism are rendered unfamiliar as the dancers’ movements slow down in this environment of hyper-artificiality, as if the components of these postulations are made larger and strange under such scrutiny. The second half also exudes a desire to annihilate human intimacy; alienation and emptiness are brought to the fore. The erotic embrace between the man and the woman seems to stay in the moment, not reaching deeper or creating a lasting connection—this perhaps resonates with the experience of the song’s narrator. The slowed-down jazz walk interspersed with the throwing back of upper bodies perhaps discloses the tension between certain put-on postures and a release of artifices. At the end, as the solo dancer goes back to the bench, her retreat seems to echo the final lyrics about returning to spend life beneath the rising sun. Or perhaps this final moment shows how depleted individuals can feel in the whirls of capitalist development, a final abandonment of self after it seems society has ruthlessly left us behind.

The dances of Lin Lee-Chen in the 1980s thus clearly articulate a unique and symptomatic range of response and mediation of the experiences under Taiwan’s development. With something like the same movement vocabulary, though in varying media, each dance piece articulates contradictory meanings and sentiments. As the film *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* shows, dance catalyzes the sense of mobility and speed that projects and produces the desire for the modern. At the end of the film, the more solemn and ritualistic quality heightens the sense of pathos as a way to reconcile the irreconcilable. The dance for the film *Kidnapped* and *Who Am I* further mine some of the more complex and darker psychological dimensions of social and personal experiences embedded in Taiwan’s modernizing process. They are at once in contrast to and anticipate the *huan* kinaesthetics of Legend Lin Dance Theatre, which we will turn to in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Economy of Mobility: Persisting *Huan* (緩) in the Force Field of Aesthetics and Politics

#### *Fanghuan* 放緩 and Continuity within Contrast

Although the highly ballet-based choreography in Lin Lee-Chen's 1980s dance looks drastically different from her choreography for Legend Lin Dance Theatre, Lin has mentioned that the creation of her 1982 piece *Who Am I* pilots the development of a bodily training that Legend Lin continues today.<sup>228</sup> The training of Legend Lin emphasizes the initiation of any movement from the deep end of the sacrum to a furling or unfurling the upper body along the vertebrae, or, the same initiation is combined with the strength of muscles between the pelvis and the thigh to lead and coordinate upper and lower body movements. In any locomotion or change of direction, the dancers' pelvises always move first to trigger the chain of movement or directional change in the rest of the body. The same principle can indeed be seen in *Who Am I* and most clearly in the beginning of the dance, where the solo dancer transitions between each pose with either a leg-sweep or a quick twist around the bamboo stick; every movement is initiated from the pelvis and either spirals the body out or curls it in. In one instance, she touches the bamboo with her lower abdomen, pushing her pelvis forward to initiate a slow and elastic chain of spinal stretch upward. This spinal stretch also figures in Legend Lin's current training, as Legend Lin dancers practice the same movement against a wall for training pelvic strength and spinal flexibility.

From 2002 to 2003, I was a dancer in Legend Lin Dance Theatre, rehearsing for the company's repertory work *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (which premiered in 2000) for its international festival engagements in that period. I also attended the *Movimentos* Festival with the company in 2003. Legend Lin Dance Theatre emerged in the mid-1990s, when the Taiwanese performing arts circle was exploring "Eastern Body Aesthetics," a movement that furthered the postcolonial impulse to seek an individual cultural identity, an urge that intersected with the conditions of post-martial law Taiwan, when the country's economy was rapidly developing. The company was formed in 1995, shortly after the premiere of *Mirror of Life* (*Jiao 醮*). The performance engagements thereafter were usually invitational international festivals, mostly based in Europe. Although the company's performances won exceptional praise from international audiences, I was always curious about the potential gap between the dancers' experiences and what the international audiences perceived and projected. Particularly, the premodern, mythical, and ritualistic atmosphere conjured by Legend Lin's works seemed to fit too well with a certain recurring imagination of the "East," as seen by European eyes. One can easily construe such perceptions in terms of Orientalism and self-Orientalism, but this may too easily explain away the multiple forces at work within these economies of mobility in Taiwanese dance at that time. In this chapter, I conduct a more nuanced discussion of the tensions between the kinesthetic of the body and the multiple forces with which it interacts.

As the previous chapter reveals, Lin Lee-Chen's choreography in the early 1980s responds to the development of Taiwan in ways that express degrees of ambivalence about it,

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<sup>228</sup> Field note, February 1, 2010.

ranging from overt celebration to visions of underlying annihilation. In her choreography for Legend Lin, not only is the movement style and quality drastically different, but also her thematic concerns retreat to a mythical, prehistorical space-time, approximating a universe of the time *before* that almost performs a desire to transcend history (and thus elide historical specificity). However, as the opening discussion in this chapter addresses, a kinesthetic continuity lies within the contrasts. This might inspire us to engage with “contrast” in ways other than simply seeing the two poles as binary. While the continuity does lead to changes that manifest contrast, I want to argue that it is foremost a *process*, a *process* of *fanghuan* 放緩 (akin, though not exactly equivalent, to the sense of “slowing down”), in an extension of Legend Lin’s self-identified *huan* 緩 aesthetics. *Huan* refers to a quality of slowness that is tranquil and at ease, imbued with Lin Lee-Chen’s personal revelations through her life experience and her approach to the body, and inflected with a ritualistic tone. Having known Lin Lee-Chen since 2002, first as her dancer and later as a researcher of her aesthetics, I have seen how *fanghuan* deeply informs her attitude toward life and her approach to art-making. She aims to “slow down” in order to touch every single detail, to get ever deeper and more intricate—this tendency was present in Lin Lee-Chen’s previous phase of dance-making and has deepened and become more elaborate in the Legend Lin phase. Moreover, for her, *fanghuan* is not only about physically reducing speed but also concerns a mental attitude of being patient and listening to the subtlest sensations within the body.

The process of *fanghuan* also directly relates to the experience of the body. Lin points out that she still kept up her training during the time when she was less active in presenting concert dance works. During those years, as she focused on working with her own body, she found that when slowing down, she seemed to enter another state that made her want to experiment with choreography that involved movements that are extremely slowed down. When Lin tried to explain this experience to me, she added that if a device for measuring the brain waves were available, there might be proof of the change she experienced.<sup>229</sup> I thought Lin’s embodied experience was equally valid, and she eventually did not resort to any scientific measurements, calculations, or proofs. Perhaps the fact that she felt the need to explain to a researcher her experience by way of a scientific term reveals the common tendency of seeing bodies as unintelligent or lacking legitimacy. The slowed-down process of working with her own body also relates to the sense of *fanghuan* mentioned above, making her aesthetic exploration in the Legend Lin phase more of a continuity and deepening of movement studies than a pure break as in the binary mode of thinking.

In the pages that follow, I will review the discourse of Eastern Body Aesthetics in Taiwan, as Legend Lin participates in and persists in this pursuit—which passed through its trendy phase in the early 2000s. I will then discuss the kinesthetics of Legend Lin, with particular focus on the complexity of *huan*, which is distinct from the sense of “slow” referenced in relation to a physical reduction of speed. I also consider the force within *huan*, which moves from the tranquil to the explosive and back again, rather than vacillating in a linear fashion between fast and slow. Here I engage with David Michael’s traveling installation *Slow Dancing* (2007), which appeared in Taipei in 2009, as another counterpoint from which to deepen the discussion of kinesthetic differences and their implications. Finally, I discuss the ways *huan* is deployed to carry out ritualistic aesthetics, whether in the service of evoking

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

community memory or with the aim of exploring the political-economy formed by the intersection of invitational international festivals, the individual company's world tour, and Taiwan's diplomatic agenda behind complicating discussions of the "economy of mobility."

### "Eastern Body Aesthetics"

"Eastern Body Aesthetics" (*Dongfang shenti guan* 東方身體觀) is a discourse and exploration in practice that emerged in the Taiwanese dance and physical theater scene in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>230</sup> The Chinese word *guan* 觀 refers to "a (philosophical) view/perspective," but many people also refer to their practice in the abbreviated form, *dongfang shenti* ("Eastern Body"), disclosing the emphasis on corporeality and physicality essential to practitioners that adhere to philosophies rooted in Eastern culture (*dongfang*). "Eastern Body Aesthetics" was at its height in the 1990s. Until the first decade of this century, a number of groups continued the exploration and development of this branch of aesthetics, while many of them also became less active.<sup>231</sup> Between the 1990s and 2000s, Taiwanese scholars and critics were also actively involved in discussions of and reflections on the practices of "Eastern Body Aesthetics," some acting as unofficial dramaturges to help shape the themes and philosophies behind the artists' works. That is, whether as criticism or dramaturgical thinking that inform the artists' aesthetic practice, the intellectual discourse was quite in keeping and in active dialogue with the production of the artworks. In 1997, *Performing Arts Review*, a highly respected Taiwanese performing arts magazine with a critical bent, created a special issue on the topic of "First Investigation of the Eastern Body Aesthetics Development over Ten Years." Over the next few years, special topics of the "Eastern Body Aesthetics" were continually made to follow up on its evolution, attesting to the importance of this discourse in Taiwan's dance historiography.<sup>232</sup>

In the Sinophone world, the word "Eastern" (*dongfang* 東方) refers to the self that is relative to the "Western" (*xifang* 西方). This self is not so much identified in terms of the limited category of "nation" but more embedded in a larger cultural sphere that shares commonality due to historical exchanges and mingling, and that is perceived as significantly different from "the West." Because of this broad and somewhat vague identification, what *dongfang* actually

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<sup>230</sup> I use the translation "Eastern Body Aesthetics" after Taiwanese dance historian Chen Ya-Ping. See Chen Ya-Ping, "Dance History and Cultural Politics: A Study of Contemporary Dance in Taiwan, 1930s–1997" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003).

<sup>231</sup> For example, two of the seminal "Eastern Body Aesthetics" explorers, Lin Hsiu-wei's 林秀偉 Tai Gu Tales Dance Theatre (太古踏舞團) and Tao Fu-lan's 陶馥蘭 Tao's Dance Theatre (多面向舞蹈劇場), have not been active or creating new works since the late 1990s and early 2000s, respectively.

<sup>232</sup> These include a series of articles under "Special Topics: Eastern Body Aesthetics" (特別企畫：東方身體觀), *Performing Arts Review*, March 1997, 36–55; "Special Topics: Investigating Eastern Body Aesthetics Again/The Phenomenon of Eastern Fever" (特別企畫：再探新東方肢體觀/東方熱現象), *Performing Arts Review*, February 2000, 14–29; "Special Topics: Art Religion" (特別企畫：藝術宗教), *Performing Arts Review*, April 2000, 28–41; the articles under these special topics include those written by scholars, critics, and dance practitioners, as well as records of round table discussions. Also see Yang Li-ling 楊莉玲, "East, It Is in One's Own Body—The Eastern Techniques of the New Generation of Choreographers" (東方，就在自己身上——新一代編舞者的「東方」身手), *Performing Arts Review*, January 2003, 14–19. Even ballet took on explorations of this aesthetics, i.e., Cheng Shu-Chih's 鄭淑姬 "In Pursuit of Ballet with Eastern Qi-Rhythm (*qiyun* 氣韻)" (追求東方氣韻的芭蕾) (review of Taipei Ballet Company's performance), *Performing Arts Review*, January 2000, 56–57. Performing arts critic and theater director Wang Mo-lin 王墨林 is also an avid contributor to *Performing Arts Review*, making criticisms of Eastern Body Aesthetics in the 2000s.



references becomes quite flexible. When people speak of *dongfang*, it can reference “Asia”; most of the time “East Asia,” or perhaps more likely the cultural sphere of the Sinophone and/or the kanji script. As to “the West,” the reference is usually centered on Western Europe or North America, bearing the power trace of world politics since the colonial era to the years after World War II. As *dongfang* is a concept and construct related to *xifang*, it also already bears the traces of the Orient’s self-orientalization in relation to the Orientalist’s Orientalism. As Arif Dirlik points out, this relational Orientalism historically occurred in the “contact zone”—the space of colonial encounters theorized by Mary Louis Pratt as one of domination and mediation. Dirlik adds that this was also an arena for exchange between “Westernized Chinese” and “Sinified Westerner” as early as the coming of Jesuit missionaries to China in the sixteenth century. Revising Edward Said’s theorization of Orientalism, Dirlik highlights the mediation of the contact zone where both Chinese and Westerners are distanced from their native societies, noting that such distancing facilitates the “metonymic cultural representations” central to Orientalism. He also reengages the permutations of Orientalism in light of its power to fuel cultural nationalisms, which goes along with global capitalist modernization, such as the revival of Confucianism in the past two decades.<sup>233</sup> While Dirlik’s revision of Said in light of the changes in the age of globalization is illuminating, my study of Legend Lin Dance Theatre engages the interactions between corporealities and discourses embedded in the contemporary hybridized condition of dance and cultural practices. In addition to bearing the traces of historical conceptions of the relational East versus West, the company’s choreography enables different meanings as dancing bodies engage with the forces of modernization, the residues of Orientalism, and representation of the nation “Taiwan” in international realms.

According to Taiwanese dance historian Chen Ya-Ping, “Eastern Body Aesthetics” is a kind of “counter-action” to the habitual “learning from the West” that dominated Taiwanese modern dance practice. She points out that Taiwanese dancers and choreographers had “long been dancing with the borrowed Western physical forms, making the choreographic practice remain at the level of movement assemblage and collage.” As a result, such practice “does not investigate the body’s kinesthetic sources for more organic formation of movements” and subjects Taiwanese modern dance to “following the patterns and trends set by the Western practice.”<sup>234</sup>

Besides the strong point about East-West/ethnic difference or identification, Chen’s remark about Taiwanese modern dance practice reveals something about the approach to dancing and choreography in Taiwan as problematic. What was becoming stagnant in modern dance practice in Taiwan, perhaps, was not only the issue of dancing with borrowed Western forms, but also a kind of laxity within the codification, coupled with choreographies that became trite. The choreographies began to simply recycle the assembling and collaging of codified movements without investigating the body’s kinesthetic sources for what Chen called “more organic formations.” My point is that dancing in Western form does not necessarily end up neglecting the body’s kinesthetic sources for organic formation of movements. The problem most likely happens when teachers and dancers become too accustomed to and comfortable with a superficial execution of codified movements. It also does not necessarily guarantee that

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<sup>233</sup> Arif Dirlik, “Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism,” in *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997), 105–128.

<sup>234</sup> Chen Ya-Ping, “First Investigation of Ten Year’s Development of the Eastern Body Aesthetics” (“Shinianlai dongfang shenti chutan 十年來東方身體初探”), *Performing Arts Review*, March 1997, 36.

practicing Eastern forms would yield to an investigation of the body's kinesthetic sources for more internally-generated movements. For example, the Eastern form widely adopted by Taiwanese artists exploring the "Eastern Body Aesthetics," *taiji daoyin*, does operate in a way we might call organic as one spiral of a joint triggers the chain of spirals of the rest of the joints along the body's physiological connection than certain modern or ballet codifications based on dictates of ideal shapes or bodily alignment; and the emphasis on breathing and channeling of *qi* in *taiji daoyin* does lead the person to become more sensitive to the body's internal kinesthetic sensations and workings. But if it is still approached in superficial ways, one can practice *taiji daoyin* with the same flaw pointed out by Chen: one that contributed, in part, to the onset of the quest for "Eastern Body Aesthetics."

That said, this problematic in the approach to dancing and choreography did intertwine with the artists' sense of self-identity in ethnic terms. The impulse of the "counter-action" to follow Western paradigms shares an affinity with some of the decolonizing discourses. One of the goals that "Eastern Body Aesthetics" aims to achieve is the establishment of the kind of "movement language" embedded in the "Eastern culture." This is not just at the level of the shape or appearance of the movement, or the sets and garments that frame it, but to the ways in which movements are generated and structured, that is, the "grammar" of the movement as it is informed by Eastern culture as different from the West. As a structured movement system, dance has patterns and qualities similar, if not analogous to, the grammar and syntax of a language.<sup>235</sup> This resonates with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's choice to write in Gikuyu language instead of in English, since "language carries culture, and culture carries [...] the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world [...]. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world."<sup>236</sup>

I would like to note that when Taiwanese dancers and choreographers talk about "Western dance" in relation to the "Eastern Body," it should not be simply taken as an essentialized understanding of a dance or body of the East or West. During the era of Japanese Occupation (1895–1945), Taiwanese dancers went to Japan and received Western modern dance trainings filtered through Japan that involved ballet, eurhythmics, and Japanese inflected European modern dance. More pertinent to the generation of dancers who turned to the exploration of "Eastern Body Aesthetics," after the 1960s Taiwanese modern dance practice saw an ascendant of American influence when a number of American modern dance groups toured Taiwan. Yet, the pursuit of the "Eastern Body Aesthetics" does not always operate by way of clean breaks from Western forms or knowledge systems. For example, Lin Lee-Chen still acknowledges her love of ballet, even though the dance company she is currently leading, Legend Lin Dance Theatre, is dedicated to exploring its distinct "Eastern Body Aesthetics."<sup>237</sup> Western anatomical knowledge of the body is important to the training of Legend Lin dancers, accompanied (without conflict) by other mind-body-philosophical approaches and Chinese medical knowledge of the body. Although the impulse toward "Eastern Body Aesthetics" echoes in part some of the decolonizing discourses (that importantly fueled later postcolonial criticisms),

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<sup>235</sup> Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull, "Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco," in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures*, ed. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 405.

<sup>236</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1981), 15–16.

<sup>237</sup> Field note, February 1, 2010.

there is another set of complexity and hybridity present in the actual practice of “Eastern Body Aesthetics” in Taiwan.

Tracing the methods by which these artists searched for and constructed their “Eastern Body Aesthetics,” we find that they bear a kind of total concern at once for body, mind, and philosophy. In different approaches and mixtures, they took inspiration from Japanese butoh, adopted trainings in *wushu*, incorporated practices of folk rituals, and explored the concept of *qi* in Chinese medicinal notion of the body along with methods of its cultivation, such as various *qigong* practices. These kinds of body-mind-philosophies also lend to the theme and tone of their works, reaching beyond the boundary of “art” to alter many of these artists’ approaches to life. In terms of theme, the artists explored, to different degrees and with differently overlapping emphases, the origin of life, the universe, the ritualistic or religious spirituality and the nature of the traditional Chinese concept of *qi* as well as bodily notions. In general, “Eastern Body Aesthetics” in its theatrical expressions communicates more about transcending the state of modernized, industrialized, urbanized way of living, expressing, in other words, a yearning for spiritual cleansing and inner peace. This tendency speaks to Taiwan’s condition of being at the peak of its modernization and development; at the same time, it was also perceived that many parts of the world shared this yearning for spirituality (often expressed as a return to nature).<sup>238</sup>

When Lin created *Mirror of Life* (Jiao 醮) in 1995, she consciously wanted to initiate a new movement “form.” *Mirror of Life* features slow, steady, gliding-walk in which dancers focus inward with softened and slightly bent upper body; they are extremely grounded and form a solid connection with the gravity when walking. This new movement “form” becomes the basis for all the choreography of Legend Lin. Lin indeed absorbs and builds on the kind of body knowledge and bodily training systems derived from the *dongfang* culture along with the philosophies or way of thinking embedded in them. Meditation is involved in the company training; a number of the male dancers come from Chinese martial arts background. In recent years, Lin Lee-Chen has incorporated the concept of *qi* and the meridians in Chinese medicine to investigate the body in relation to movement and to deepen the company’s training. Their works always end with the chanting of the *Heart Sutra*, the most well-known Buddhist scripture that is recognized as capturing the essence of all the sutras; it exudes the company’s strong orientation toward spiritual catharsis, devout self-cultivation, and sharing the wisdom and the effects of self-cultivation with others. If the exploration of the “Eastern Body Aesthetics” in Taiwan and its orientation toward the spiritual, the premodern, and the natural implies a reaction to the state of life amidst modernization, industrialization, and urbanization, then Lin Lee-Chen’s choreography penetrates

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<sup>238</sup> Dancer and choreographer Gu Ming-Shen 古明申 was also interviewed about the “Eastern character” (being humble, listening, practicing give-and-take and the emptying of oneself, etc.) in contact improvisation for the special topic of Eastern Body Aesthetics in *Performing Arts Review*. Gu attributes the trend of “going back to oneself” as a sentiment shared more widely throughout the world. She stated: “I think this stage of identification is one of a global awakening. And this awakening goes along with the yearning of going back to the nature, to a less polluted situation. This yearning is the biggest motivation of the world now. It is just that in Taiwan it is added another layer of nativist consciousness.” See Gu Ming-Shen, “Seeking a ‘Way Out’ Together?” (共謀「出路」?), interview by Chen Ya-Ping under “Special Topic: Eastern Body Aesthetics,” *Performing Arts Review*, March 1997, 51–53. Note that the New Age movement and the Japanese discourse of “healing” (*iyashi*) also emerged in the 1980s to 1990s; these echo Gu’s observation. See Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Also, Paul Roquet, “Ambient Literature and the Aesthetics of Calm: Mood Regulation in Contemporary Japanese Fiction,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 87–111.

these two poles. She had embraced ballet while her choreography helped perform the value and energy of modernizing development; she later turned to constructing a unique movement aesthetics, performing a body much informed by the Eastern culture imbued with anti-modernist tones. Such an aesthetic contrast appears very compatible with the spirit of “counter-action,” as if overturning all the past movement aesthetics to reconstruct something anew. However, as I note at the beginning of this chapter, between the contrasting expressions is an essential undercurrent of kinesthetics continuity.

### ***Huan* 緩 Versus *Man* 慢**

Speaking about the dance aesthetics of Legend Lin, Lin often notes that *huan* is not *man* 慢 (slowness). *Huan* has mind-body-philosophical dimensions as opposed to *man*/slowness, which refers more to physical slowness, the reduction of speed. Take the *huanxing* 緩行 (slow walk) prominent in Legend Lin’s works and training for example; the dancers perform it with the imagery and sensation that every step is sinking into soil or water. They seek to impart in each step a soft but also solid, steady feeling. During their practice, the dancers are also attentive to the kinesiological workings of the body, clarifying how every step is initiated from the pelvis, how the sole of the foot touches and gives weight into the ground inch by inch, and how the center of the body is constantly moving forward along with each step, as if drawing an invisible line in the air horizontal to the floor. Before delving into the multidimensionality of Legend Lin’s *huan*, let us take a look at a contemporary example of an artistic mediation of “slow dance” that will help illuminate the difference between *huan* and *man*. It may also illuminate the logical and kinesthetic gap in the case of *Movimentos* Festival, whose framing created an analogy between the automobile’s mechanical deceleration and Legend Lin’s somatic-philosophical *huan*.

#### *Slow Dancing* (2007)

In 2007, photographer David Michalek made a large-scale installation work, *Slow Dancing*.<sup>239</sup> He used a high-speed camera (1000 frames/sec) to shoot five seconds of dancing from each of the selected forty-three highly recognized dancers from around the world, each of whom practice various dance forms. He then slowed the images down to play each of the five-second sequences in the duration for eight to twelve minutes. These extremely slowed-down images of dance are projected onto gigantic screens placed on the facades of buildings or erected in the middle of plazas in different cities around the world as the installation goes on tour.<sup>240</sup> These images look as if they are still portraits in any single second, while in fact they are extremely slow moving images. As described on the project’s website, *Slow Dancing* seeks to “[catch] details that would normally escape the naked eye.”<sup>241</sup> Indeed, many people respond to and approach the installation in terms of an anatomical desire to see (and, in their minds dissect/analyze) the details of dance more clearly.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> David Michalek, *Slow Dancing*, available at [http://www.slowdancingfilms.com/about\\_en.php](http://www.slowdancingfilms.com/about_en.php) (accessed February 18, 2012).

<sup>240</sup> *Slow Dancing* was also exhibited in Taipei at the Zhongshan Hall Plaza from August 21 to September 3, 2009.

<sup>241</sup> David Michalek, “About,” in *Slow Dancing*.

<sup>242</sup> For example, Wendy Perron posted on *Dance Magazine*’s Web site: “Slow Dancing is a form of meditation. It makes you think about the fundamental nature of people moving. For instance, I noticed that with ballet and modern, you might see one part of the body holding steady while another part moves. Wendy Whelan in relevé is still except for her back leg coming in to join the front leg before she arches back. Desmond Richardson has a still torso as his

Although the extreme slowing down of movement represented in *Slow Dancing* allows people to see the processes and details of the dances more clearly, its uncanny presentation ends up being quite “unreal.” It is physically impossible to execute or sustain dance movements such as leaping or spinning in such a slow way. Moreover, the quality of ordinary movements also becomes significantly altered when being shown in extreme slow motion. As one reviewer describes, “In these videos, as hair or draperies float about them, the dancers’ limbs move with a serene inevitability drained of weight and effort.”<sup>243</sup> Choreographer William Forsythe was surprised by “how slow motion obscured chains of muscle coordination, instead emphasizing tiny shifts in position.” Choreographer Karole Armitage “saw her staccato movement smoothed and sanded by slow motion.”<sup>244</sup>



*Slow Dancing* at the Josie Robertson Plaza, Lincoln Center, New York City, July 12–29, 2007



*Slow Dancing* at the Zhongshan Hall Plaza, Taipei, Taiwan, August 21–September 3, 2009

For human beings to execute the movements in such a slow manner, muscular coordination, the body’s relationship with gravity, and the exertion of force required to sustain a move would be complex, and quite different from mechanical speeding up or slowing down. Such adjustments, moreover, would create different effects for each person. More can be said about *Slow Dancing*; we might consider it in relation to the documentary impulse involved in using mechanical reproductive technology to capture the ever-fleeting dance movements,<sup>245</sup> or in terms of its recuperation of an early strain of anthropological study that seeks to arrest cultural expressions across the world under one analytical principle—in this case that different forms of dance are placed within a singular representational format based on the manipulation of speed.<sup>246</sup> My first concern is to show the different quality of movement approached as *man*, or slowness in terms of physical reduction of speed, versus *huan* of Legend Lin.

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leg rotates in and out. But West African dancer Youssouf Koumbassa moves all parts of his body at once—a joyful twistfest.” See Wendy Perron, “Slow Dancing as Religious Experience,” *Dance Magazine Blogs*, July 27, 2007 (available at <http://www.dancemagazine.com/blogs/wendy/1825>).

<sup>243</sup> Robert Johnson, “A Chance To Watch Every Move They Make—Slow-Motion Camera Helps Demystify an Athletic Art,” *Star-Ledger*, July 6, 2007.

<sup>244</sup> Joy Goodwin, “Finding the Poetry in Slow Motion,” *New York Times*, July 8, 2007.

<sup>245</sup> André Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance,” in *Of the Presence of the Body*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 124–139.

<sup>246</sup> Susan Foster has discussed this legacy persistent in works from German musicologist Curt Sachs’s *World History of the Dance* (1937), to anthropologist Alan Lomax and his team’s project in the 1960s that implemented universal categories of measurement against which all dances can be analyzed, and to recent use of computer technology in extracting and comparing movement data such as the one led by Pegge Vissicaro and a team of computer scientists in the 2000s. See Susan Leigh Foster, “Worlding Dance: An Introduction,” in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan Leigh Foser (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–13.

## Huan 緩

The *huan* in Legend Lin encompasses conceptual and philosophical dimensions as well as corporeal and spiritual ones. Regarding the conceptual and philosophical parts, they involve the kinesthetic association retained in the Chinese word *huan*, the philosophies that come from Lin Lee-Chen's own daily life experiences, and the ritualistic tone blended in with the subject matter of Legend Lin's dance work. As to the corporeal aspect, it revolves around the essential qualities and processes developed from the training system of Legend Lin, crystallized in the six-character mantra *jing* 靜 (calming), *ding* 定 (settling), *song* 鬆 (relaxing), *chen* 沉 (grounding), *huan* 緩 (slowing down at ease), and *jing* 勁 (elastic force). Of course, in the choreographer's and dancers' experiences, these multiple dimensions are constantly interacting with one another and evolving over time.

As the Chinese word *huan* is circulated in Legend Lin's trainings and rehearsals, the kinesthetic meaning retained in this word is understood by the dancers as part of a Sinophonic milieu that becomes part of the discursive discipline affecting their movements. The Chinese word *huan* has the sense of a poised, at-ease attitude relative to the sense of hurried anxiousness; therefore its meaning, though relevant to slowness, goes beyond the level of physics to the psychological.<sup>247</sup> *Huan* can also describe the circumstance as relaxed rather than full of tension.<sup>248</sup> It has the sense of postponing things, but the connotation is more about not being rash and impatient than of being late.<sup>249</sup> *Huan*, in some usages, also describes looseness and softness, as in the looseness of one's belt and the softness of the earth.<sup>250</sup> Taken as a whole, *huan* encompasses unhurried, at-ease, relaxed, loose, and soft qualities. The dancers' Sinophone acculturation makes them understand *huan* and *man*/slowness differently, associating it with different kinesthetic meanings and feelings. The utterance of *huan* with its physical and mental associations thus goes into the shaping of Legend Lin's movement aesthetics. The spectrum of meanings that *huan* encompasses also corresponds to the qualities of Legend Lin's signature slow, steady walk.

Besides the semiotics of the word *huan* being part of the disciplinary discourse that affects the dancers' approach in cultivating their movements, Lin has her own interpretation of *huan* that stems from her daily life experiences, which also informs the philosophical basis of Legend Lin's *huan* aesthetics. Lin's interpretation of *huan* is also connected to another of her interests and areas of expertise—sewing, fabrics, and costume design. She has done costume design for many other performing arts troupes, and she conceives all the visual designs for Legend Lin's works.<sup>251</sup> When Lin Lee-Chen talked about her idea of *huan*, these experiences also informed her interpretation. She mentioned that the character of *huan* 緩, with its radical 糸 *si* (“silk”) composing its left part, evokes associations of threads and fabrics. To her, the shape of the writing 糸 looks like spiraling threads, the making of a thicker thread by spiraling together

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<sup>247</sup> Lee Xingjian, ed., *Modern Chinese Language Standard Dictionary (Xiandai Hanyu guifan zidian 現代漢語規範字典)*, rev. ed. (Beijing: Language and Culture Press, 2004), s.v. “*huan*” (緩).

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Xia Zhengyi and Chen Zhili, eds., *Phrase Sea (辭海)*, vol. 2 (辭海) (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2009), s.v. “*huan*” (緩).

<sup>251</sup> While Tim Yip is listed as costume designer for Legend Lin's works, much of the visual design concept (including make-up and costume) came from Lin Lee-Chen.

two thinner ones. As she explained the concept, her finger also drew out the spiraling pathway in the air—that internal to the straight line of a thread, its composition entails spiraling, which creates a more complex experience of spatial dimensions in motion.<sup>252</sup> In another occasion when Lin also interpreted *huan*, she drew her hand into a fist and started rolling it against the table surface. She explained that *huan* is like a ball slowly rolling over a plane, every point of its surface making contact.

This gesture vividly performs the touching-through of every single detail via circular, spherical motion, recalling the duets in Legend Lin’s works. For example, in the section of “Spring Shoots” (“*Chun ya* 春芽”) in *Anthem to the Fading Flowers*, a man and a woman slowly walk from two sides of the stage and meet at the center point. Their abdomens and chests touch, and they slowly rotate with this point of contact as the axis of the rotation, as the two bodies soften and press to each other as if they are almost melding into one, until, eventually, at the end of the rotation, they part, backing off to the reverse side of one another’s original entrance. The point of touch that supports the two bodies’ rotation is just like two balls touching and rolling together. As I will elaborate further, this physical spiraling is integral to a kinesthetic philosophy of temporality that threads through Legend Lin’s holistic training system and stage works.



“Spring Shoot” in *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (2000), performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre.  
Photo by Chen Nian-Chou.

### **Continuity and Cycle from Training to Performance**

Legend Lin’s internal training is intimately connected to its performance repertoire (see also chapter 2). The six-word mantra “*jing, ding, song, chen, huan, jing*” captures the order of exercises in Legend Lin’s basic training, from which all of its dances move through these multi-layered qualities. These qualities and concepts were systematized over years of the company’s

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<sup>252</sup> Field note, August 17, 2010.

aesthetic explorations before they were named and written down.<sup>253</sup> The mantra also delineates a cycle: after reaching the kind of explosive energy and speed with *jing* 勁 (elastic force), one needs to go back to being *jing* 靜 (calming) to rest and re-center oneself. *Huan* is essential in this training system in that it is the transition from the more quiet state to the forceful state. To attain *huan*, one has to go through the accumulative process of “calming,” “settling,” “relaxing,” and “grounding.” Therefore, *huan* also entails the four qualities that precede it, intertwined with the other philosophical dimensions of *huan* discussed earlier.

Legend Lin’s training always starts with meditation in order to let the dancers quiet down physically and mentally. It is a way for the dancers to leave the hustle and bustle of the city behind, while opening up their bodily sensitivities, “to stave off running thoughts in order to *peer internally* (*neiguan* 內觀),” as dancer Cheng Chie-Wen puts it. This characterizes how the concept of Buddhist meditation in Chinese terms informs the dancers’ approach to Legend Lin’s training, which emphasizes the deep layers of muscles working in tandem with breathing.<sup>254</sup> After attaining “calmness” and being “settled,” the dancers go on to find “relaxation.” *Song* 鬆 as relaxing in Legend Lin’s training does not mean letting the body collapse, but a loosening of the surface of the body’s muscles while maintaining a strong center of support, as if there is a tree inside one’s core from which the body hangs. *Song* also releases physical and mental space in order to expand the body’s sensitivity in internally feeling the deeper and subtler working of the muscles. The meditation is usually followed by quiet-walk (*jingzou* 靜走), a foundation for the slow, steady walk (*huanxing* 緩行) in performance. Here, *chen* 沉 (grounding) also figures in. *Chen* is about grounding one’s body to form a solid connection to gravity. The quality of the movement, with *song* and *chen* involved, is weighted, rooted to the ground without being heavy or cumbersome, and the dancer exudes a calm, steady, un-agitated disposition.

Building on calming, settling, relaxing, grounding and being “slow at ease,” Legend Lin’s dancers work toward *jing* 勁 (elastic force). To exert *jing* and perform explosive, forceful movements, the dancers have to be able to be *huan* first, to quiet down and be centered, before finding the space and possibility of *jing* from the at once relaxed and strong body. Relative to quiet-walk, Legend Lin’s training also includes forceful-walk (*jingzou* 勁走) in which dancers walk, speed up, and run at a very fast speed across the studio. The forceful-walk then ends by returning to quiet-walk and rest. *Huan* also relates to *jing* in that the exertion of force is also internal to *huan*. Still elaborating on the radical 糸 of the character *huan* 緩, Lin interprets that the spiral evoked by the shape of 糸 also illustrates the way force is formed and exerted—it is continually in spiraling motion. As such, *huan* also carries an internal *jing* 勁, which further differentiates itself from the concept of *man* 慢 as physical reduction of speed.

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<sup>253</sup> They first appeared in the program of the 2006 revival of *Jiao*: “Legend Lin Dance Theatre’s Body Aesthetics/View” (“Wugou shenti guan 無垢身體觀”), *Jiao* (*Miroirs de Vie*) 2006 Program Book (Taipei: Legend Lin Dance Theatre, 2006).

<sup>254</sup> Cheng Chieh-Wen 鄭傑文, “Delving into the Body: A General Account of Legend Lin Dance Theatre’s Bodily Training” (究竟肉身：略說無垢舞蹈劇場訓練), in *Song of Pensive Beholding* (十年一《觀》：悲敏自然的身體史詩) (Taipei: National Chiang Kai-Shek Cultural Center, 2010), 84–99. *Neiguan* 內觀 (literally, “peer internally”) is the Chinese translation of Buddhist meditation method *vipassana*, meaning to see things as they really are. We can sense how the Buddhist concept translated into Chinese term informs Eastern Body Aesthetics practitioners’ engagement with the body—from its physical weight, placement and alignment of the pelvis, spine, and circulation of the breathing, to “settling the mind into a peaceful balance” (Cheng, “Delving into the Body,” 88).



### Continuity and Cycle within Spirals of Historical Course

The training of Legend Lin shows that these seemingly opposing qualities, the *jing* of calmness and the *jing* of elastic force, are related in terms of continuity, forming a cyclical rather than binary connection. This logic of continuity and interconnection also informs the choreography of *Anthem to the Fading Flowers*. Whereas *Mirror of Life*, the first work of Legend Lin, creates a movement form that can function to carry the community's memory based on indigenous ritual and view of life and death, the second work, *Anthem to the Fading Flowers* seems to extend and deepen the theorization of this movement aesthetics by marrying the kind of continuity and cycles embedded in the training with the cycle of the four seasons informed by Daoist view of human's connection with the universe.

Premiering in 2000, the four seasons that function as the structure of *Anthem to the Fading Flowers* also frame the interpretation of budding of love ("Spring Shoots" "Chun ya 春芽"), erotic desire and power struggle ("Summer Shades" "Xia ying 夏影"), the passage of time ("Autumn Weakening" "Qiu zhe 秋折"), and the internal challenge imposed by oneself ("Winter Withering" "Dong ku 冬枯"). The section of "Spring Shoots" is *huan*, where two dancers slowly meet in center stage and part at the end. "Summer Shades" is full of explosive and even violent energies—a fierce, erotic duet between Summer God and Goddess is followed by the violence of Summer Shades toppling the Summer God. "Autumn Weakening" goes back to the quality of *huan*—the Water Spirits row a boat for the Autumn Spirit, who slowly transforms from a young girl to an old woman as the watery scene changes bit by bit. "Winter Withering" begins with one man practicing the skill of bamboo-sword by himself, until he is exhausted to death, falling amidst the heavy snow. The cycle of four seasons suggests that even though the man exhausts himself in the pursuit of art, another cycle will begin, that after winter, spring will come back again to breed new lives.

From the micro-physics of spiraling that connects reinterpretation upon the Chinese character of *huan* 緩, to the training system in which degrees of spiraling force expand and release in a continual cycle, and to an evening-length dance work that communicates a macrocosmic view of life unfolding along the cycle of the natural world, Lin has been slowly crystalizing a kinesthetic philosophy of history, one that we might consider a radical alteration of developmentalist temporality in acts of reversal that re-envision the historical course as one of spirals. Walter Benjamin cites a passage from Hermann Lotze in *The Arcades Project* that critiques the concept of progress by pondering spirals:

In opposition to the readily accepted doctrine that the progress of humanity is ever onward and upward, more cautious reflection has been forced to make the discovery that the course of history takes the form of spirals—some prefer to say epicycloids. In short, there has never been a dearth of thoughtful but veiled acknowledgment that the impression produced by history on the whole, far from being one of unalloyed exultation, is preponderantly melancholy. Unprejudiced consideration will always lament and wonder to see how many advantages of civilization and special charms of life are lost, never to reappear in their integrity.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Hermann Lotze, *Mikrokosmos* (Leipzig, 1864), vol. 3, p. 21, cited in Walter Benjamin and Rolf Tiedemann, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 478.

To interpret the course of history as formed by spirals is to recognize that the passage of time involves reappearance as opposed to a continual forward and upward movement that never looks back, never falls back. Spirals trace reappearance in a way that acknowledges the lost and is fused with preponderant melancholy. It is this fall and recovery, gain and loss within the spirals that Lotze applies to his study of the course of history. The lamentation for that which is lost in the inevitable course of history and life especially resonates with the moment of “Autumn Weakening” in *Anthem for Fading Flowers*. In this regard, we might also recall this piece’s difference from the dance in the film *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* discussed in the previous chapter, especially during the first singing of “The Same Moonlight” that well embodies a kinesthetics of acceleration, expansion, and orientation toward the future, and how at the end of the film acts of lamentation are accompanied with swirls of the upper body and a hand wave—a kind of spiral. By the time Lin formed Legend Lin Dance Theatre and started creating *Anthem*, an intricate and deep physical spiraling had come to feature prominently in the choreography and continued to be cultivated afterward. More compellingly, as the principal dancers Tsai Bi-Chu 蔡必珠 and Wu Ming-Ching 吳明璟 expressed to me, when dancing “Spring Shoots,” which essentially revolves around a spiraling rotation, they actually had to think of maintaining a *straight line*.<sup>256</sup> This is akin to Lin’s idea of *huan* as spiraling threads that form and adhere to one central line. The dancing also enacts a kinesthetic contemplation of progression as sustained spiraling than a one-dimensional forward movement.

Having a line within the spiraling that sustains its continuous cycling and renewal is perhaps where Legend Lin’s work departs slightly from the melancholic recognition of loss in response to the doctrine of progress in the passage of Lotze’s. Linking the contemplation of life with the four seasons in *Anthem* reflects an underlying Daoist thinking that relates the microcosm of the human to the macrocosm of the universe. The cycling as renewal is embedded in the way Legend Lin’s system of training approaches the use of physical energy that is then integrated with the philosophy its work articulates. After “winter” and all that is inevitably “withering” will be another spring, and the whole cycle repeats and renews, within which there is growth and desire, as well as moments of weakening and reflection of time passed. Rather than a linear retreat into the past, Legend Lin’s reversal of developmentalist temporality elaborates upon specific forms of spiraling.



“Summer Shades” in *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (2000). Photo by Lee Da-Ming



“Autumn Weakening” in *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (2000). Photo by Lee Ming-Hsun

<sup>256</sup> Tsai Bi-Chu, interview by author, August 26, 2010; Wu Ming-Ching, interview by author, August 18, 2010.



“Winter Withering” in *Anthem for Fading Flowers* (2000). Photo by Lee Ming-Hsun

### Dancing as Embodiment of Ritual and Memory

Besides the multidimensional kinesthetic and philosophical qualities of *huan*, the *huan* aesthetics, whose creation is intimately tied to Lin’s 1995 epic ritualistic work *Mirror of Life*, is also a vector of performing ritual in ways that seek to evoke the community’s memory. The Chinese title *Jiao* 醮 means Daoist ritual. *Mirror of Life* is based on Lin’s interpretation of the local historical memories related to the ritual of Zhongyuan pudu (the Ghost Festival), a tribute to and pacification of the souls of the dead in the Ghost Month of the lunar calendar in the mixed Daoist-Buddhist tradition. It is very important within the majority of ethnic Han Taiwanese indigenous religiosity and way of life, but most elaborately in Lin’s hometown Keelung, located in the northeastern coast of Taiwan. Not only does Lin Lee-Chen quote elements of the ghost festival ritual on stage, her choreography also takes on a ritualistic quality in that even though the later works of Legend Lin do not directly reference a certain religious ritual in practice, ritualism nevertheless saturates those works. Along with the theme of *Mirror of Life*, the *huan* aesthetics also takes on a ritualistic quality.

As mentioned earlier, *Mirror of Life* features a slow, steady, gliding walk. The dancer is focused inward, with a softened and slightly bent upper body that is extremely grounded. Commenting on this walk in *Mirror of Life* upon its premier in 1995, critic Wang Mo-Lin regards it as a pioneering creation of a movement “form” (*xingshi* 形式) that is far ahead of the Taiwanese dance circles and also deems it as a vehicle for cultural memory:

In *Jiao*, Lin Lee-Chen strips away all the elements of dance until only a lonely piece of body remains; its posture is “standing,” and its movement is “walking.” What Lin Lee-Chen is searching for is to return the body to its starting point, and then slowly tease out the cultural memory between “standing” and “walking,” which cannot be understood in terms of an “ethnic dance” (*minsu wudao* 民俗舞蹈).<sup>257</sup>

In addition to praising Lin’s choreography as a prime example of “Eastern Body Aesthetics,” Wang is trying to theorize the creation of a “form” that could “exert direct influence (給予直接

<sup>257</sup> Wang Mo-Lin, “The Archetype of Body and Space: An Attempt To Theorize the Form of Lin Lee-Chen’s *Jiao*” (身體與空間的原型—試論林麗珍的《醮》之形式), *Jiao (Miroirs de Vie) 2006 Program Book*. Wang’s article was originally published in *Taiwan Dance Magazine*, July 1995, after *Jiao*’s premier in 1995.

的影響) on the dancers and the audiences,” as opposed to transplanting existing repertoire of certain rituals onto stage, even “adjusting them according to the aesthetics of modern theater.” The latter would create a “separation between the religious and the ritualistic dance” and become “a secularized exhibition” (世俗化的展示). His differentiation of the “form” that Lin created in *Mirror of Life* and the “ethnic dance” that often becomes an aestheticized marker of ethnic identity also bears a similar concern. Along Wang’s line of thinking, the “direct influence” that Lin’s creation of a new “form” can exert would “make dance transmit the mystic dimension of one’s inner universe,” functioning much as actual ritualistic dance does, as “a medium between the religion and the incantations.”<sup>258</sup> Although *Mirror of Life* quotes elements of the ritual of the Ghost Festival, such as the image of Mazu 媽祖 (the female deity that protects seafarers); the shamans (*jitong* 乩童) that hold incense, caught in a state of trance; and the custom of burning the water lantern; the dance movement is not taken from any practice in the actual ritual of the Ghost Festival, such as the motif of this *huanxing* (緩行 the slow walk) that Wang writes about. In fact, these kinds of Taiwanese folk ritual performances are usually clamorous and action packed. Lin transformed the ritual via *huan* in search of a more profound experience, and in this way also constructed her own ritual.

Fellow performing artist Chen Wei-Cheng 陳偉誠, who is invested in the relationship between ritual, memory, and performance, discusses further the ritualism that saturates the movement which becomes a way of conjuring and passing on the community’s memories. Chen attended Jerzy Grotowski’s Objective Drama workshop at UC Irvine in 1986 and has helped with the training of Lin Lee-Chen’s dancers. He associated his own experience working with Grotowski with the ritualistic performance of *Mirror of Life* as a “rumination of collective memory.”<sup>259</sup> Reflecting on the experience of being asked by Grotowski to repeatedly run in a circle (a movement that he took from his training at the Peking Opera) until extreme exhaustion, he ponders the corporeal action that triggers his own sense of connection with an ancient memory:

When you are able to trace the impulse of your body back to the origin of an action, you form a connection with a certain ancient memory in your body. Then the actor is not you, nor some ancestor, but the fully experienced present of you in the action and its process of tracing the ancestor.[...] You gain catharsis in this process. To me, this already composes the most basic element of ritual.<sup>260</sup>

He goes on to identify *Jiao* as such a “ritual” of the “rumination of collective memory,” involving all the participants, including the dancers, choreographer, crews, and audience, coming to terms with the theme of the Ghost Festival:

[They] not only experience in the process the dialogue between the individual and their inner world, but also a close connection with their ancestors through their own cultural history and the history of the whole community’s life. Once the dialogue is formed, the feeling of being spiritually moved connects all the lives when ritual performs its meaning and power at that moment.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Chen Wei-Cheng, “Ritual Is the Rumination of Collective Memory” (儀式是集體記憶的反芻), *Jiao (Miroirs de Vie) 2006 Program Book*.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

Chen resorts to drawing from his own experience and training in his efforts to conjure the relationship between corporeal action and “collective memory.” Although it is hard to pinpoint an individual’s perception of their own sense of “ancient memory,” at least we are certain that these artists and critics are invested in exploring the relationship between ritual and memory. From an academic perspective, Stephan Feuchtwang notes that “societies don’t remember, but there are institutions for the transmission of knowledge. Ritual is one and it works by means of repetition.”<sup>262</sup> When ritual is repeated, its memory is reinforced; its prescriptive nature “leaves room for a number of possible exegeses” and “is one means of linking memories and providing occasions for sharing them.”<sup>263</sup> Moreover, “[ritual] is recalled in other situations, adding to one’s knowledge of what happened and to what it has by now referred in its own and subsequent contexts.”<sup>264</sup> The invocation of the Ghost Festival and the use of its ritual elements in *Mirror of Life* re-creates the occasion in the theater for the Taiwanese audiences whose memories associated with the Ghost Festival interact with Lin’s interpretation of that memory.

Crucial in the Han Chinese culture, which fuses Buddhism and Daoist beliefs, the Ghost Festival is reflective of the people’s approach to life and death. The Ghost Festival takes place in July of the lunar calendar when the popular superstition believes that the gate to hell is opened and the souls of the dead would wander among the living. The purpose of the Ghost Festival is to take care of the “homeless” ghosts who are not properly mourned and memorialized by their descendants, since their deaths are often homicides or took place in faraway regions, or that in life they were in a homeless or family-less state. To many Taiwanese people, the Ghost Festival carries other meanings. It evokes the historical memory of Taiwanese ancestors who came over the sea from Minnan 閩南, a part of southeastern China, and who died en route or due to conflicts between fellow migrant communities, most famously the people coming from different parts of Minnan, the Zhangzhou 漳州 and Quanzhou 泉州 groups.

In *Mirror of Life*, we see representations of Mazu, the female deity that protects fishermen and sailors and that is very important to many Taiwanese people, and the brutal weapon-fights between Zhangzhou and Quanzhou groups that happened in history. The slow and steady walk of *Mirror of Life* is meant to portray ghosts; it is slow, steady, and gliding, pressing into the ground. The female dancers paint their feet in black while the rest of their bodies are in white to represent their ghostly state. The slow, steady, “ghostly” walk that the dancers perform (a new movement “form”) becomes a communication between the past and the present, the human and the ghost. The dancers are transformed in this process of corporeally interpreting the ghosts. In the context of *Mirror of Life*, the walk performs a corporeal catalyst for the beliefs and memories that are important to many Taiwanese people. The same kind of slow, steady walk also permeates in Legend Lin’s other works, and although it does not function the same way as in *Mirror of Life*, it bears the same kind of ritualistic tone in its careful, reverent execution—the walk has itself become a ritual.

In anthropological understanding, ritual is construed as an institution that maintains through corporeal repetition of prescribed actions removed from everyday life in a more compelling way. It expresses power and negotiates authority for expectations of effects beyond

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<sup>262</sup> Stephan Feuchtwang, “Ritual and Memory,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 285.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 285–286

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

the normal.<sup>265</sup> In Legend Lin's works, many movements are not choreographed to show the spectacle of moving; rather, they are more like acts enacted according to a prescribed rule. For example, in *Song of Pensive Beholding* (2009), a dancer walks slowly at a very low level from the end of upstage all the way toward the edge of the downstage, placing one pebble on the ground in each step until sixty of them in total are placed, forming a straight line that traces her pathway. When dancers carry such (seemingly arbitrary) acts, they invariably perform with an unquestioning reverence, and because everything is slowly executed, the atmosphere bears a careful solemnity. The ritualistic quality is reinforced with the chanting of *Heart Sutra* at the end of all three pieces of Legend Lin, as Lin truly envisions its dance theater performance as a kind of ritual that eventually cleanses and brings blessings to all the participants—performers and audiences alike.



*Song of Pensive Beholding* (2009). Photo by Chin Cheng-Tsai

In Chen Wei-Cheng's view, ritual is not just about "form" and the corporeal process of its enactment, but involves energies that come from a deep, intense, and spiritual place:

The meticulous rules and the forms created have no direct relationship to whether an act counts as ritual. *Sincerity* is that which is fundamental to it. Imagine those slowly passing bodies or the explosion of energies [in *Jiao*] enacted without spiritual purity or the will to give all out. How can the actors/dancers create and sustain the impulse and the flow of energies [that way]? The energies should interact with each other in the moment, directed with absolute purity and wholesome sincerity. When energies flow this way, even a tiny lack of care would alter the spiritual connections and the state of the collective ritual, thus breaking the flow.<sup>266</sup>

Legend Lin dancers are indeed working toward this ideal in all three works. The unhurried, at-ease, relaxed, loose, and soft qualities of *huan* also bear ritualism with a sense of care, reverence, and sincerity, resulting in a unique in-betweenness of being simultaneously at ease and carefully reverent. It corresponds with Lin's characterization of a certain way of force-exertion using the

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Chen, "Ritual Is the Ruminant of Collective Memory."

metaphor of holding a fly between one's fingers but not pinching it to death, an in-between of tightness and looseness.<sup>267</sup> With such in-betweenness, even the duets of Legend Lin that portray budding romance and love exchanges take on a sacred quality with their slowly unfolding movements. This kind of in-between adds another layer of complexity to Legend Lin's aesthetics. Such internal complexity, vital to the engagement of history by embodying ritual and the memory contained within it for the community, is a profound response to developmental pursuits that have permeated Taiwanese society. It is also central to fashioning an aesthetics of the "Eastern Body" that departs from making spectacles out of movement, moving toward cultivation of a kinesthetic as philosophy. The resistive attempt at altering the temporality of capitalist development, however, yields a more complicated picture when we consider the economy of Legend Lin's performance, especially within the network of international festivals.

### **Economy of Mobility**

The growth of Legend Lin has to do in part with its recognition by major international festivals. The invitations to perform at the Avignon Festival in 1998 and the Lyon Dance Biennial in 2000, among others, made Legend Lin a quite well-known group among the "Eastern Body Aesthetics" explorations in Taiwan. I have discussed the complexity of its dance aesthetics, which exemplifies a unique refinement in art making. However, the attendance of international dance festivals also illuminates how, in addition to aesthetic explorations, dance as a cultural industry in capitalist society needs to negotiate forces beyond the aesthetics, such as the symbolic and material capital gained from participation in international festivals (which are enmeshed with national interests). Because of Taiwan's domestic funding structure, the kind of interest expressed by international dance festivals, and the need for international representation and visibility on Taiwan's part due to its diplomatic situation, has led "Eastern Body Aesthetics" (and its postcolonial impulse to question the terms of "modern dance") to be penetrated and even reshaped by many different forces. Legend Lin is a compelling case in point that can highlight the complexity of this larger phenomenon.

Performing arts groups in Taiwan rely most heavily on government funding with a mixture of different portions of private and corporate donations, funding, or advertisements. Out of diplomatic interest, the Taiwanese government also supports or actively promotes Taiwanese performing artists to attend international festivals or appear in venues abroad. Taiwan's diplomatic situation has been difficult since the 1970s, when it lost its diplomatic relationship with the U.S. and subsequently departed from the UN, thereby losing many more diplomatic allies. Its unresolved status regarding whether or not it is recognized as a legitimate "nation," along with its tense relationship with China, added even more difficulty. Many of Taiwan's diplomatic relationships are maintained by giving generous financial aid to foreign countries. Since the middle of the 1980s, the economic reform of China and its market attraction began to influence the choice of Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies, and the Taiwanese government began to think about using culture as a diplomatic strategy, as cultural matters can be "less politically sensitive," while holding or facilitating performances can be occasions for enhancing transnational exchanges.<sup>268</sup> The Taiwanese government launched programs to nurture and support performing arts groups who make international performances and projects that create

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<sup>267</sup> Field note, September 14, 2009.

<sup>268</sup> Wang Ling-Li 王凌莉, "Taiwan's Diplomacy, Pass Out a 'Culture' Name Card!" (臺灣外交, 遞張「文化」名片吧!), *Performing Arts Review*, September 1997, 54–61.

international cultural exchanges.<sup>269</sup> The Avignon festival in 1998 and the Lyon Dance Festival Biennale in 2000, both of which Legend Lin attended along with other groups that prominently feature the “Eastern Body Aesthetics,” are two important festivals that began to see Taiwan’s more proactive move in enacting cultural diplomacy.

The Avignon Festival in 1998 was a milestone of Taiwanese performing arts groups’ presence on the international stage. It also represents the first fruition of the Taiwanese government’s change of strategy in promoting performing arts to the international from more passive support to active marketing. The “support” offered by the Taiwanese government in the past usually involved the recommendation of a few performing arts groups when international festivals approached the government, while leaving the negotiations to the groups themselves. Since the middle of the 1990s, the strategy has gradually shifted to actively inviting foreign representatives and special guests as a way to promote Taiwanese performing arts groups, until the endeavors gradually led to the high visibility of Taiwanese groups in the 1998 Avignon Festival. For that year’s Avignon festival, the artistic director Bernard Faivre d’Arcier came to Taiwan in May 1997 to see a number of performing arts groups recommended by Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs. The invitations were made at the end of November that year and the festival embarked on assisting the groups to prepare for their performance at the end of July 1998 in the festival’s special program “Desires of Asia” (*Désirs d’Asie*). Eight Taiwanese performing arts groups were chosen, of which six are focused on traditional performing arts and two practice contemporary performance in the vein of “Eastern Body Aesthetics.” These groups include a traditional Peking Opera troupe, two hand-puppet troupes, one shadow-puppet troupe, Contemporary Legend Theater (當代傳奇劇場) with its Peking Opera interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Hantang Yuefu 漢唐樂府 with its neoclassical Pear Orchard Theater style,<sup>270</sup> U-Theater (優劇場) and its drumming performance, and Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Besides Taiwanese troupes, the program of “Desires of Asia” also invited Japanese, Korean, and Tibetan artists or troupes to present works or collaborate with Western artists.

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid. Since 1991, the National Council for Cultural Affairs (currently Ministry of Culture) has promoted international cultural exchanges through the Taipei Culture Center in New York (formed in 1991), Cultural Center of Taiwan in Paris (formed in 1994), and Taipei Culture Center in Tokyo (formed in 2008). In 1992, the National Council for Cultural Affairs inaugurated a special sponsoring program for nurturing performance groups aimed at international touring, which lasted until 1997. From 1995 to 1997, more companies with an Eastern Body Aesthetics inclination won grants than others; see Chen, “Dance History and Cultural Politics,” 308–309. In 1998, the policy changed to orient toward developing sustainability of the troupes and away from international touring. Since 2003, the funding category for international touring has been available again, and in 2004 the program for nurturing performance groups doing international touring was reinstated. In 2009, funding for performing arts troupes was divided into different levels (excellent, developing, and nurturing); the excellent level requires the applicant to have at least one international festival invitation or performance at an important international venue per year for the past three years and in the year of applying. As such, the funding concerns reflect the importance the government places in encouraging arts to make international presentations; see Wen Hui-Wen 溫慧玟, “Research on Management Constitution of Arts Groups: An Analysis Based on Taiwanese Performing Arts Groups” (藝文團體經營體質研究案—以台灣表演藝術團體為面向分析), project consigned by the National Culture and Arts Foundation, September 2009. The current policy was revised in 2012; see Ministry of Culture on funding performing arts troupes by levels <http://www.moc.gov.tw/law.do?method=find&id=216> (accessed May 15, 2013).

<sup>270</sup> *Nankuan* 南管 is a kind of musical style from southeastern China, featuring elegant singing along with wind, string, and percussive instruments, and that accompanies the Pear Orchard Theater (Liyuanxi 梨園戲), a branch of southern Chinese music theater (*xiqu* 戲曲) popular between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.



The name of the program “Desires of Asia” perhaps sought to create intertextuality with the title of Contemporary Legend Theatre’s Peking Opera adaptation of *Macbeth*, titled *The Kingdom of Desires* (*Yuwang chengguo* 慾望城國). However, the naming also quite explicitly admits and assumes the continuation of Orientalist desire and the power embedded in the ability to assert such a desires. Taiwanese performing arts circles were highly aware of the problematic nature of this power relationship and the principles that guided the choice of troupes and performances (all of which conveniently matched a certain Western imagination of the East). It was surprising for many Taiwanese artists that the Avignon Festival, which usually favors contemporary works, should choose mostly traditional performing arts troupes. The festival’s artistic director Bernard Faivre d’Arcier explained that the choices he made corresponded to the festival’s theme and were very “Eastern” to the local audience of Avignon. The critics of *Performing Arts Review* then offered their view in response: “Eastern is often a vague impression. To many Westerners, they often cannot tell the difference between Japan and China, not to mention the sameness and differences between the performing arts of Taiwan and mainland China. In the end, anything that has a traditional flavor (*tuwei* 土味, “earthy flavor”) can represent the East.”<sup>271</sup>

For the invited troupes, production costs soon became an issue. Since all the performances invited were existing works in the troupes’ repertoire, Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs (currently Ministry of Culture) only funded 40% of the production costs. The payment from the festival did not contribute much to covering these costs. In fact, almost all the troupes rearranged their work to adjust to the venues assigned by the festival—an amount of labor that is not that different from that required to make new productions. Yet, all the troupes were striving to make ends meet for the country’s diplomatic mission and for their own international exposure and the symbolic capital that would come along. The attraction sparked by the West’s “Desires of Asia” and the promotion of Taiwan’s need for cultural diplomacy reinforced each other, while the exploration of “Eastern Body Aesthetics” in Taiwan was also gaining momentum by then (both U-Theater and Legend Lin are representative troupes and international festival favorites). Moreover, to Taiwanese artists, the field of competition still lay in the international West. These forces became the arena “Eastern Body Aesthetics” was negotiating.

The Lyon Dance Biennial in 2000, themed “The Silk Roads” (*Les Routes de la Soie*), closely followed the 1998 Avignon Festival, and also invited a number of representative troupes to explore “Eastern Body Aesthetics.” They include Cloud Gate Dance Theater, Hantang Yuefu, Legend Lin Dance Theatre, U-Theater, and National Taiwan Junior College of Performing Arts circus troupe. The trend of “Eastern Body Aesthetics” caught even more attention because of these international festival invitations. The troupes being (repeatedly) invited were now framed alternately as the continuation of Orientalist desire and providing cultural tourism in the globalizing context. The Lyon Dance Biennial had been curating programs according to geographical areas since 1990, from the United States to Spain, Africa, Brazil, and the Mediterranean, then on to Asia and the Silk Roads in 2000. Under the curatorial theme, the dance troupes largely came from East Asia and India, from countries deeply influenced by Buddhism and other Asian religions. As such, the festival was immersed in the atmosphere of religious

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<sup>271</sup> Wang, “Taiwan’s Diplomacy, Pass Out a ‘Culture’ Name Card!” 57–58. The characters *tuwei* 土味 literally mean “earth” or “flavor,” while *tu* has the connotations of traditional, indigenous, and, sometimes, backward—under modernist ideology of progress and civilization.

spirituality, with works such as Cloud Gate's *Songs of Wanderers*, Legend Lin's *Anthem for Fading Flowers*, U-Theater's *The Sound of Ocean*, and Korean shaman dance-based choreography.<sup>272</sup> Dance scholar Lin Ya-Ting observed that the government's supportive policies and advertisements played a crucial role in making the Taiwanese troupes stand out in this festival, where national competitions are fierce and there is a need to highlight cultural features.<sup>273</sup> In fact, the use of culture as a strategy with which to advance the nation's diplomatic agenda in the international arena is not limited to Taiwan. Many Western countries deploy similar strategies, carrying out various implicit or explicit political aims. However, the "Eastern Body Aesthetics" phenomenon in Taiwan, entangled in the context of various national and international interests, generated unique transnational performances that were often imbued with multiple contradictions. As a case in point engaged in this chapter, Legend Lin's distinct kinesthetics of *huan* is often coopted by renewed Orientalist desires when performed in international festivals based in the West, or, as in *Movimentos* Festival, reframed into "slowness." likened to the deceleration of automobiles in the corporation's vision of mapping world dance along the movement logic of its own product. When placed at the slow end in relation to other companies from different parts of the world, Legend Lin's aesthetics risks being simplified and reified as a desirable, *unchanging*, beautiful premodern East Asia serving as a pleasant antidote to modernity's pursuit of progress, and yet this pursuit is fundamentally kept intact; the *Movimentos* Festival maintains the acceleration end as it also includes/absorbs deceleration.

With the increasing consideration of international audience reception, artists began to avoid making their works too culturally specific. The tendency toward abstraction in Cloud Gate's *Cursive* series that I discussed in an earlier chapter perhaps corresponds in part to this consideration, while its abstraction also ties in with the desire to go beyond manifestations, along the lines of high Chinese aesthetics. We also see a tendency in the three works of Legend Lin toward abstracting cultural and geographic specificity, from *Mirror of Life*'s close tie with the ritual of, and the historical memory related to, the Ghost Festival, to the framework of the four seasons without spatial and temporal specificity in *Anthem for Fading Flowers*, to *Song of Pensive Beholding*, in which many of the costumes from ethnic groups of Southern China are rearranged to evoke a spatial and temporal environment still belonging to the unspecific and the mythical. However, the ritualistic performance of Legend Lin adds another layer of complexity to such abstractions. As ritual bears memory in the historical temporality of myth, it unfolds in qualities of eternity and universality that is removed from a specific historical space and time. As Feuchtwang notes, the ritualistic memory as it pertains to the historical temporality of past and present, is close to "a saga or a myth, the past as a before that explains or directs or makes sense of the present and its eternal or universal truth." As such, "the temporality of ritual is of an eternity. Its tense is of something that has always been so, is repeated, or is revitalized or recovered, or of a continuity that is adjusted to a change."<sup>274</sup> In this way, the ritualistic aesthetics of Legend Lin become fitting to the internationalized condition of its performance. That is, the detachment from actual historical space and time of myth in ritual seems to fit with the non-

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<sup>272</sup> Lin Ya-Ting 林雅婷, "Taiwanese Dance Companies on International Stage; The Silk Road Journey of Lyon Dance Biennale" (臺灣舞團集體躍上國際舞台：里昂雙年舞蹈節「絲路之旅」) *Performing Arts Review*, January 2001, 7–11.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. The Cultural Center of Taiwan in Paris set up a temporary office in Lyon and made a special publication for the five Taiwanese dance companies.

<sup>274</sup> Feuchtwang, "Ritual and Memory," 287.

specificity of international festival contexts and, perhaps conveniently, to relieve much of the difficulty of translation across cultural contexts.

Intriguingly, this abstracting tendency in Legend Lin's work does not necessarily result in alienating Taiwanese local audiences. Consider its third work, *Song of Pensive Beholding*, for example. During the post-show discussion of its performance in Kaohsiung in July 2010, a male audience member was eager to speak, but once he got the microphone he burst out in tears and could not stop crying.<sup>275</sup> The performance in Kaohsiung was sponsored by the Bureau of Culture of the Kaohsiung City Government. Many people came with free tickets, and the man is not the typical kind of cosmopolitan-international-festival audience member. His highly visceral reaction was certainly not the result of some Orientalist attraction to Eastern beauty, nor can it be explained in terms of the indigenous historical memory that *Mirror of Life* evokes. In the mythical framework of *Song of Pensive Beholding*, the climax lies in the defeat of the older brother by his younger sibling, and the younger brother ends up filled with poignant regret. Perhaps it is the humanistic element in the work and the story as such that moved him? Or perhaps the performance interpolated him in an emotional identification? Of course, the *Heart Sutra* chanted at the end of the performance could stir familiar feelings for the local audience, whose experience with Buddhism would lead them to associate it with emotional release and cleansing. What can be inferred is that as international touring becomes increasingly integral to the conditions of performance for these groups, what can move or affect audiences is becoming *as inclusive as possible*.

Going back to the question of the "economy of mobility" raised during our "Pause," we see that we gain a more complex understanding of this phenomenon when considering both the representation and kinesthetics of dance works in conjunction with their material conditions of possibility. Examining the two phases of Lin's choreography, we see that *fanghuan*, as a way to evoke a community's historical memory via ritual, besides being a "counter-action to Western dance," is also a resistant move to alter the rapid flow of capitalist development that transformed Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s. However, representational and kinesthetic analysis may still fall short when the "desires of Asia," the nation's need for visibility, and the company's need for material support and pursuit of symbolic capital are intimately intertwined. In this chapter, in addition to unpacking the complexities of *huan* in juxtaposition to the *Movimentos* festival's reframing of dance kinesthetics, I want to underscore the idea that as performing arts cannot exist outside of the systems of capitalism, in order to fully understand whether and how dance functions as a critique of the kinetic of capitalist modernity, the real "economy of mobility" must be carefully considered. In the next chapter, we will move to a different type of transnational performance, examining the works by Japanese butoh artist Hata-Kanoko, who lived in Taiwan for nearly a decade. The border-crossing paths she treaded are different from the established international festivals in which Cloud Gate and Legend Lin participate. Also collecting source materials from the historical past of both Japan and Taiwan and invoking ghosts and folk rituals, she carries a much more radical anticapitalist and self-marginalizing politics, enacting a different kind of economy of mobility that explicitly critiques the combined legacy of modernity, development, colonialism, and biopolitical violence.

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<sup>275</sup> I was performing as a dancer for this piece for the performance in Kaohsiung with Legend Lin Dance Theatre at the time.

## Chapter 6

### Exchanges (*jiaohuan* 交換) Actual and Phantasmagoric: Biopolitical Protest and the Seeding of Alternative Inter-Asian Transnationalism

It was the night of the first full dress rehearsal of Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe's (Huangdie nantian wuta tuan 黃蝶南天舞蹈團) butoh performance *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (*Zhugao zhi qi* 祝告之器, 2011). Some fellow Haibizi 海筆子 members and I sat on little stools scattered on the ground inside the tent that thinly shelled the performance-to-be. The tent perched on the hillside of Lo-Sheng Sanatorium (Lo sheng liaoyang yuan 樂生療養院), a leper colony in the Xinzhuang district of New Taipei City, on the west fringe of Taipei, Taiwan. It was July, hot and sultry; we and the performers had been working for days pitching the tent, building the stage and the sets, mending the costumes, and making the props. We now got to sit back and “enjoy the show” before anyone else. A stream of cheerful tunes sounded out of the stereo, designed for the pre-show warm-up. Canned and a bit corny, the music reminded me of the modern festive songs the department stores would play around major holidays such as Christmas and the Chinese New Year to boost the atmosphere of celebration and consumption, a vivid scene from my urban childhood. Later, the canned music was replaced with live beating of cymbals, gongs, and drums. It generated an entirely different atmosphere, reminiscent of the traditional temple festivities and the outdoor performances that often accompany them. Yellow Butterfly's stage pieces, handmade and in bold, vibrant colors, were imbued with the aesthetic of popular folk rituals. I felt mesmerized staring at the big red curtain billowing in front of me, enlivened by the front-stage lights.

The festive mood was drastically overturned as the curtain was raised. The warm, cheerful din was swept by a dark, deathly chill. Seven bodies powdered in white dangled upside down from a large net made of thick ropes hung over the entire stage. Their hair, also powdered white, spread out like dry grass. The sound of a wild thunderstorm came from the P.A. system, while the actual night wind continued to blow. A feeble shriek or two sounded from among the bodies, and they slowly lifted themselves up, and splayed back down, and up, and down. They wriggled through the ropes onto the stage floor, collapsed, struggled to get up, did a backbend and stayed there, tripped, fell, and got up again, trembling. I later learned that this opening section is entitled “The Grand Catch of Fish” (*Da yu huo* 大漁獲). It imagines the lost bodies from tsunami-hit Fukushima on March 11, 2011, drifting across the ocean to the shore of the Lo-Sheng Sanatorium—more precisely, to the site of this performance tent, pitched beside the memorial pagoda that houses the ashes of those who have passed away in Lo-Sheng since its founding in 1930. While the semantics of the title suggests gains (*huo* 獲) worthy of celebration, the performance of this section exuded the horror of death. If the framing of the performance is akin to temple festivities, it is a ritual of and for the dead across time and two places.

Semiotic contradictions abound. Mourning and festivity coexist. This is characteristic of the butoh of Yellow Butterfly, founded in Taiwan by Japanese butoh artist Hata-Kanoko and fellow Taiwanese experimental artists in 2005. I participated in the production of *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* at Lo-Sheng Sanatorium in the summer of 2011 to study their work. Having based her butoh activities in Taiwan for nearly a decade since 2001, Hata-Kanoko conceived her praxis as “butoh action” (*wuta xingdong* 舞蹈行動), which seeks to marry butoh and social

engagement. In recent years, her “butoh action” has centered on a sustained engagement with the residents of Lo-Sheng and their protest against being forcibly moved by the city government for the building of a new Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station and train depot. *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* was the third butoh performance at Lo-Sheng. It was also the first time the performance went “abroad”: it was brought “back” to Japan, performing in Hiroshima on August 6 and 7, 2011, the anniversary of the A-bomb explosion with which the United States ended the Pacific War. Mirroring the explicit engagement with contemporaneous issues and mourning across national borders, Yellow Butterfly attempted to bring their production physically across space and place. Although the association of butoh with Hiroshima and the A-bomb is a myth to be continually debunked,<sup>276</sup> Hata-Kanoko consciously tapped into it. The fear and stigma attached to the memory of nuclear radiation in Hiroshima—and those contaminated by it—was brought alive and then anxiously dispelled in the recent crisis of nuclear radiation leakage from Fukushima’s tsunami-struck power plant. Hata-Kanoko had scheduled the site-specific performance in Lo-Sheng well before the tsunami happened. As the new crisis arose, she folded her later concern into the existing one, letting one filter the other, letting two groups of audiences experience this mutual filtering. The physical travel of *Body-Vessel* stopped at the end of the Hiroshima performance, but Hata-Kanoko and a few of the Haibizi and Yellow Butterfly artists went further to join the tent theater performance led by Sakura Daizo in Fukushima in September 2011. This is how contemporaneous concerns are sustained across space—via a fluid expansion of a minor transnational network of art praxis.

In this chapter, I consider the political kinaesthetics of Yellow Butterfly’s “butoh action” as manifesting alternative inter-Asian transnationalism in the making. Carrying the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance, Hata-Kanoko’s butoh politics and its critique of modernity comes up against the legacy of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, as Lo-Sheng’s establishment and segregationist approach to patients of Hansen’s disease were the policy of the Japanese colonial government; the forced movement due to urban development is a reincarnation of violence toward the socially marginalized and abjected internal Other, carried out by the current government. I focus on *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* as a way to contemplate the constant disintegration of butoh kinaesthetics in relation to Hata-Kanoko’s acts of social engagement and butoh performance. This chapter poses another counterpoint to the previous ones by shifting attention to how contemporary dance and theater performances invigorate minor networks of transnationalism among sites in Asia and enact self-reflections on the geopolitics of this region while consciously staying outside of “big” international festivals (often in the First World) and perpetuating cultural tourism.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Kurihara Nanako has pointed out how butoh has been erroneously essentialized and stereotyped (as “Japanese,” “Eastern,” or “Zen Buddhist”), including being associated directly with the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, particularly by American critics. See Nanako Kurihara, “Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh,” *The Drama Review* 44, no. 1 (2000): 12–28. Another image that may be attributed to this association is that of Isamu Ohsuka of Byakko-sha, who talked about his mother’s experience during the bombing in Hiroshima, and whose left arm is atrophic because she was pregnant with him when the atom bomb dropped. In *Navel and A-bomb* (1960), an experimental film made by photographer Hosoe Eikoh, Hijikata Tatsumi and other dancers are juxtaposed with an image of an A-bomb.

<sup>277</sup> For the concept of “minor transnationalism,” see Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005). My discussion has a slightly different emphasis from Lionnet and Shih, drawing attention to the inter-Asian relationships and the self-marginalizing politics of Hata-Kanoko.

Yellow Butterfly's "butoh action" embodies many characteristics of transnational migratory practices and aesthetic expressions, derived from Hata-Kanoko's decade-long residency, working and interacting with a network of Taiwanese experimental theater artists and presenting works to Taiwanese audiences. Filtered through her vision, in Yellow Butterfly's butoh, Japanese allusions and visual aesthetics are blended with Taiwanese references and practices, which are further refracted through the use of butoh's irony, humor, darkness, contradictions, and metamorphosis. What distinguishes Hata-Kanoko from most discussions of migrant transnationalism is that as a solo butoh artist coming from Japan, she represents not so much a migrant community negotiating with inclusion/exclusion in the receiving country as an individual tapping into and invigorating a transnational network of experimental theater artists who share her concerns about issues of social justice. Yellow Butterfly's involvement with the Lo-Sheng movement became a flashpoint where lines of transnational concerns intersected and sparked reflections on heretofore underinvestigated historical questions and relationships. The postwar permutation of modernist biopolitical violence since Japanese colonialism was brought to the public attention with the recent protest movement incited by the present-day MRT construction schemes. Hata-Kanoko's involvement heralds another self-reflexive force that penetrates Lo-Sheng's historical legacy and its accompanying postcolonial entanglements, as well as their historical and contemporary echoes and ramifications across wider geopolitical spheres.

This unique phenomenon also reverberates with Chen Kuan-Hsing's proposal that we think of "Asia as method," which offers much to think about regarding historical inter-Asian relationships and the politics of contemporary inter-Asian engagements.<sup>278</sup> Chen's proposal is a response to what he sees as the impasse of postcolonial criticism and, as a corollary, the need for Asian subjects to go through the intertwined projects of "decolonization," "deimperialization," and "de-cold war." The obsessive critique of the West that occupies much of postcolonial criticism ends up binding the field together. Besides reiterating how the West should be recognized as bits and fragments that are already internal to the local social formations in a systematic, but never totalizing way, Chen further proposes that we "multiply the objects of identification and construct alternative frames of reference" by turning toward a heterogeneous Asia.<sup>279</sup> But this requires dealing with the incomplete project of decolonization, which was interrupted by the Cold War. Taiwan, for example, was absorbed under the U.S.-led capitalist bloc, while Japan's prewar oppressor/colonizer status was immediately overturned with its defeat and occupation by the American military. Therefore, the decolonization of Taiwan (as well as other former Japanese colonies), complicated by Taiwan's internal political strife, has never been sufficiently carried out. Nor has the deimperialization of Japan. Both processes, as Chen points out, entail painful self-reflection and self-interrogation to work out a historical relation between the two countries. As Chen further indicates, although the energy of decolonization comes back with full force when the easing of the Cold War creates the conditions for globalization (that promotes various kinds of regional connections), the legacy and tensions of the Cold War need to be interrogated. Hence the three interconnected negation processes (decolonization, deimperialization, de-cold war) must be fully accomplished for Asian societies to move forward, imagine alternative horizons and perspectives, and advance a different understanding of world history by being each other's points of reference and mobilizing diverse historical experiences

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<sup>278</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

and social practices. Proposed as such, “Asia as method,” Chen stresses, recognizes the need to keep a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of Asia; that is, it recognizes that Asia is a product of history and an active participant in historical processes.<sup>280</sup>

Contemplating the constant disintegration of butoh kinaesthetics in relation to her acts of social engagement and butoh performance, I ponder Hata-Kanoko’s revision of butoh cofounder Hijikata Tatsumi’s idea of “vessel” (*qi, utsuwa* 器), the “exchanges” (*jiaohuan* 交換) between the living and the dead via the butoh dancer’s body, and her revision of Hijikata’s statement about butoh as the body’s own “grabbing of life” “in face of crisis.” I also examine potential contestations against biopolitical violence folded within the invocation of the spirits of the dead, in this performance framed in the fashion of a “temple festival” (*miaohui* 廟會) along Taiwanese and Japanese folk traditions. Yellow Butterfly fluidly collaborates with the “tent theater” collective Haibizi, initiated by director Sakura Daizo, also in the tradition of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance. Haibizi’s and Yellow Butterfly’s inter-Asian activities resonate with Chen Kuan-Hsing’s proposal of “Asia as Method.” They also harbor their own concerns and fluid ways of working in their rhizome-like operations and rejection of any institutional funding informed by their leftist and self-marginalizing politics.

### **Hata-Kanoko: Transnational Journey and “Butoh Action”**

Born in 1964 in Rishiri Island, Hokkaido, Japan, Hata-Kanoko began studying butoh in 1988 with Kuritaro (b. 1952), in the lineage of Hijikata Tatsumi’s students based in Otaru, Hokkaido. In the 1990s, in addition to dancing with Kuritaro, she started creating her own butoh performances and forming butoh groups with fellow artists. The turning point was her three-month attendance at the third annual “Cry of Asia” festival in Manila, Philippines, in 1998. Held by the Asian Council for People’s Culture, formed in the Philippines in 1985, “Cry of Asia” invites performers and directors in the Asia-Pacific region to collaborate on creative works and give workshops and presentations to local communities. It was also at “Cry of Asia” that Hata-Kanoko met Taiwanese artists Chung Chiao and Li Wei, who later invited her to Taiwan to give butoh workshops. She also encountered the people living in Smoky Mountain, a gigantic rubbish dump at the fringe of Manila, who survive by scavenging recyclable materials for meager compensation. Teaching a butoh workshop for the mothers of Smoky Mountain, Hata-Kanoko started to question her own butoh practice. She reflects in her statement written for the performance of *The Pure Land of Collage* (*Pinzhuang jing tu* 拼裝淨土), created and presented in Taiwan in 2002:

I came to this country (the Philippines), and I saw the cruelest living circumstances; I saw the images of the mothers with their babies on their backs, begging amid the thick emission of cars upon which one can barely open one’s eyes; and the kids who collect stuff for sale from the rubbish dump, who have nowhere to retreat, nothing to rely on, but make every effort to survive. In there, I saw “the other butoh” that I need to compete with. The butoh I am striving for should be comparable to, and have the same glow as, the “butoh on the street” that keeps flowing from the reality of everyday life.<sup>281</sup>

After this experience, Hata-Kanoko reconceived her butoh as an “action” that sees no

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>281</sup> Yu-Bing Lin 林子竝, “The Butoh That Uses ‘Asia’ as Method: Hata-Kanoko and Taiwan,” in *The Body and Space in Postwar Japanese Experimental Theater* (*Riben zhanhou xiaojuchang yundongdangzhong de shenti yu kongjian* 日本戰後小劇場運動當中的身體與空間) (Taipei: TNUA Little and Limited Publishing, 2009), 76.

boundary between “art” and “life,” and since then has called her style of “butoh action” “Asia Baroque.” “Baroque,” derived from the Portuguese and Spanish word *barroco*, originally meant a “rough, irregular, imperfect pearl” and becomes a metaphor for the ideal of Hata-Kanoko's butoh as formless and always in irregular transformations.<sup>282</sup> Her butoh actions have evolved from creating and performing, as she had been doing in Japan, to developing themes and methods deriving from her experience in Taiwan. In 1999, Hata-Kanoko came to Taipei and taught a butoh workshop, presenting *The Dimensions of Worms* (*Chong de cun fa* 蟲的寸法) with Taiwanese workshop participants and musicians and poets from Japan with whom she had collaborated in Hokkaido. Later, she presented the classical Japanese literature-inspired *The Princess Who Loves Worms* (*Ku ai chong de gongzhu* 酷愛蟲的公主); it was created with her butoh group El Jardin de Cuerpo and premiered in Sapporo, Hokkaido, before being presented in Kyoto and Taipei. She decided to stay in Taiwan in 2001, settling in the Shenkeng district of Taipei county (now New Taipei City). In 2002, she presented the work *The Pure Land of Collage* in Taipei, the first piece she created after having taken up residence in Taiwan. This was the start of Hata-Kanoko's exploration of the “Taiwanese body” through butoh.<sup>283</sup> The “Taiwanese body,” as she observed and explored in this piece, is one of “*pinzhuang* 拼裝,” or assemblage in collage, which not only reflects the hybrid nature of Taiwan's culture but also is seen in the creative and improvisational spirit of assembling materials from everyday life, such as the makeshift (and often illegal) housing made by many of the less well-off. It is “like a body that keeps expanding in the same way housing built in atypical situations is assembled and linked together one after another, or, like a body that does not have a center, growing and spreading out endlessly like weeds,” she suggests.<sup>284</sup> In 2003, she presented *Hell of the Eye* (*Mu zhi yu* 目之獄), a performance that came out of her workshop with Body Phase Studio (Xin baodao shizhangzhe yi tuan 新寶島視障者藝團), a theater troupe of blind performers since 2002. In 2005, she formed the first butoh troupe in Taiwan, Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe (Huangdie nantian 黃蝶南天/Kocyonanten), and they presented their first work, *King of Moments* (*Shunjian zhiwang* 瞬間之王), danced by Hata-Kanoko and two Taiwanese dancers, Li Wei and Li Pei-chi, a blind dancer from the previous collaboration, in Taipei, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Yellow Butterfly maintains a fluid membership and performers vary in each production.

In September 2005, she presented a solo performance as part of the artist-initiated series of performances in Lo-Sheng Sanatorium in support of its residents' protest movement.<sup>285</sup> In 2006, she participated in the performance *Screen Memory* (*Yecao tiantang* 野草天堂), created by Haibizi.<sup>286</sup> It shuttled between one of the buildings in Lo-Sheng and the Experimental Theater of

<sup>282</sup> Yi-Jen Yu 尤苡人, “The Flowers of ‘Akusho’—Japanese Butoh Dancer-Choreographer Hata-Kanoko's ‘Akusho’ Aesthetics (惡之華——秦 Kanoko 舞蹈的惡所美學)” (M.A. thesis, National Taiwan University, 2011), 72.

<sup>283</sup> Lin, “The Butoh That Uses ‘Asia’ as Method,” 76.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–77; translation mine. Original text: “就像是在非常狀態當中所搭建的住所一間又一間不斷地拼接擴大般的身體，或者說，就像是沒有中心，像雜草一般不斷增生蔓延的身體。”

<sup>285</sup> A group of experimental theater artists who supported the protest movement of Lo-Sheng residents independently staged “Music, Life, and under the Tree 925 Action” (“Yinyue, shengming, dashuxia 925 xingdong 音樂、生命、大樹下 925 行動”) in Lo-Sheng Sanatorium in September 2005.

<sup>286</sup> The Chinese title means “paradise of weeds.” The English title makes a reference to Freud's concept of “screen memory,” one that, like a screen, covers up and displaces that which is unacceptable to the ego. Under Sakurai Daizo's vision, Haibizi's plays often have spirits and ghosts that are evoked to break the “screen memory” that



the National Theater. In the same year, Hata-Kanoko presented her first evening-length butoh performance in Lo-Sheng, *The Beauty of Nature* (*Tianran zhi mei* 天然之美), followed by *Fleur du Mal* (*E zhi hua* 惡之華) in 2010 and *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* in 2011.<sup>287</sup>

### **The Legacy of Lo-Sheng Sanatorium and the Current Protest Movement**

The sustained engagement with the Lo-Sheng movement and the site-specific butoh performances have become the center of Hata-Kanoko and Yellow Butterfly's "butoh action" in recent years. Lo-Sheng yuan 樂生院 was established in 1930, when Taiwan was under Japanese colonial rule (1895–1945). In 1934, the Japanese government implemented a Leprosy Prevention Law in Taiwan that sanctioned the government's segregation of those infected with the disease. The forced arrest and imprisonment of patients began soon thereafter, along with the establishment of forty-six leprosy segregation institutions across Taiwan. The segregationist approach taken by the Japanese government followed the lead of other nations at the time. The International Congress on Leprosy that took place in Berlin in 1897 concluded that there was no medical cure, and the prevention of contagion could only rely on quarantine. After thorough research, Japanese scholars attributed the vanishing of the disease in Europe to effective quarantining and supported the segregation of the patients in Japan.<sup>288</sup>

What fueled these stringent measures of segregation and even extermination of leprosy (patients were treated with ligation and abortion, even though the disease is not genetic) was in part the ideology of maintaining the status of modern, civilized nation. The first director of Lo-Sheng yuan, Kamikawa Yutaka 上川豐 wrote that the high number of leprosy patients in Japan (including its colonies) compared to other "civilized" nations, where leprosy is almost nonexistent, was a "national shame" (國恥), all the more intolerable because Japan had made impressive progress since the Meiji Reforms of the 1860s to become one of the three most powerful nations in the world.<sup>289</sup> Contemporaneous discourses that deemed the existence of leprosy "uncivilized" also abounded.<sup>290</sup> The police's brutal arrests of patients in public spaces further stigmatized those who had been infected.

After World War II, the Chinese Nationalist government, which took over the governance of Taiwan, continued the Japanese segregation policy until 1962. Although the law regarding segregation was eventually lifted, social discrimination persisted, and it was difficult for the patients to re-assimilate into mainstream society. Many, in fact, had come to rely on the sanatorium for the specialized medical care it could provide and chose to stay in Lo-Sheng as

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covers up undesirable things. See Bo Sun 孫柏, "Searching for 'The Majority'—Sakurai Daizo and the Theatrical Hauntology of The Tent (Xunzhao 'duoshu'--Yingjing dazao han zhangpeng de juchang youling xue 尋找'多數'—櫻井大造和帳篷的劇場幽靈學)" (September 20, 2007).

<sup>287</sup> For a study of Hata-Kanoko's dance works in Taiwan from 1998 to 2010, see Yi-chun Chen 陳宜君, "The Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South: Japanese Female Dancer-Choreographer Hata-Kanoko, Her Works, and the First Butoh Company in Taiwan (飛遷南國的黃色蝴蝶—日本舞蹈家秦 Kanoko 來台創作十年研究)" (M.A. thesis, National Taipei University of the Arts, 2010).

<sup>288</sup> Wei-Bin Chen 陳威彬, "Hansen's Disease and Its Treatment in Modern Taiwan—Using Lo-Sheng Sanatorium as a Main Thread (近代臺灣的癩病與療養—以樂生療養院為主軸)" (M.A. thesis, National Tsing Hua University, 2001); Kenneth F. Kiple, ed., *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 839.

<sup>289</sup> ” 30–31.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

their “home.” They were free to go outside for needs and errands but still endured stigmatization and discrimination. Not until the 1990s did Lo-Sheng stop taking new patients. The segregation policy in Japan lasted until 1996 and was halted only because of the protests of Japanese patients, who eventually won state compensation in 2001; Taiwanese patients who had been forced into segregation during the Japanese occupation won the same compensation from Japan in 2005.

While the words “segregation” and “sanatorium” conjure images of cold isolation in a closed institution, the present environment of Lo-Sheng is actually quite the reverse, especially since the stringent management was lifted with the ending of forced segregation. The leper colony stretches up a hill to form a vast green campus in which the residents can move around in the open air. Over the years, they have cultivated their own yards, grown plants, formed supportive neighborhoods, and built a sense of community in the traditional ground-level housing that combines Japanese and Taiwanese architectural styles. Many have grown to identify this place as “home,” however unpleasant it was to be forced to live here in the first place; the MRT construction plan and its rough handling of their will to choose where they want to live angered many and led to their fierce protest movement in the 2000s.

Whereas Lo-Sheng was surrounded by farmland at the remote fringe of Taipei at its inception, nowadays the expansion of Taipei metropolis has brought growing commerce and population to this area, and the demand for new, fast public transportation increased. In 1994, Lo-Sheng was chosen as the site for a new MRT station and train maintenance depot. The residents were never formally informed nor consulted, but heard the news from the grapevine. In fact, from an engineering perspective, Lo-Sheng is poorly sited for such facilities, as the vast hill on which it was built would need to be flattened to make way for the maintenance depot. In 2002, construction began, forcing a large group of residents to move hurriedly to temporary housing and to stay there for two years or more. The issue attracted the attention of various human rights groups, students, scholars, and architects in 2003, and they began to petition for preservation of the site or an alternative construction plan. The residents of Lo-Sheng also formed their own organization to protest against the forced move. Lots of street demonstrations took place; artists, including Hata-Kanoko and many Haibizi members, also staged performances to support the movement. After much negotiation, compromise, and a brutal police eviction of residents (many are old and unable to walk well), the Executive Yuan’s Public Construction Commission finalized a plan in May 2007 that would preserve about 30 percent of the original residential area and build additional housing elsewhere on the campus after construction of the depot was completed. However, as of 2013, the residents face new dangers as the MRT construction continues, leveling a vast proportion of the hill and showing signs of possible landslide that would affect the entire residential area.

### ***Body-Vessel of the Priestess***

*Body-Vessel of the Priestess* was staged from July 26 through 30, 2011, in Lo-Sheng Sanatorium in New Taipei City and at the Abierto Theater in Hiroshima on August 6 and 7, for the anniversary of the A-bomb explosion. Like *Fleur du Mal Body-Vessel*, it was staged in a tent pitched on the empty plain adjacent to the new Memorial Pagoda on the hill of the Lo-Sheng campus. Thus, the invocation of a priestess is relatable to the physical site of the performance, as it casts its vision on the existence and history of the entities (the past lives) invisible (or forgotten) to the now living. The title *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* also gestures to the approach

to butoh developed by Hata-Kanoko over her years in Taiwan. The compound phrase *zhugao* 祝告 refers to ancient designations for “priest” or “priestess.” *Qi* 器 means “vessel” or “container,” empty and able to be filled with other substances. It is invoked to suggest the kind of body Hata-Kanoko’s butoh is working toward. To her, the butoh dancer’s body should be empty like a vessel, even a “corpse,” to allow other substances to fill it—in this case, to allow “dead spirits” to “possess” the body, as ancient priests or priestesses did. Particularly, Hata-Kanoko draws from the ancient priestess (*miko* 巫女) in the Japanese tradition in reflections on her own female corporeality.<sup>291</sup>

*Body-Vessel* continues the idea of creating a temple festival that pays tribute to the dead. In *Fleur du Mal*, the dead include everyone from the Lo-Sheng residents who have passed away over the years of their protest movement to the unknown but historically long dead fighters in the conflict between Okinawa and Taiwan that links up the imperialist history. In *Body-Vessel*, the “festival” pays tribute to the Lo-Sheng patients of different nationalities—Taiwanese, Chinese mainlanders, Korean, Japanese, and Okinawan—who passed away during the Japanese occupation and whom no one commemorates, as well as the Fukushima residents who died in the 2011 tsunami.

As mentioned before, the performance in Lo-Sheng in July 2011 was planned at the end of 2010, but the tsunami that hit Fukushima on March 11, 2011, and its aftermath prompted Hata-Kanoko, who was in Japan at the time and swept up by the drastic change of the social climate, to infuse her new concern into the existing performance. The opening scene of *Body-Vessel*, “The Grand Catch of Fish,” thus imagines the dead bodies from Fukushima floating across the ocean to Lo-Sheng. Meanwhile, Lo-Sheng residents were facing new dangers as well. The MRT construction that entails vast leveling of the hill was showing signs of causing a possible landslide in the whole area; many buildings have growing cracks on their walls that are parallel to the hill section, a sign of land displacement already under way.<sup>292</sup>

In her statement about the performance of *Body-Vessel*, Hata-Kanoko discusses the affinity between the people in Fukushima and the Lo-Sheng residents regarding the “state of emergency” (*jinji zhuangtai* 緊急狀態) that they are in. She begins by exposing the contradiction between the “state of emergency” in Japan and its citizens’ complicity in protecting the “national interest” (*guojia liyi* 國家利益) through acts of forgetting. While the tsunami and the radiation have left more than a hundred thousand people suffering the long-lasting effects of bodily and environmental contamination, Japanese citizens have largely followed the government and the economists’ suggestion in continuing to consume and spend, even taking trips, and largely living “as before.” The government revised the degree of tolerable radiation exposure to the human body in one year from 1 millisievert to 20 millisievert, and thus arbitrarily sanctioned the “safety” of Fukushima residents, although in fact they *are* in danger, especially the children. The staff of the Tokyo Electric Power Company left Fukushima as soon as they could, but many residents remain without resources to relocate. “The citizens forget the ‘state of emergency’ by going back to their daily lives, and by forgetting they prop up the economy to protect the ‘national interest,’ only they already forgot how they are internal to this kind of structure,” Hata-

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<sup>291</sup> Yu, “The Flowers of ‘Akusho.’”

<sup>292</sup> Lok-sin Loa, “MRT Construction Leading to Cracks at Sanatorium,” *Taipei Times*, August 10, 2010. Loa cites civil engineer Wang Wei-Min’s observation.

Kanoko writes.<sup>293</sup> And yet, between the “state of emergency” and the protection of “national interest,” Hata-Kanoko also notes the “great opportunity” (*dahao qiji* 大好契機) that emerges: “It is very hard to get out of this structure of complicity. However, different from the national order, perhaps we could create a completely new structure from within the supportive community (*gongtong ti* 共同體, “shared body”) that emerged from the disorder in the wake of the earthquake. This is probably a great chance that could only happen in a state of emergency.”<sup>294</sup> Hata-Kanoko then shifts to the situation in Lo-Sheng and her contemporaneous concerns as a transnational subject:

This reminds me of another thing; that is, the grandpas and grandmas in Lo-Sheng, after being forcibly segregated in the sanatorium for Hansen’s disease, live their whole life in a state of emergency. Now, standing between the new and the old residential areas of Lo-Sheng, looking down at the construction site of the MRT digging deeper and deeper into the earth, I can’t but also think of the small towns and villages in Tohoku destroyed by the tsunami. Facing natural disasters, we still have hopes for reconstruction, but the people of Lo-Sheng, where can they go for hope? How can they reclaim their community that has been destroyed? Or, like the people suffering from the nuclear disaster, can they only keep living in the state of emergency? How can we seek out any kind of opportunity from this state of emergency?<sup>295</sup>

Hata-Kanoko then invokes the ancient and the supernatural, echoing the aura and connotations in the title *Body-Vessel of the Priestess*: “We will not allow people to forget. For this reason, let us carve the evidence of the residents’ lives onto the stele. To not allow people to ignore, let us create a stele that carries a will as powerful as the magical curse.”<sup>296</sup>

### Vessel (*utsuwa* 器)

“Barrel Woman” (“Zun nü 樽女”)

*Live musician plays buoyant, jazzy tunes on the electronic bass. Two men in hemp cloaks (following Taiwanese funeral customs) carry a big wooden barrel onto the stage, leave it at the center and go offstage. One hand slowly sticks out of the barrel; the palm swims in the air, wiggling like a fish. Suddenly, the fingers curl up and freeze—the fish has turned into a claw. Then the “barrel woman” stands up from inside the barrel. First, she lifts her clothes to cover her face and shows her belly, its flesh shaking as if she were doing some kind of titillating belly dancing. Then she jumps onto the rim of the barrel, squatting and protruding her buttocks*

<sup>293</sup> Hata-Kanoko, program of *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (Taipei: Taiwan Haibizi, 2011). Japanese-Chinese translation by Li Yan 李彥. English translation mine. Chinese text: “國民藉由回歸日常生活來遺忘緊急狀態，然後再透過遺忘來支撐經濟而守住「國家利益」。只是，人們早就遺忘了自己身處於這樣的結構之中。”

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. Chinese text: “要從這個共犯結構中脫身極為困難。不過，在有別於國家秩序，震災之後的失序之中所出現的互相扶持的共同體當中，我們會尋找出創造嶄新結構的可能性吧。這或許是只有在緊急狀態中才會出現的大好契機。”

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. Chinese text: “現在，只要站在樂生願新院區和舊院區居住區之間，俯視深深向下挖掘的捷運工地，就不禁讓人聯想到遭海嘯沖毀的東北小鎮和村莊。在面對自然災害時，我們還能夠對重建滿懷希望，但樂生院到底該向何處尋求希望呢？如何奪回已被摧毀的共同體呢？或者，宛如核災難民一般，只能繼續生活在緊急狀態之中？而我們又能從這個緊急狀態之中尋找出甚麼樣的契機呢？”

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. Chinese text: “不過，我們不允許人們將之遺忘。為此，讓我們將院民曾經活過他們生命的證據銘刻於石碑之上吧。為了不讓人們予以忽視，讓我們建立起帶著有如詛咒般的意念的石碑吧。”

(wearing only a white thong) toward the audience. She stretches her legs sideways and switches between stretching out and folding in her legs. Then she climbs up to stand on the rim of the barrel, doing all kinds of contorted, whimsical, and often shaky moves, like balancing on one foot and making faces that look like she is laughing and crying at the same time—as if she is ridiculing the world around her but also deeply lost in her own world.... In the end, the “barrel woman” curls herself back inside the barrel. The two men in hemp cloaks come onstage again and carry the barrel offstage.

In her statement, Hata-Kanoko goes on to explain the meanings and references of the performance title, noting that “the point of origin for our dancers is the priestess.”<sup>297</sup> “‘*Zhugao zhiqi*’ is a symbolic phrase,” she explains:

It refers to the body of the priestess and the dancer who is being possessed by the dead. The reason I search for the body of the priestess is that “the look of the dead may not be just what we have seen. By exploring this possibility, we can not only conduct dialogues with the dead but also bring the dialogues into the future.” Let the will of the dead lodge in the body, and let the body of the living turn into the “body/corpse” (*yiti* 遺體) of the dead. People can keep this “body/corpse” alive, and as such, the body can become the vessel for the living and the dead to make exchanges. This is not some Tale of the Arabian Nights. Everyone carries a “body/corpse” with them from when they were born.<sup>298</sup>

As Hata-Kanoko expresses, the concept of treating one’s body as a container, first expounded by Hijikata, has long been a part of butoh discourse and training. The following passage by Hijikata offers a glimpse of how the idea of the container or vessel (*utsuwa* 器) is conceived in relation to the state of emptiness that the butoh dancer’s body maintains:

The “*utsuwa*” (器) for performing butoh is also the “*utsuwa*” to summon butoh. No matter what, *utsuwa* should always maintain a state of emptiness. If it is too full, or abruptly entered, of course it would cause the passing through of spirits. [...] The so-called butoh is the continuous replacement of emptiness (空的不斷的替換). The self (inside the body) and the Other are always in a state of trance.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid. Chinese text: “我們舞者的起源點是女巫。”

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. Chinese text: “『祝告之器』是一個象徵性的詞彙。它指的是被死者附身的女巫以及舞者的身體。我們之所以會追尋女巫的身體，是因為「亡者的死狀也許不僅僅是我們所看到的模樣。藉由探索此可能性，我們不但能夠和死者對話，而且得以將話語向未來發聲」。讓死者的意念寄宿於體內，將生者的身體轉變為死者的「遺體」。人會使此「遺體」活著，至此，身體始能成為生者和死者之間的交流之器，這不再是天方夜譚。所有人都是一出生便牽引著「遺體」。” The discourse of butoh is in fact imbued with the idea of contacting the spirits of the dead. Hijikata Tatsumi claimed his dead sister lived inside him; Ohno Kazuo made a work commemorating his mother who had passed away in *My Mother* (1981). Ohno also expounded the idea of the “dead body” into which the dancer places an emotion that can freely express itself, reveal the “form of the soul,” and dances freely—intending to revert to the original memory of the body and discover the soul stifled within; see Jean Viala and Nourit Masson-Sekine, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), 17–22. For Hata-Kanoko, it was in reflecting upon her own female corporeality that she started thinking about the body of the priestess.

<sup>299</sup> Yu-Bing Lin 林于竝, “‘Negative Body’: Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People (「否定性的身體」：土方巽與日本人),” in *The Body and Space in Postwar Japanese Experimental Theater*, 36. Lin cites an article by Hijikata published in 1971 about the concept of *utsuwa*, collected in Tatsumi Hijikata, *Hijikata Tatsumi Collection I* (土方巽

Hijikata's words are both elusive and highly evocative. The emphasis on the "emptiness" of the body that allows for "the continuous replacement of emptiness" recalls the concept of "metamorphosis"—"the transformation of one's body and spirit into the body of another animal or person"<sup>300</sup>—which relates to modes of self-fragmentation and self-negation, in line with butoh's founding discourse on challenging the myth of the modern, alienated, individual subject by surrealist means.<sup>301</sup> Butoh scholar Susan Klein notes that the critic Ichikawa Miyabi suggested the metamorphosis "that lies at the very heart of the butoh 'spectacle'" is based on "the dual personality, or constant metamorphosis, of various characters, so that eventually as it becomes impossible to tell one person from another, the individual subject disappears altogether."<sup>302</sup> Klein elaborates that "in this way the audience is forced to take the first steps towards an awareness of the fragility of their own sense of self-unity. For the dancer, on the other hand, [butoh's] use of metamorphosis helps restore 'the body that has been robbed' in the process of socialization into modern society."<sup>303</sup>

In Taiwanese scholar Lin Yu-bing's interpretation, the above passage by Hijikata reveals the sense of "possession" within his idea of the butoh dancer's body, while also invoking "the passing through of spirits" and "trance": "whether it is the becoming 'weak' of one's body, or letting one's body become the 'Other' or 'corpse,' the butoh body that Hijikata ultimately pursues is to let the existence outside of oneself (spirit) reside within one's body, a state close to being possessed."<sup>304</sup> Lin cites Hijikata's claim of his sister living inside his body to illustrate the association with the idea of "possession." Hata-Kanoko acknowledges the relevance of Hijikata's idea of *utsuwa* and the metamorphosis in butoh, while noting that later butoh dancers have their own takes on what their metamorphoses are. She too has her own interpretation, different from Hijikata's idea: it lies in thinking through her own female body, which she considers to be most relevant to the birthing of life, which relates to the origin of dance, that is, shamanism (*wu* 巫 shares an etymological origin with *wu* 舞, "dance"). By going back to the ancient purpose of dancing and offering one's body (as a conduit) for the dead, Hata-Kanoko links her butoh with the idea of possession. This thought journey emerged from wanting to mourn for the dead in Lo-Sheng as she began staging performances there.<sup>305</sup>

In *Body-Vessel*, Hata-Kanoko carries forward the idea of the "priestess's (female shaman's) body" by incorporating Taiwanese folk practices and beliefs related to death. The dancers of *Body-Vessel* have studied the special death ritual dance and priest's dance of Taiwanese Daoist religious ritual and re-presented them onstage. The special death ritual dance, or "linking-the-dead-dance" (*qian wang wu* 牽亡舞), seen in rural Taiwanese funerals, features

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全集 I) (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2005), 238–239. The Chinese text translated by Lin reads: "表演舞蹈的『器』，同時也是召喚舞蹈的『器』。無論如何，器都必須經常保持在空的狀態。過度的充足，或者突然的闖入當然會引起靈的通過現象。[...] 所謂舞蹈，是空的不斷的替換。(身體裡面的)自我與他者不斷保持在出神(Trance)的狀態。"

<sup>300</sup> Susan B. Klein, *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1989), 38.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Lin, "Negative Body," 36. Chinese text: "無論是自己身體的「衰弱」，或者將自己的身體成為「他者」或者「屍體」，土方巽的最終追求的舞蹈身體，是讓自己之外的存在(靈)棲息在自己身體內部，類似附身的狀態。"

<sup>305</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 11, 2011.

acrobatic feats like backbends, lifts, spinning of another body in the air, and balances suggesting entwinement, such as one person clutching their legs around another's lower back. Counterintuitive to the performance of grief associated with mourning, the “linking-the-dead-dance” makes for spectacular “entertainment” (for the dead and the living who attend the funeral), often performed by females in flashy costumes. The steps of the present-day Taiwanese priest's dance form a floor pattern in the shape of the Big Dipper constellation.<sup>306</sup> Toward the end of *Body-Vessel*, a handmade model of the Big Dipper with blinking lights is lifted onstage; the tent is lifted open as well, showing the natural night sky of New Taipei City, toward which the back of the stage extends, and on which the Big Dipper onstage then shinningly “imprints.” In a section called “Female Shaman” (*wu nü* 巫女), Hata-Kanoko also incorporates the ritual of the female shaman of one of the Taiwanese aboriginal tribes, the Siraya, as she chews betel nuts, filling her mouth with their blood-red juice, and drinks and spits rice liquor. She wears a loosely tied kimono and her hair unbound; looking altogether disheveled, she dances to the rapid rhythm played by *er-hu* 二胡 (Chinese two-stringed fiddle) and the fierce drumming, interjecting butoh's *beshimi* 悪見 (grimace, grotesquery)<sup>307</sup> facial expressions as she gets increasingly wilder in trance. Notably, this is the first time Yellow Butterfly's performances have involved male dancers. Thus there is also an implied melting of rigid boundaries of gender and sexuality. The two male dancers have a duet section entitled “Forbidden Love” (“Kinjiki” 禁色), a conscious reference and homage to Hijikata's first butoh in 1959, after Mishima Yukio's homoerotic novel of the same name—perhaps also a kind of “replacement” that the dancers make via their “Body-Vessels.”



“Barrel Woman” in *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (2011). Photo by Chen You-Wei.

<sup>306</sup> Hata-Kanoko, program of *Body-Vessel of the Priestess*.

<sup>307</sup> Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 50.

### *Utsuwa* and “Replacement/Exchange” (*zhihuan/jiaohuan* 置換/交換)

The section called “Barrel Woman” sees the concretization of *utsuwa* on the stage of *Body-Vessel*. Against the hand-drawn backdrop featuring billowing sea waves, amid which an empty wooden boat floats under a golden yellow sky, Hata-Kanoko stands on top of an actual wooden barrel onstage, making contorted smiling-crying faces throughout a precarious balancing act. It looks as if she is riding the waves (recalling the tsunami), with the “vessel” onstage echoing the other empty “vessel” on the backdrop. Hata-Kanoko explained that in Japan, people used big barrels as a kind of “coffin” to keep the corpse, and in the old days, some Koreans in Lo-Sheng were buried against their will with Japanese ritual after their deaths.<sup>308</sup> Despite the ghostliness or corporeal associations of grotesquery, however, the live electronic bass that provides the soundscape for this section sets a rather different, even humorous tone.

The audience simultaneously sees the empty boat painted on the backdrop and the material acts onstage. Although theorizations of *utsuwa* emphasize emptiness, the concrete object of the barrel demarcates and materializes the spaces inside and outside, and Hata-Kanoko, as the “barrel woman,” moves back and forth and in between. Following the logic of Hata-Kanoko’s discourse, the barrel then contains Hata-Kanoko which is at once the “barrel woman,” the corpse, and the “spirit” that “enters” her body and “comes out (of the barrel),” and plays (or shocks, laughs, cries, teases). The concretization of an *utsuwa* is in echo and competition with the elusive textual theorization of Hijikata; the metamorphosis—or “replacement”—happens between the material and the immaterial, the living and the dead, the barrel and the vessel, the concrete and the flatly drawn. It aligns with self-negation while suggesting a certain kind of space, an emptiness that is not just about nothingness and lack of substance but requires some kind of material container, a vessel, a body to define it.

In the final passage of Hata-Kanoko’s statement for *The Beauty of Nature*, three iterations of “exchanges/replacements” (*jiaohuan* 交換) punctuate her idea of butoh as a “fight” for survival:

To stand out and fight for survival is the basis of my butoh; butoh is itself a fight. In butoh, the creation of art *exchanges* (*jiaohuan* 交換) with the fight in reality; the dancer *exchanges* her body with the body of the dead. A while ago, an *a-gong* 阿公 [“grandpa” in Taiwanese] living in Lo-Sheng told me that “For the sake of your butoh, we must keep the Zhongshan Tang of Lo-Sheng intact.” Yes, isn’t our butoh danced for the conservation of this place? In here, we *exchanged* thoughts with the people who understand the meaning of this act.<sup>309</sup>

Since *The Beauty of Nature*, the first butoh performance by Yellow Butterfly staged in Lo-Sheng, Hata-Kanoko has begun to think of her butoh as something to be danced for the dead. Although it is in *Body-Vessel* that this exploration is further developed, with the title a theorization of its own aesthetics, the relationship between the body of the dancer and the body of the dead has been conceived as an “exchange” or “replacement” since *The Beauty of Nature*. As the above passage shows, the multiple iterations of these “exchanges” traverse different dimensions of the intertwined social engagement with butoh practice—between the creation of art and the fight in

<sup>308</sup> Field notes, July 28, 2011.

<sup>309</sup> Hata-Kanoko, “Let Us Play the Song *The Beauty of Nature* with the Dead” (“Yu sizhe yitong yanzou women de ‘Tianran zhi mei’ ba 與死者一同演奏我們的《天然之美》吧！”), in *Haibizi Correspondence I: Special Issue on “Butoh”* (*Haibizi tongxin I—wuta’ teji* 海筆子通信 I—「舞蹈」特集) (Taipei: Xinkuzhiwang Publishing, 2006), 11.



reality; between the *a-gong* in Lo-Sheng and Hata-Kanoko; between Hata-Kanoko's butoh performance and a specific building in Lo-Sheng (where *The Beauty of Nature* was housed); between Hata-Kanoko, the Lo-Sheng residents, and "the people who understand the meaning of this act"; and between the thoughts of these different subjects. In other words, we begin to glimpse the political aesthetics of Hata-Kanoko's "butoh action."

The series of *jiaohuan* 交換 crosses between the material and the immaterial—bodies, subjects, spaces, thoughts—in a mutual, reciprocal, two-way trafficking. That *jiaohuan* is also applied to "thoughts" is most intriguing. In Chinese, the phrase *jiaoliu* 交流 is usually used to refer to the "exchange" of thoughts; *liu* 流 is a "current," so there is a sense of thoughts as "currents," and *jiaoliu* as a two-way flow. *Jiaohuan*, on the other hand, delineates a much more defined sense of a spatial switch, of objects swapping places or leaving (emptying) their original spaces and entering each other's space. To characterize the "exchange" of thoughts in terms of *jiaohuan* thus suggests that thoughts are more like discrete objects swapping places than currents that flow toward each other (and merge). The use of *jiaohuan* thus might generate a slight semantic friction for Chinese readers (the statement is translated into Chinese for print). Hata-Kanoko's explanation confirms the emphasis on *huan* 換 that highlights the sense of spatial difference (before and after the "exchange"). In Japanese, *kokan* 交換 is the same word, which could also be *chikan* 置換, meaning "replacement" (Hata-Kanoko uses the English word). She also mentions in this respect Hijikata's narrative of his dead sister living inside his body, which she thinks is related to the idea of *utsuwa* as well, and the dependence/possession (*hyoi* 憑依) by the dead spirit.<sup>310</sup> With *jiaohuan* connoting a more solidified materiality, the "items" in "exchange" that Hata-Kanoko invokes—body, art creation, reality, and thoughts—all take on more concrete spatiality and materiality of leaving and entering into one another. The slight semantic friction also compels one to rethink the idea of boundary—the *utsuwa* as "frame" (if a porous one) as well as the "emptiness" inside—that concretizes difference before "exchange" or "metamorphosis" can happen. Whether crawling out of or falling back into the barrel, the "barrel woman" stumbles, and at times struggles; there is friction in moving in and out of the "frame." The friction also prompts rethinking about "metamorphosis," or social engagement, or their intertwinement as it relates to Hata-Kanoko's "butoh action." Hijikata "empties" his body to "possess," and allow himself to be "possessed by," his dead sister. Both become different ("replaced") but also maintain their separateness.

Miryam Sas contemplates the surrealist influence in Hijikata that debunks the idea of the subject as the agent that acts. "Acts pierce us suddenly before we have a moment to catch our breath," writes Hijikata. Sas notes that "this image—having something in common with a notion of the psyche or the body that functions beyond or prior to conscious control or 'decision'—undermines a conventional relation of subject to artistic expression. Expression pierces us before we are ready for it. Acts come upon us and become the act-ors, we become the emptiness that is acted upon."<sup>311</sup> Sas continues, "while suggesting deconstruction's debunking of the myths of origin, then, Hijikata's vision also clears the way for a kind of contradictory intersubjectivity or intimacy deeply embedded in the very perception or retroactive construction of both origin and

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<sup>310</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 11, 2011.

<sup>311</sup> Miryam Sas, *Experimental Arts in Postwar Japan: Moments of Encounter, Engagement, and Imagined Return* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 164.

agent of an act.”<sup>312</sup> In elaboration, she teases out the “mutual grappling” of acting and being acted upon, which harbors important implications for “engagement” and “intersubjective encounter”:

If doing and being done to, grasping and being grasped, come to intertwine in an indistinguishable and mutually constitutive process, what happens to the assumed transitivity of engagement? If one normally thinks of activism, as a part of engaged and ‘authentic’ action, as in some way transitive—the subject does something, works to change something, acts on something—here the notion of action twists on itself and returns within itself.[...] the action here is provoked, interrogated, and then rewritten as a process of ‘mutual grappling.’ This mutual grappling, this grasping of each other that Hijikata describes as having a ‘terrifying hostility,’ becomes a model for a radical vision of engagement as well as intersubjective encounter that he elaborates. He continually proposes a kind of engagement that encompasses the unknown without mastering it.<sup>313</sup>

Even one’s engagement with one’s own action can be defamiliarized into an intersubjective encounter of “mutual grappling.” This idea can also inform *jiaohuan* in terms of a productive unsmoothness when expanding from the intersubjectivity of self-defamiliarization to circumstances of actual encounter and engagement with the Other. The kind of encounter and engagement that encompasses the “unknown” acknowledges and is vulnerable to the Other. Rather than a mode of easy incorporation of, appropriation of, and imaginary becoming Other—what a facile understanding of “metamorphosis” can be—the encounter and engagement “encompasses the ‘unknown’ without mastering it.” It recognizes boundary, friction, and concrete difference that one is working—*grappling*—with.

Hata-Kanoko has made more explicit critiques of civil society and contemporary *butoh* in the statement about *The Beauty of Nature*, which illuminates her own politics of social engagement as well:

With the maturity of civil society, people’s lives are protected by the social welfare system. In this seemingly stable life, in order to maintain stability, people refuse to interact with the “Other.” They tame their bodies, fitting them to the civil order/custom, guarding them, and opening up the monitoring eye to prevent them from being entered by the “Other.” Recently, even such a monitoring eye is closed. In this condition, even the *butoh* dancer’s body is gradually losing “Otherness” (*tazhexiang* 他者性), becoming a body that has no other besides itself.<sup>314</sup>

The “Other” that Hata-Kanoko refers to here resonates with all those marginalized, abjected, and expelled by the societal norm throughout history, and more relevant to our contemporary moment, by the institutions and forces of modernity—although it also encompasses a broader sense of that which is “other” to oneself. What Hata-Kanoko is critiquing, besides the institutions

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 165–166.

<sup>314</sup> Hata-Kanoko, “Let Us Play the Song *The Beauty of Nature* with the Dead,” 10. Japanese to Chinese translation by Lin Yu-Bing 林于竝. English translation mine. Chinese text: “隨者市民社會的成熟，人們的生活受到社會福利制度的保障。在這看似安定的生活當中，人們為了維持安定，卻杜絕與「他者」之間的交流。人們馴服自己的身體，讓身體符合市民規範，防禦自己的身體，打開監視的眼睛，讓「他者」不要進入自己，而最近甚至連這種監視的眼睛都關閉起來。在這樣的情況之下，即使舞踏家的身體，也逐漸失去「他者性」，成為自我之外別無他物的身體。”

and forces that marginalize, is also their maintenance of this problematic state by the fundamental refusal to engage with, or even *see* (as even the monitoring eye is closed), the existence of the “Other.” The concern for the stability of the self leaves no room for engagement or even recognition. The butoh dancer’s body can “lose ‘Otherness’” in the same vein of disengagement and blindness, but it also seems to harken with what some other butoh scholars’ criticisms of butoh’s “narcissistic need to please”<sup>315</sup> and the increasing emphasis on the development of technique, which moves from keeping oneself in a constant state of fragmentation to seeing the body as in a wholesome and perfect state of balance.<sup>316</sup> Even the “metamorphosis” of the butoh dancer can walk the fine line between self-fragmentation as a critique of individual subjectivity and a self-oriented (self-centered, “narcissistic”) feeling of free incorporation with, appropriation of, or becoming Other momentarily without ever truly engaging or entering, with friction and difficulty, the places of the Other.

Relating to and differentiating herself from Hijikata, Hata-Kanoko expresses that in Hijikata’s time, butoh performed resistance on the conceptual level; it was a kind of cultural movement. Although her butoh is also a cultural movement, after participating in the Lo-Sheng protest, it became more about using culture to participate in social change, and she wants to directly confront the real struggles in life. The idea of *jiaohuan* bears Hijikata’s influence, but it is also her own wording. Using the idea of the priestess’s body, drawing from the uniqueness of the female body to commemorate the spirits of the dead is a way to connect more directly to the reality of life. Or it could be said that her butoh is to be “possessed” by the spirits and fight for them.<sup>317</sup>

Other dimensions of *jiaohuan* can also be seen in the intertwining of Hata-Kanoko and Yellow Butterfly’s butoh performance and social engagement. As mentioned in the beginning, the honorary president (and also the ex-president) of the Lo-Sheng residents’ self-help organization (Lo-Sheng zijio hui 樂生自救會), Li Tian-pei, proposed to Hata-Kanoko to commemorate those who died during the Japanese occupation—Koreans, Japanese, and Okinawan people. Having learned about Hata-Kanoko’s butoh as being for the dead as well as for survival, Li proposed to commemorate these long dead and forgotten “Others.” Hata-Kanoko got a book of their names from Li and had someone recite the names and the dates of their deaths during the section “Swing” (“Qiuqian 鞦韆”).

The site-specificity of *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* invites physical *jiaohuan* with the audiences as they enter and walk through Lo-Sheng Sanatorium before seeing the performance. Coming from different parts of the city, they were made to walk all the way up the hill (about 15 minutes), physically experiencing the climbing and the change of landscape—from the road along the vast construction site where the air is full of dust at all times; to an area where some temporary housing is visible; to a long bridge that crosses over the construction site (as the continuous hill was leveled in the middle) to the preserved area of Lo-Sheng, where the kind of “home” environment the residents were fighting for can be briefly experienced; to farther up the hill where the new Memorial Pagoda is. This route, in fact, is what the residents of Lo-Sheng (many of whom are in wheelchairs or electric mobility scooters) use every day for errands and visits to the hospital (the new hospital building is on the opposite end of the leveled hill from the

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<sup>315</sup> Viala and Masson-Sekine, *Butoh*, 170.

<sup>316</sup> Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 26.

<sup>317</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 11, 2011. Hata-Kanoko points out that “this is the method I chose,” differentiating herself from Hijikata.

old/preserved residential area).

Finally, as also noted earlier, the performance of *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* itself travels. This was the first time Hata-Kanoko brought the Yellow Butterfly's butoh, made in Taiwan, "back" to Japan, performing it in the Abierto Theater in Hiroshima during the anniversary of the A-bomb explosion. But as Hata-Kanoko articulates, although Hiroshima audiences seemed to engage with *Body-Vessel* as mourning, which was what the anniversary activities were all about and created an association between Lo-Sheng and Hiroshima, she kept thinking it was "not enough." In place of her own thoughts, she included afterthoughts written by Otsuki San of Abierto Theater: "This work [*Body-Vessel of the Priestess*] uses 'mourning' and 'laughter' to subvert 'the everyday. Through the dancers' bodies, we were allowed to peek into the true face of those 'things that are being hidden.'" Even though there is the experience of 3/11, the Hiroshima 86 memorials still fell into formality and ambiguity, and the huge alienation thus generated makes me, a Hiroshima citizen, disheartened. Therefore, I feel grateful that *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* could be performed on the same day [as the anniversary] in Hiroshima.<sup>318</sup>

### Chance (*Qiji* 契機), Life, and Contestation of Biopolitical Governance

*"Bamboo and Sparrow"* ("Zhu yu que 竹與雀")

*The curtain rises. A thick piece of bamboo hangs in midair above the stage. A female dancer, powdered all white, wearing a bright-colored apron and shorts, and holding a bamboo fan, steps onto a stool and then lands on the hanging bamboo, where she begins her balancing act. Without holding a balancing rod of any sort, she walks from one end of the bamboo to the other, back and forth. Each step forward is taken with utmost care; the muscles on her calves, toes, and soles are constantly making all kinds of contractions and releases to help her maintain balance. (The bamboo shakes every time she takes a new step; the outdoor wind and the occasional rain also make the condition of the bamboo hard to predict.) Despite tension and the tremors all over her body, she maintains a smiling face, twisting her fan like a flower in the air as she walks and performing tricks when she gets to the middle of the bamboo: a quick turn around, or lowering her body in a certain aesthetic shape. The background music first plays an old Taiwanese song, "Flower in a Rainy Night" ("Yu ye hua 雨夜花"); the sorrowful tune laments a disheartened woman who is like "a flower beaten down by the rain but that no one sees." Later, the dancer takes up a small red umbrella and continues the balancing act while manipulating the umbrella in different ways. The music is changed to an old Mandarin song, "The Story of the Small Town" ("Xiaocheng gushi 小城故事"); the sweet female voice praises the goodness of the small town, inviting outsiders to be its guest and make a visit.<sup>319</sup>*

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<sup>318</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 30, 2011. Hata-Kanoko quotes Otsuki San's words, translated into Chinese. Chinese texts: 這個作品藉由「憑弔」和「歡笑」顛覆「日常」，透過舞者的身體，讓我們得以一窺那些「被隱藏起來的事物」的真面目。即便有了3 1 1的體驗，仍不免流於形式化且曖昧不明的廣島8 6紀念儀式，以及因此產生的巨大隔閡，讓身為廣島市民的我感到消沉，所以，對於「祝告の器」能同一天於廣島上演，我由衷地感謝。

<sup>319</sup> Both songs have rich and specific histories and gendered connotations in cultural and political memory that may be relevant to the reading of the dance for Taiwanese audiences. "Flower in a Rainy Night" was originally a children's song whose music was composed during the Japanese colonial era by Deng Yuxian 鄧雨賢. The lyrics were later rewritten to portray the sorrows of a heartbroken woman based on the story of a hostess in a wine bar in Taipei, who came from the countryside and who was deserted by her boyfriend. The new song was circulated back

Besides the multiple ways and dimensions of *jiaohuan* that thread through Yellow Butterfly's "butoh action," what stands out, as expressed in the statement for *Body-Vessel*, is also the paradox of "chance" (*qiji* 契機) that arises in the "state of emergency." As Hata-Kanoko explains, "chance" (契機) means "opportune moment" (好機). She mentions the Japanese idioms "come back to life" (起死回生), "in crisis there is opportunity" (緊急關頭就是絕好的機會), and "climbing up from the bottom" (從底層爬上). They are all about chance or opportunity being born when people feel most hopeless. "When sunk in the abyss of despair, if one still wants to live, one begins thinking what else one can do. This is a small possibility," she explains. "But Lo-Sheng has not found its possibility yet. The *a-gong* at Lo-Sheng told me that I already had 'realization' (覺悟). But I still think 'realization' is not 'resignation' (斷念)."<sup>320</sup> "Realization" comes from a profound understanding of the difficulty in reality; it is not some projection of revolutionary romanticism. To Hata-Kanoko, Lo-Sheng can be seen as at the worst moment of crisis, the abyss of despair, but this state also propels the desire to survive—Lo-Sheng just has not found the way to do it yet. Hata-Kanoko also continuously stresses that her butoh is a "struggle" (戰鬥) to maintain the right to survive. She also gives her own interpretation of Hijikata's statement that "butoh is the body on the edge of crisis" (舞踏是屹立危機的肉體). "To these words, my understanding is 'body in the face of crisis' (肉體自己當危機的情況). I changed the meaning: 'in Lo-Sheng, or in this world, how the body reacts in the face of a crisis in reality,'" she elaborates.<sup>321</sup> She said, "In the contemporary situation in which even life is being managed, it can also be said that only in a crisis situation can there be the possibility for one to grab life (抓生命) for oneself."<sup>322</sup> Besides inheriting Hijikata's butoh as a way to deconstruct the habituated body conditioned in modernity, Hata-Kanoko's butoh also makes the body struggling in the midst of crisis and "grabbing for its own life" a critique of the contemporary situation of biopolitical governance.

Biopolitics, as defined by Michel Foucault, is a modern technology of power that, rather than dealing with the social body as defined by the jurists or the individual-as-body, deals with the population (multiple bodies) as a political problem. Regulatory and security mechanisms are deployed to establish a sort of "homeostasis" among the people and to monitor "the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life."<sup>323</sup> Alongside "a technology in which the body is individualized as an organism endowed with capacities" is "a technology in which bodies are replaced by general biological processes."<sup>324</sup> Noting the shift

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to Japan, and during the war it was recreated to become a patriotic military song that served to encourage Taiwanese soldiers in support of Japanese military invasions. "The Story of the Small Town," sung by the famous popular singer Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun 鄧麗君; 1953–1995) came out in 1979 as the theme song for the film of the same title directed by Li Hsing 李行 in the tradition of Healthy Realism. The town embodies all the virtues and beauty. In the film, a young man studies the craft of wood sculpting in the small town of San Yi 三義 (known for wood sculptures) and falls in love with the master's deaf mute daughter who is talented and good hearted.

<sup>320</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 28, 2011.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 247.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 249.

from the power of sovereignty to biopower in nineteenth-century Europe, Foucault comments that while the power of sovereignty takes life and lets live, “the power of regularization [...] consists in making live and letting die.”<sup>325</sup> Key to “making live” is controlling sexuality and enforcing norms. Sexuality has “procreative effects” and thus is a matter for both discipline and regulation, at the level of the individual body and in terms of the overall population that will be increased by its effects.<sup>326</sup> This points to the larger question of the norm, combined disciplinary and regulatory technologies that “succeed in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population,” thus taking control, or at least care, of life.<sup>327</sup>

Such a political system, in regulating life, “exercise[s] the power of death, the function of death.” Foucault thinks that this is the point at which “racism intervenes,”<sup>328</sup> helping to justify the logic that “the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.”<sup>329</sup> Killing would be acceptable to achieve this objective—not only outright murder “but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on.”<sup>330</sup>

That the Japanese government and the majority of its citizens are anxiously protecting the “national interest” by acting “normal” at a time of crisis attests to the investment of biopower in maintaining the homeostasis of the population by security and regulatory measures. The “state of emergency” as the aftermath of the tsunami in Fukushima upsets that homeostasis, hitting biopower head on. In turn, Hata-Kanoko’s attention to the “state of emergency” and the “chance” that can emerge from it aspires to the critique and resistance of biopolitical governance. The legacy of Lo-Sheng as a statist institution of segregation likewise manifests the technology of biopower. However, the nature and the cause of the residents’ “state of emergency” are different. The Lo-Sheng residents have already been “expelled”—or politically “killed” through “racist” terms—by biopower; the forced move of some residents after the MRT construction began and the ensuing danger of possible landslide performed a second, doubled “killing.” How can those already “killed” by biopower resist, or simply keep surviving? If biopower is that which enables the condition of “life,” how can one survive in the state of political death? I think this conundrum is implicit in Hata-Kanoko’s statement: “Facing natural disasters, we still have hopes for reconstruction, but the people of Lo-Sheng, where can they go for hope? How can they reclaim their community that has been destroyed? Or, like the people suffering from the nuclear disaster, can they only keep living in the state of emergency? How can we find any kind of chance from this state of emergency?”

Hata-Kanoko says that *butoh*, the struggle for the right of survival, is the “body in the face of crisis,” compelled to “grab life” for itself. The visceral word “grab” as the body’s instinctual urge to keep on living, hold onto its life, is telling. Given that the condition of “life” is enabled by biopower, the seeming impossibility of “grabbing life” (from the place excluded by biopower) makes survival efforts more urgent and poignant. In the extreme situation of crisis, the body performs its most raw instinct and desire to survive. If the individual body is produced by

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 256.

discipline, the “chance” that Hata-Kanoko invokes, believes in, wishes for, and pushes for is in the body’s survival instinct, coming through the cracks of discipline.

In the section “Bamboo and Sparrow” in *Body-Vessel*, dancer Hsu Ya-hung performs a balancing act on a thick piece of bamboo hung in midair above the stage in the tradition of Japanese *geino* 艺能 (entertainment), as seen in old-fashioned circus or temple festivals. According to Hsu, who has long been involved in the Lo-Sheng movement, the two old popular songs in Taiwanese and Mandarin that form the background music, which she heard the first time she came to Lo-Sheng, are favorites of the senior residents. During the act, her body was constantly trembling, from a mixture, perhaps, of fear, excitement, and the physical exertion of gripping the round surface of the bamboo with her soles and balancing herself as the bamboo constantly wavered in the night wind. I, for one, was fixated watching her slowly and carefully planting her feet, each step along an invisible line that she must follow to stay centered and not fall. We did not see a “representation” of a “*geino* performer,” nor did we see a polished and perfected “product” of *geino* that was simply “entertaining”—and thus happily consumed. We trembled along, feeling something dangerous and troubling in between, seeing the acts in awkward conjunction with the old pop songs’ alternately melancholy and ameliorating lyrics and tunes that might evoke different memories for each audience member. The balancing act is not a “show”; every time Hsu steps onto the bamboo, it is a struggle to find balance, to stay on, survive the act, and not fall. “In the contemporary situation in which even life is being managed, it can also be said that only in a crisis situation can there be the possibility for one to grab life for oneself.” Hata-Kanoko’s words resonate here.

In the situation of the Lo-Sheng residents, to actually seek out a “chance” for survival is extremely difficult. Having “realization” (*juewu* 覺悟)—as Lo-Sheng residents say of Hata-Kanoko—but not “resignation” (*duannian* 斷念), as she insists, she is taking a leap by tapping into the power of the supernatural in her performances and in her writing. In her statement, after firing off dire questions at the reader—“Like the people suffering from the nuclear disaster, can they only keep living in the state of emergency? How can we seek out any kind of chance from this state of emergency?”—she continues not by suggesting solutions, but by conjuring a completely different scene of the ancient and the supernatural: “We will not allow people to forget. For this reason, let us carve the evidence of the residents’ lives onto the stele. To not allow people to ignore, let us create the stele that carries the will as powerful as a magical curse.” By looking back and invoking the powers of the spirits of past Lo-Sheng residents, Hata-Kanoko’s *butoh* fights against the biopower of the present “life.” Pronouncing the individual names on the list during the performance also works against biopower’s treatment of humans as a “population” devoid of individuality.

Foucault actually notes that “death is outside the power relationship,”<sup>331</sup> for it effectively ends any outside control over life. To the extent that death escapes biopower, this is how Hata-Kanoko’s whole discourse of the priestess’s body in possession of the dead spirits can be potent. On the one hand, it continues *butoh*’s self-negation to the point that the body becomes merely a container, a “corpse” for the “Other subjectivity” to enter. On the other hand, by resorting to this realm of the dead that escapes biopower, it aspires to the potential of protest, if real-life resistance is barely possible, against biopower.

Foucault also contemplates the changing performance of death rituals to illustrate how

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<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

death is ignored by power. He notes that “the great public ritualization of death gradually began to disappear, or at least to fade away” in nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>332</sup> Death was once made so spectacular and ritualized because “it was a manifestation of a transition from one power to another,” from “that of the sovereign of this world” to “that of the sovereign of the next world.” By contrast, under biopower, death becomes “the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his own privacy.”<sup>333</sup> Death rituals in turn become more privatized. Hata-Kanoko’s resort to the realm of the dead via the mode of “temple festivals” (*miaohui* 廟會)—spectacularized public rituals, especially those acknowledging ghosts, such as the Ghost Festival in Taiwan and other similar practices found in Taiwan and Japan—seems to push even more through the cracks of biopower. Indeed, many sections of *Body-Vessel* draw from spectacles found in Taiwanese funerals, such as the reference to *xiaonü* 孝女 (“filial daughter”) and the performance of pole dancing. “Bamboo and Sparrow” performs an act from Japanese temple festivals. Such festivals and spectacular funerals now mostly occur in the rural areas; to create a performance after such practices on the campus of Lo-Sheng, at the fringe of metropolitan Taipei, also injects a different mode of power into the “life” of a space meant to uphold the value of a modernity produced by the permeation of biopower.

Although Hata-Kanoko’s butoh invokes the concepts of “empty vessel,” “corpse,” and “possession of the dead spirit,” which seem to be the opposite of life, on a parallel (and intertwined) level, it also seeks to embody the urgency of survival and the struggle to fight for one’s right to live, to “grab life.” We might think of Yellow Butterfly’s butoh performances such as *Body-Vessel*, which imitates the lively spectacles of funerals while invoking possession by spirits and dancing for those spirits, as an embodiment of just such an intertwined duality. Hata-Kanoko’s persistent awareness of female corporeality also figures here, helping her to reimagine her butoh body as the body of the ancient priestess. Now, upon this matrix of the body of the priestess and the death rituals, Yellow Butterfly’s butoh also re-embodies the actual acts of survival by the females in the actual rites. The section “Filial Daughters” in *Body-Vessel* features two female dancers performing pole dancing. In many Han Chinese funeral customs, people hire “filial daughters” to perform crying, often in hyperbolic fashion, as a way to show the filial piety of the children of those passed away. It has also been a custom in Taiwan to hire pole dancers to “entertain” the dead and those attending the funeral. It is not impossible that both the “filial daughter” and the pole dancers could appear at the same funeral. To perform pole-dancing under the title “Filial Daughters” instills irony in the spectacular absurdity of female corporeal affects channeled in patriarchal and heterosexist terms, coexisting with erotic desires at the sites of funerals.

Hata-Kanoko incorporated pole dancing in her butoh after coming to Taiwan. She is attracted by its alignment with her persistent concern for survival, particularly the affinity to her own existence as a female performer. She mentions that some female butoh dancers perform at strip clubs as a way to make a living, including Hijikata’s dancers.<sup>334</sup> Hata-Kanoko is tapping

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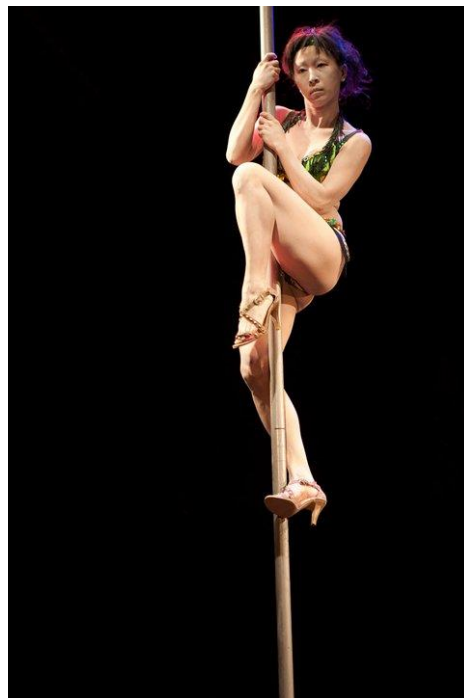
<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Hijikata and Ohno Yoshito had danced in cabarets all over Japan during the 1960s as a way to finance his work. Hijikata’s female disciples/dancers also worked as cabaret dancers in the evenings at a string of nightclubs run by Hijikata’s wife, performing a sort of butoh-style striptease. Economic needs aside, cabaret dancing is also a way of generating a sense of detachment from the body for the dancers, an experience of objectifying the body to realize the “dead body” on stage. However, Paul Roquet has questioned the possible exploitative nature in this practice. See



into desperate means of survival as sometimes the only option for females caught within the economy of patriarchal consumption; in other words, the reality of the ways many females have to “grab life.” Hata-Kanoko said that in the underground strip-show scene in Japan, the performer, often not “trained” in the “techniques” of stripping, would just carry a straw mat on stage and improvise her own way of stripping on the mat—she does not really know what to do, but *has to do it anyway*, as she is already out there.<sup>335</sup> The pole dancing Hata-Kanoko adopts from Taiwanese customs embodies the tripartite terms of survival, female corporeality, and spectacle of the death ritual. It is a “life-grabbing” spectacle particular to the melancholy and absurdity of specific female experiences at the liminal site of life and death. Hata-Kanoko’s theoretical and aesthetic leap requires not only creativity and imagination but also a heartfelt grounding of survival struggles in the most ordinary everyday practices that one’s body performs.



“Filial Daughter” in *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (2011). Photo by Chen You-Wei.

“Filial Daughters” (“Xiao nü 孝女”)

*The animated tune of the popular Taiwanese rock song “Love-struck by You” (“Sa diu li 煞到你”) is playing. The curtain rises. Two poles are planted vertically onstage. In the background is a standing rectangular box with the big handmade poster “Yellow Butterfly Song and Dance Troupe” (Huangdie Nantian gewu tuan 黃蝶南天歌舞團) attached to it. Two female dancers, powdered in white and wearing flashy bikinis and high heels, step onto the stage and begin to sway to the music near the poles. They dance a routine onstage and then hop onto the poles,*

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Paul Roquet, *Towards the Bowels of the Earth: Butoh Writhing in Perspectives* (Davis, Calif.: Palupalu Publishing, 2003), 66–70.

<sup>335</sup> Field note, July 28, 2011.

*their thighs and ankles clinging firmly onto them, and they swing, spin, and hang upside down in different poses. While their bodies rehearse such sexualized gesticulations, their faces remain quite stiff and expressionless; their white powdered bodies even lend an air of grotesquery to the performance. The rock song keeps singing the hyper-excitement of a man being “love-struck” upon seeing a pretty woman and almost losing his wits: “It’s flooding, it’s flooding. My love is hit by a big typhoon. [...] Wait a minute, wait a minute. Of the whole world I only love you. [...] I am love-struck by you!”*

### **Taiwan Haibizi and Its Rhizome-like Inter-Asian Action**

Yellow Butterfly and Haibizi tent theater collective form a fluid convergence in their production supports and inter-Asian activities. Haibizi 海筆子 and its tent theater practice, like Yellow Butterfly’s *butoh*, also carries the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance and its politics. The same group of Taiwanese experimental theater artists who met Hata-Kanoko brought the Japanese tent theater director, Sakurai Daizo, to Taiwan, resulting in the meeting of the two artists and their respective performance practices, and leading to new kinds of artistic and political collaborations with the Taiwanese artists.

Sakurai encountered the Taiwanese artists in the Philippines in 1994 and had worked on exchanges with them between Japan and Taiwan since then. In 1999, he began producing tent theater works in Taiwan with the Taiwanese artists. In 2001, Sakurai moved to Taipei with Hata-Kanoko and the next year, he formed a tent theater troupe based in Taipei with a group of Taiwanese artists. They drew from the name of a kind of mangrove that grows along the seashores of Taiwan, *shuibizi* 水筆子 (*Kandelia obovata*, “water pencil”), and modified it to Haibizi (“sea pencil”) as the name of their collective activity.<sup>336</sup>

Haibizi, besides collaborating with Sakurai and his Japanese tent theater and making their own tent theater productions, has also produced Yellow Butterfly’s performances in recent years, including all the productions that took place at Lo-Sheng Sanatorium. Later, the Taiwanese members renamed their action “Taiwan Haibizi,” independent from Sakurai’s Japanese tent theater but still maintaining a collaborative relationship with them. The collective states their aesthetics and politics on their own weblog as such:

“Haibizi” designates the “planning” of things (*qihua* 企畫); it is not the name of a collective, but the name of action. Although based in Taiwan, the action is not planned only for Taiwanese people. What is geographically called East Asia, from the South China Sea to the Taiwan Strait; from the East China Sea, to the Yellow Sea, to the Sea of Japan; it is all like the flowing “water plants” (*shuicao* 水草), and that is why we name our action as such. Like “water plants,” the small force that has nothing to depend on = the expression of the body (似“水草”般無所依憑的弱小力量 = 身體的表現). How does the modern history of this area collide with, contest, and intervene in the current geopolitics? Take it as a hypothesis, if you will, but this is what “theater” aspires to.<sup>337</sup>

<sup>336</sup>Yu-Bing Lin, “The Space in the Gaze of the Dead Spirits: Sakura Daizo and the Tent Theater in Taiwan (亡靈凝視的空間：櫻井大造與臺灣帳篷戲劇),” in *The Body and Space in Postwar Japanese Experimental Theater*, 113–174. Lin also traces the historical development of tent theatre in Japan (most notably Kara Juro’s Red Tent since 1976), as well as Sakurai’s involvement in it and departure from it.

<sup>337</sup>Taiwan Haibizi Web log, available at <http://taiwanhaibizi.pixnet.net/blog> (accessed February 9, 2012). Original text: “企畫”的名字“海筆子”不是集團的名字，而是行動的名稱。雖然以臺灣為據點，但這並不是單單為臺

Taiwan Haibizi projects their action to engage with the heterogeneity of East Asia, while bearing in mind the modern history of this area and its interaction with geopolitics. Framing this region, and hence their action, as “water plants” that flow through seaways creates a “rhizome-like” fluid connectivity; moreover, it is not in the mode of strong, forceful expansion (recalling imperialism) but taps into “the small force that has nothing to depend on = the expression of the body.”

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari conceptualize “rhizome” in reference to an underground root system that grows and expands horizontally. Opposed to the rigid construction of “arbor thought,” their “rhizome” maps out a process of networked thought, forces, bodies, affects, and ways of being that form lines of connections into new networks of beings or thoughts.<sup>338</sup> There is an interesting similarity between the organism of “rhizome” and that of *shuibizi* (what Haibizi draws on), which makes it compelling to consider Deleuze and Guattari’s thesis in relation to the inter-(East) Asian action that Haibizi is undertaking. *Shuibizi* is a species in the mangrove family, or *Rhizophoraceae*. Its Taiwanese name refers to its pencil (*bi* 筆)-shaped seedling, which drops into the water upon maturation and can be transported great distances until it finds a suitable environment to root (usually in the mud along the seashore); the process can last for weeks, months, to over a year while the floating seedling stays dormant. *Shuibizi* can be found on the seashores north of the South China Sea, Taiwan, the Ryukyu Islands, and southern Japan; a similar type of *Kandelia* grows on the seashores of western and eastern India, Burma, and the rest of the South China Sea.<sup>339</sup>

Designating their action as Haibizi, or “water plants,” the tent theater collective adapts *shuibizi*’s floating and resilient quality and its suggestion of a geographical expanse throughout Asia, but discards its biological-taxonomical confines. The joint tent theaters of Taiwan Haibizi and the Japanese collective led by Sakurai have performed in cities in Taiwan and Japan and in Beijing, many places where Hata-Kanoko has also performed.

While I do not argue that Haibizi is “rhizomatic,” I would like to propose that we allow ourselves to engage, if momentarily, “rhizomatically” in *sensing* the corresponding energies between aspects of Haibizi’s operations and Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. Haibizi’s actions are certainly circumscribed by the collective’s distinct politics, but also share the quality and energy of a horizontally networked manner of openness—allowing the troupe to be always becoming or in quest, rather than resting on a fixed solution/achievement—while believing in the agency of the floating plants and their “small force that has nothing to depend on,” the “expressions of the body,” rather than the excess of artifices.

Whether people become involved with the collective through tent theater, Yellow Butterfly, or the Lo-Sheng movement, during the production period, everyone participates in the labor. Because of the politics of refusing institutional funding, all work is voluntary, and the proceeds from ticket sales go to cover production costs. They use the most cost-effective methods and materials for making the tent, the stage, the costumes, and the props, and cook food

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灣人的行動計劃。在地理上被稱作東亞的領域，從中國南海到臺灣海峽，從東海、黃海到日本海，都好像漂浮的“水草”，所以如此命名。似“水草”般無所依憑的弱小力量＝身體的表現，這一地區近代的歷史性是如何與現在的區域政治學碰撞、鬥爭，又是怎樣介入的。且把它當作假說，但，這正是“劇場”所憧憬的。

<sup>338</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

<sup>339</sup> Sheue Chiou-Rong, Ho-Yih Liu, and Jean W. H. Yong. “*Kandelia obovata* (Rhizophoraceae), a New Mangrove Species from Eastern Asia,” *Taxon* 52, no. 2 (2003): 287–294.

for everyone. An important aspect of the tent theater practice led by Sakurai is developing a kind of body immersed in physical labor. As to Yellow Butterfly's engagement with the Lo-Sheng movement, besides the street protests that some members physically joined, Haibizi also initiated the guarding of the Lo-Sheng residents who did not wish to move, lest violence be exerted on them when the government forced them to do so. This 24-hour patrol lasted for two months beginning in May 2010, attracting many other people to support the Lo-Sheng movement; they lived collectively day and night at Lo-Sheng, receiving civil disobedience training in preparation for confrontation with the police.<sup>340</sup> During the production period, the people who joined in the collective work might not have known one another, yet this was not a problem, since the core members had already developed a culture in which tasks were clearly assigned while individuals often make themselves available for needs that arise. At the tent are Lo-Sheng residents, friends in arts circles, students, activists, housewives, children, etc. ... After the end of the performance, the audience was invited to stay for discussion and refreshments (cooked by the crew), and to join in the dismantling of the stage and tent, creating possibilities for future collaboration.

### **Conclusion: The Political Kinesthetic of Yellow Butterfly's "Butoh Action"**

Some of the Lo-Sheng residents have stated that seeing the tightly curled hands and contorted posture that Hata-Kanoko performs onstage makes them think of their own infected bodies and pain.<sup>341</sup> Hijikata, in negating the social institution of modernity that shapes our habituated existence, had sought inspiration from the states of the "Other" of modernity—Japanese rural farmers, Kabuki, children, etc. In his 1972 piece *Story of the Small Pox (Hosotan 庖瘡譚)*, for example, he danced in a weak body, in continuous inward contraction, by fasting and assimilating the deformed states of leprosy patients.<sup>342</sup> While Hata-Kanoko's butoh inherits the discourse, politics, and performance of butoh's critique of modernity, most strongly from Hijikata, she also moves from experimenting with her own bodily states and appearances to actual engagement with the social. To directly confront the struggles in real life, as she expresses clearly, is *her* method and politics.

*Jiaohuan* becomes a mode of intertwined politics and aesthetics of butoh practice and social engagement—or "butoh action," in Hata-Kanoko's words. *Jiaohuan* takes place between the butoh dancer's body and the spirits of the dead; among Hata-Kanoko, the individual dancers, and the Lo-Sheng residents; and among the bodies, objects, thoughts, and energies of all those that exist in or entered the space of Lo-Sheng and the performance of Yellow Butterfly. Continuing butoh's self-negation, the concept of the empty "vessel," besides emptying/eliminating the self-ego, also points to the mode of engagement between the self and the Other. As Hijikata's discourse implies, rather than the mastery of the Other, the encompassing of the Other in his butoh is a "mutual grappling." *Jiaohuan* further connotes two entities undergoing a more concrete sense of "replacement," the mutual leaving and entering of each other's space as a kind of grappling, frictions involved, difference remaining while transformation happens.

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<sup>340</sup> Hsin-wen Chang 張馨文, "Haibizi, Lo-Sheng, and Me" ("Haibizi, Losheng yu wo 海筆子·樂生與我"), public forum at *Coolloud* (Ku lao gong gong wang luntan 苦勞網公共論壇), April 21, 2010, available at <http://www.coolloud.org.tw/node/51680> (accessed February 9, 2012).

<sup>341</sup> Field note, July 4, 2011. The resident commented on the section "Barrel Woman" shown at the press conference for *Body-Vessel of Priestess* held on that day.

<sup>342</sup> Lin, "Negative Body." 34. Lin cites critic Goda Nario.

Hata-Kanoko's framing of Yellow Butterfly's performance at Lo-Sheng in terms of a temple festival is also worth contemplating. The "extraordinary time-space" created at the specific site of Lo-Sheng recalls KuroDalaiJee's writing on the "Ritual" of postwar Japanese avant-garde performance group Zero Jigen. Active in the 1960s, Zero Jigen was known for its provocative collective performances (often of vulgar acts involving nudity and coded gestures) in the urban spaces of Tokyo. The "Ritual" of Zero Jigen, like many concurrent Japanese avant-garde artworks, or the "*angura* (underground) culture," used exaggerated physical actions and gestures to express contrasting or conflicting ideas. KuroDalaiJee cautions against reading this in the framework of Orientalism (taking as truth "the dualistic theory of 'the modern West' and the 'premodern Asia'"<sup>343</sup>). Rather, he stresses the critical tension, reflection, and "zeroing of time" in the "extraordinary time-space" that Zero Jigen created. Rather than staging their "Ritual" in the linear progression of modernist temporality, the group performed past, present, and future alternately and simultaneously, while juxtaposing a variety of subjects, events, and modes of expression. They sought to carve out a "vacuumed dimension" when "fictitious bills between reality (economy) and fiction (arts) are over-issued in a balanced manner," in "the gap where the eccentric performance group and the spectator group meet."<sup>344</sup> As such, the performance is a "non-hierarchical self-reflection of vulgarism ('vulgarism+vulgarism+vulgarism+')" in which events and places are taken out of context and thrown together, and performers' bodies are minor objects against the backdrop of the high-powered city.

The temple festival that Hata-Kanoko draws from the Taiwanese and Japanese customs shares with Zero Jigen's "Ritual" the multiplied, nonlinear, nonhierarchical assemblage of symbols, acts, and auras, such as the invocation of the ancient priestess and the supernatural, the recalling of the era of *kindai* (including past Lo-Sheng residents' names pronounced with the specific Showa years they passed away), the Taiwanese "postmodern" funeral spectacle (pole dancing), and the matching of old Taiwanese and Mandarin pop songs to Japanese traditional circus acts. The temple festival re-created at Lo-Sheng by Yellow Butterfly is also an "extraordinary time-space," but one where the spirits are alive in protest against urban developmentalist and biopolitical violence. Yellow Butterfly's performance, staged at the fringe of metropolitan Taipei, deep in the campus of Lo-Sheng, next to its Memorial Pagoda, and inside a tent (Taiwanese funerals or temple festivals often have tent-like canopies to softly mark spaces of activities outdoors), summons urbanites to leave their usual places and enter this alternative place and time. In this regard, this mode of site-specificity is akin to an open container available for entering and "re-placements."

In line with its politics of critiquing states and institutions, Yellow Butterfly does not receive funding from any institutions. Hata-Kanoko explained that in her own previous butoh performances, she never received such sponsorship, but since collaborating with the tent theater and Haibizi, she has consciously refused institutional funding. Interestingly, the "ticket sales" for the performance in Lo-Sheng were reframed into a "gift economy"; audiences were told to put their money in red envelopes, or patrons' names were written on red strips of paper upon receipt of money and hung around the reception table as a gesture of thanks for the contributions. Hata-Kanoko explains that because one cannot engage in commercial activity at Lo-Sheng, in thinking about how to receive ticket money from the audience, she was reminded of how in the Taiwanese old-fashioned music clubs (otherwise called *hongbao chang* 紅包場, "red envelope clubs"), the

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<sup>343</sup> KuroDalaiJee (Kuroda Raiji), "The Rituals of 'Zero Jigen' in Urban Space," *Aru* 3 (2003): 36.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

audience gives “red envelopes” to the singers. In Japan, there is a similar practice in underground strip clubs (in Taiwan, also called *niurou chang* 牛肉場, “beef joints”). She thinks that borrowing the practice from the “red envelope stage” and the “beef stage” is quite in concert with the humility of folk artists who perform to make a living, to get “rice and vegetables”; it is also a kind of “direct” *jiaohuan*.<sup>345</sup> Besides the affinity Hata-Kanoko’s *butoh* has with the real struggles in life, in a way, the most simplistic and “direct” *jiaohuan* is also going back to a state before art become a reified commodity detached from reality, masking its true economic relations.

In contemplating the participation of *butoh* in social movements, as well as confronting the ideologies embedded in the society, Hata-Kanoko elaborates on the “bodily sensation” she felt about her political and aesthetic engagements in relation to *jiaohuan*, from which she further invokes different kinaesthetic feelings and metaphors:

I do think Lo-Sheng and I are in a relationship of *huxiang jiaohuan* 互相交換 (“mutual exchange”). I participate in the Lo-Sheng conservation movement; Lo-Sheng gives me a place to fight.

Toward the concept of “*jiaohuan*,” I feel two kinds of bodily sensations. One is less nervous where the language of *jiaohuan* can apply; the other makes me nervous when we directly apply the language of *jiaohuan*. The *jiaohuan* inside my body or through performance makes me less nervous. The relationship with the dead spirits, the invitation of audiences into the space of Lo-Sheng, and the exchanges and interactions with the *a-gong* and *a-ma* of Lo-Sheng do not make me nervous and can be characterized as *jiaohuan*. These are all on the level of the performance or thoughts when engaging in social movements. On the other side, I feel nervous when engaging with the residents of Fukushima; it is more complex and full of problems—with whom can I *jiaohuan*? This has to do with the history from the atomic bomb in Hiroshima to the present, the U.S. domination, the bureaucratic system since Meiji Japan, and the lack of feeling of Japanese citizens. I found another language—that is, to “create friction” (*mocai* 摩擦, or to “rub [*mo* 摩] against”) as a way to *jiaohuan* with the situations before. At least I can create friction, or we can also say whenever we begin a movement, there must be “friction.” I am beginning to “create friction” in Japan now.<sup>346</sup>

Hata-Kanoko’s words disclose the limitations of *jiaohuan* in social engagement. Perhaps the marginality that Hata-Kanoko insists on in her *butoh* vibrates in a similar frequency to Lo-Sheng residents and the spirits, making it easier for possibilities to be opened up in the liminality of their encounters. By contrast, when engaging with the residents of Fukushima, Hata-Kanoko was “nervous” because of the more complex historical structures and the people’s deeply embedded ideologies (and structure of feelings). In this situation, the concept of *jiaohuan*—and the bodily sensation it evokes—becomes insufficient. What Hata-Kanoko thinks of instead is to “rub against” and create “friction” to the problems as a way to possibly “exchange” with the history. Facing what is to her an even more deeply fixed obstacle, she has to “rub against” the kinetics of the larger structure in a much more different “frequency” to begin any “movement” at all.

The concept of *jiaohuan*, besides being a way through which to understand the evolution of Hata-Kanoko’s *butoh* praxis, also resonates with Chen Kuan-Hsing’s proposal of turning to a

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<sup>345</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 30, 2011.

<sup>346</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 23, 2011.

heterogeneous Asia as a way for Asian peoples to reimagine subjectivities. In recent years, Hata-Kanoko expanded her concern, beginning to reach leper colonies in Japan, South Korea, and China. In the same week of the performance of *Body-Vessel*, Mogi Ryo, a member of the Kanto committee of Friends International Work Camp (FIWC), was invited to give a report on the volunteer works the group has done in leper colonies or villages in remote areas of China, South Korea, and Japan. Titled “Connecting Asia through Hansen’s Disease” (“Touguo hanshengbing, lianxi quanyazhou 透過漢生病，聯繫全亞洲”), the report was followed by discussions with the Lo-Sheng residents and those who have been interested in the issues of Lo-Sheng or Yellow Butterfly’s performance. It also resonates with Chen’s idea of “international localism”:

Internationalist localism acknowledges the existence of the nation-state as a product of history but analytically keeps a critical distance from it. The operating site is local, but at the same time internationalist localism actively transgresses nation-states’ boundaries. It looks for new political possibilities emerging out of the practices and experiences accumulated during encounters between local history and colonial history—that is, the new forms and energies produced by the mixing brought about by modernization.<sup>347</sup>

Hata-Kanoko plans to continue performing at Lo-Sheng (regardless of whether the other dancers want to—and if they do, she wishes to begin training with them for at least one year), and to perform in Hiroshima again, as well as “returning” to the sites where she performed between 1998 to 2000—Kyoto, Hokkaido, and the Philippines. It almost seems that to “return” is the single most important reason for her future plan. “I do not know how long it will take, but because they have given me a lot, I have to return to them. This is probably an exchange that will take twenty years to accomplish. Of course, the different issues in different places will influence the content of the performance.”<sup>348</sup>

Just as the “butoh action” of Yellow Butterfly goes beyond the theatrical performance to consciously engage with the social, its political kinaesthetics is not limited to the convulsions of the dancers’ bodies onstage. Critic Iwabuchi Keisuke has described the kinesthetic affect of butoh at the limit state of crisis and its infection of the audience:

The body of the Butoh dancer convulses endlessly. It is as though each fiber of the muscles has its own selfish autonomy and shudders violently as it pleases. It is not some *kata* that cries or is sad, it is the muscles themselves that are crying. The will does not move the muscles, the muscles themselves have their own will. The trembling of the limbs infects the spectator watching, too; this will of the muscles calls forth the penetrating power of the imagination so that mutual communication between audience and dancer occurs.<sup>349</sup>

When Hsu Ya-hung strives to balance on the bamboo, the irregular trembling of her body is the “cry of the muscles” that aligns with the *actuality* of butoh’s seminal pursuits (“body on the edge of crisis”), as well as Hata-Kanoko’s metaphor of “grabbing life” when “body is in the face of crisis.” *Jiaohuan*, in terms of a butoh aesthetic (body as “vessel” and spiritual possession) and social engagement, connotes a constant leaving and entering of each other’s space, a mutual *grappling* of intersubjective co-becoming. The audiences have to make the physical effort of climbing up the hill to participate in the “temple festival.” Members of Taiwan Haibizi and those

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<sup>347</sup> Chen, *Asia as Method*, 223.

<sup>348</sup> Hata-Kanoko, e-mail to the author, December 30, 2011.

<sup>349</sup> Keisuke Iwabuchi, “The Paradigm of Butō” (“Butō no Paradaimu”), *Butōki* 3 (1982): 75, quoted in Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 50.

who volunteered to help with the production collectively pitch the tent, make the stage, the sets, the props, and the costumes, and take turns cooking for everyone. Some members of Taiwan Haibizi and supporters of Lo-Sheng movement prepared themselves with civil disobedience techniques in order to guard the residents from forced removal by the police. Hata-Kanoko decides to “rub against” the deeper and more complex structural problems that makes her feel “nervous” as a way to begin “movement,” and perhaps “(ex)change.” These intertwined, cross-dimensional “dances” form the political kinaesthetics of Yellow Butterfly’s “butoh action,” an alternative inter-Asian transnationalism in the making.



## Coda

### Shifting Rhythms

In a companion event to the conference “Temporal Shifts: Time across Contemporary Chinese and Taiwanese Art Practices” held at UC Berkeley in 2013, Shanghai-based dance artist nunu kong gave an informal showing to students, fellow conference participants, and the general public in the Bancroft Studio on campus. In this improvisation-based performance, nunu relentlessly tested and played with the sense of time. She would hold an ordinary gesture in stillness for an unusually long time, disrupting the general public’s expectation for the nonstop flow of “dance.” She persistently repeated simple acts; at one point she placed her elbow on top of an old slipper she found in the studio and rubbed it back and forth against the floor. In the middle of her performance, she mentioned the time in Shanghai. Taking her watch off her wrist, she went up to the audience, handed the watch to one member, and said, “This is made in China.” A long, curious, and perhaps awkward pause ensued; the calculation of time—together with the boundary between the performer and the spectator—were thrown in a different light. As she returned to the supposed “performance area,” she put her watch back on her wrist and listened to it closely—for another long time.

Throughout nunu’s impromptu performance, the durations and repetitions refracted the mundane and the gestural into idiosyncratic rhythms and tempos. The old slipper and the rubbing act called attention to the texture and even the micro history of the Bancroft Studio that we momentarily shared. (Who wore and then left those slippers in the studio? How long had they been there?) But this materiality was further recalibrated as the supposed objectivity of the abstract measurement of time was challenged by its difference across geographical locations, even though we all speak the same language of date, hour, minute, and second. What we as the audience members counted on as solid and unquestionable, through which we envisioned the happening of the event, its beginning and end, its congregation and dispersal, was put into question by placing time in relativity. Indeed, as we were transfixed by nunu’s “*still-acts*,” she was enduring the material effect of jet lag, having just flown from Shanghai to San Francisco the day before. More than the abstract notion of “simultaneity,” more than going along with or against the kinetic of capitalist modernity, and more than the inevitable transnationality of contemporary performance, the unorthodox rhythm of nunu’s performance, pressed by the specific informal, impromptu condition, pushed the materiality of the present to prominence. What kind of temporality were we compelled to experience and negotiate between the slipper, the watch, the different bodies, the different tempos, and the different time zones?

Like what this single instance sparked, central to this research project is the way in which performance negotiates temporality across different spaces, often simultaneously. Performance draws attention to the material conditions and effects that are integral to the negotiation of temporality across space. The spaces the performances and the performers move through are not singular and static, but constituted within and traverse national boundaries. The source materials of the performances trace the transnationality of the locales and personal journeys: the cultural and political heritage of Chinese calligraphy, the ways Euro-American modernist art exerts its influence, the sedimentation of Buddhist and Daoist philosophy, the rituals of the Ghost Festival and their link to the migratory history in Taiwan, and the histories and memories of Lo-Sheng

Sanatorium that bear the traces of Japanese colonial modernity. Meanwhile, these performances also participate in the transnational economies of performance, as part of established international festivals or catalysts of alternative networks of transnational engagement. Globalization exerts its influence on the formation of newly transnationalized performance conditions, within which the performances engage with the local's own fraught processes of modernity and the legacy of modernity's equally fraught discourses within the international fields.

We saw how kinesthetic efforts are made to cope with or inhabit these differing temporalities. Both Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's *Cursive* series and Legend Lin Dance Theatre at once tap into historical and cultural impulses in Taiwan and put forward a kinesthetic statement of modern dance to the international dance world in which they participate. Whereas Cloud Gate fashioned a new kinesthetics of dance via a training of conscious eclecticism, Legend Lin crystalized one system that enfolds the physical with the philosophical. The butoh troupe Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South similarly resorted to the historical past to collect source materials. Unlike the "purity" of the *Cursive* series and Legend Lin's works, however, the shards of memories that Yellow Butterfly assembled traverse locales of Japan and Taiwan, particularly those scattered at the margins of the society, often at the brink of oblivion. These historical fragments put in competition invoke the fraught modern histories of East Asia; further provocations result from the constant disintegration of Hata-Kanoko's butoh kinesthetics as bodies tremble to "grab life" in face of crises.

If examining Cloud Gate's *Cursive* series and Legend Lin's works allows us to probe prominent engagements of Taiwanese local memories and senses of identity as they negotiate the geotemporal mapping along the Euro-American-centric narrative of modernity, engaging with the butoh action of Hata-Kanoko and Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South allows us to reflect on the legacy of Japanese colonial modernity in Taiwan and its relevance to other suppressed recent histories of East Asia. The practice of Chinese calligraphy, furthermore, recalls the premodern order of the Chinese empire and the historical transnational engagements within the East Asian region. As facets of the past and the present continue to interact with each other in the alchemy of discourses across transnational locales, engaging with these performance cases as counterpoints also serves to clarify their distinctions. In other words, one of the goals of this project is to parse out the differences and complexity within the colossal designation of "transnationalism," as each of the unevenly interconnected zones harbors its own formative conditions and expansive pathways that constitute the multifaceted "contemporary performance."

Shuttling between different geographic zones and temporalities, these performances are inevitably caught within negotiations of identities and representations. Engaging with this crucial problematic, this project pushes further to consider the effects of economic development that these performances also mediate, contest, and complicate. Another contribution of this project is the consideration of the intersection between socioeconomic and kinesthetic discourses as they reconfigure temporality. The temporality of development demands an orientation toward the future; the "latecomers" to development are compelled to "speed up" and "catch up" with the developed—this, to note again, is within the geotemporal narrative of the Euro-American-centric vision of modernity that had served the colonial enterprise. The state of *chendian* 沈澱 that the *Cursive* series' reengagement with Chinese calligraphy seeks and the *huan* 緩 that is central to Legend Lin's aesthetics thus form profound responses to the developmentalist structure of feeling in Taiwan. What becomes complicated is that the "slowing down" in response to the

local's developmentalist temporality is met with different categorical forces and temporal mappings within the international, especially within Euro-American zones, while dance companies still wish to compete internationally, often also shouldering the mission of bringing politically underrecognized Taiwan into international visibility. Internally, Taiwan is dealing with its own reflections on the narratives of the nation, most heatedly in the years leading to and after the lifting of the Martial Law, which also manifested in the performances created in this period. This project is not content with simply stating the problems of international representations; rather, it traces the different strands of forces circulating within and across performance locales to consider the nuances between the reifications and abstractions of representation and the kinesthetic strategies deployed in these contemporaneous negotiations.

In nunu's oral presentation in the conference "Temporal Shifts," she expressed that, to her, "contemporary dance" is about "now."<sup>350</sup> The emphasis on the extreme point of the present sharply resonates with the extreme acceleration of the compression of time that characterizes the drastic economic development China is undergoing. In part, to title a conference that engages with contemporary art practices between Taiwan and China in terms of "temporal shifts" evokes the historical connections and breaks between the two milieus that manifest their temporal repetitions and differences "shifting" between them. Most recently, one might discern similarities between China's accelerating growth along capitalist economic development lines and what Taiwan went through over the 1980s. Of course, China bears its own context-specific legacies and multiple influences within its postsocialist modernity amid the intensity of globalization.

nunu also spoke about herself and her fellow independent (*duli* 獨立) contemporary dance and performance artists based in different cities in China. As independent artists, they opt to work outside of official support (they are not registered with the government and cannot have public ticket sales for their performances). Working in the underground venues in Shanghai, she characterized their activities as forming "[their] own special rhythm of time" as "the great economic development passes [them]." Not willing to align with the official vision for the "future," they are nevertheless filled with "a feeling of unrest." Much maneuvering has to be improvisatory, and the "now" is imbued with a particular urgency—"We don't know where the future is," nunu said.<sup>351</sup>

In Bancroft Studio, nunu carved out intervals via stillness and repetition into which she inserted reminders of time in geographical relativity. Back in Shanghai, she would need to improvise rhythms to hold on to a "now" that maintains an alternative to the torrent of development. If earlier across the strait in Taiwan, reengaging with the past was a prominent strategy to calm down in order to cope with the compulsion to accelerate—as in the dilation of the present moment in *chendian* or the reversal of developmental time with *huan*—it seems that for nunu and her fellow artists based in China, there is not any one way, or any one kind of alternative rhythm, in which these artists can settle. For nunu and the others, the desperate seizure of a "now," pressed by the uncertainties about their future, seems to also point to the futility in searching for anchors in the past. We might recall how the grand spectacle of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games has equally written China's premodern past into the narrative of progress and development. In this light, Shen Wei's will for abstraction

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<sup>350</sup> nunu kong (a.k.a. Wu Yandan 吴艳丹), presentation in the panel "Moving Time" in the conference "Temporal Shifts: Time across Contemporary Chinese and Taiwanese Art Practices," UC Berkeley, February 1, 2013.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

might imply an aesthetic impulse to deflect such a narrative force. For someone of a slightly earlier generation, like Yin Mei, memory of a bygone childhood during the Cultural Revolution is alternately surreally vibrant and like a long piece of blank paper<sup>352</sup>—it is alongside relentless theatrical reincarnations that permutations of her solo performance *Cursive* emerge, secreting a body of knowledge that she gained from the diaspora. This project performed its own “shift” when it extracted one telling moment in which contemporaneous intersections of Chinese calligraphy and dance provided opportunities to problematize both the “transnational” and “Chineseness.” Seen in relation to the younger generation of artists based in China, artists like Shen Wei and Yin Mei provide telling references to other shifts that happened in light of the genealogy of modern performance in China.

But even *nunu* is embedded in a specific sphere of the international dance world. The support of international communities—based in China and abroad—provide, if still unstably, the renewed conditions for the flourishing of artists like *nunu*. “We need to make works good enough to go to international festivals,” *nunu* remarked in the conference, not without a certain irony. This statement reminds us to be vigorously attentive to the formation and dynamics in the specific contemporaneity, for artists are pressed to be keen to them, more so under the current conditions of a drastic space-time compression.

For the particular moment in Bancroft Studio, *nunu* chose to stand still and listen to her watch. The “freeze moment” against the invisible ticktock of the watch created a rhythmic contention both subtle and great. What does it take to reorient time from the distance of Shanghai, or the manufacturing power of China that propels it to move “forward” and on which much of the world now relies? She listened closely.



*nunu kong* performing in the Bancroft Studio at UC Berkeley, January 31, 2013. Photo by the author.

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<sup>352</sup> In Yin Mei’s work *City of Paper* (2010), a long strip of blank paper is first stretched across the stage by the dancers. Throughout the whole piece they play with strips of paper in different ways, until gradually projections of images appear on the strips that evoke events of a single momentous year during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Her previous works have deployed installations and other visual designs to generate a provocative visual environment as she repeatedly contemplates her childhood memory of the Cultural Revolution, specifically *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies* (1988) and *Nomad: The River* (2005), but this theme recurs throughout her works.

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**Performance (by company/choreographer in the order of appearance; works in chronological order)**

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集)

*Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984* (春之祭禮·台北一九八四). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min (林懷民) and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in Chung-Hsing Hall (中興堂), Taichung. 1984.

*Songs of the Wanderers* (流浪者之歌). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 1994.

*Portrait of the Families* (家族合唱). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 1997.

*Cursive* (行草). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2001.

*Cursive II* (行草 貳, currently renamed as *Pine Smoke* 松煙). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2003.

*Wild Cursive* (狂草). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2005.

*White X 3* (白 X 3). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2006.

*Water Stains on the Wall* (屋漏痕). Choreographed by Lin Hwai-Min and performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2010.

Shen Wei Dance Arts

*Connect Transfer*. Choreographed by Shen Wei and performed by Shen Wei Dance Arts. Premeired at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center, New York. 2004.

*Connect Transfer II*. Choreographed by Shen Wei and performed by Shen Wei Dance Arts. Premeired at Judson Church, New York. 2008.

Shen Wei

*Scroll* (畫卷). Choreographed by Shen Wei for the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics. National Stadium, Beijing. 2008.

Yin Mei Dance

*Cursive* (alternately titled *Wild Grass* and *Ink/Body/Paper/Scent*). Choreographed and performed by Yin Mei. Premeired at Whitebox Gallery, New York. 2006.

Lin Lee-Chen (林麗珍)



*Who am I* (我是誰). Choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen for Seven-One Concert (七一舞展), presented by National Council of Cultural Affairs of Taiwan. National Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall, Taipei. 1982.

*Worship to Heaven* (天祭). Choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen and performed by Taipei Folk Dance Theatre as part of the 1990 Taipei International Art Festival, directed by National Council of Cultural Affairs of Taiwan. Experimental Theater of National Theater, Taipei. 1990.

Legend Lin Dance Theatre (無垢舞蹈劇場)

*Jiao (Miroirs de Vie)* (醮). Choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen and performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 1995.

*Anthem for Fading Flowers* (花神祭). Choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen and performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2000.

*Song of Pensive Beholding* (觀). Choreographed by Lin Lee-Chen and performed by Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Premeired in National Theater, Taipei. 2009.

Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troup (黃蝶南天舞踏團)

*Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (祝告之器). Choreographed by Hata-Kanoko and performed by Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe. Lo-Sheng Sanatorium, New Taipei City. 2011.