

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Feeling Taiwaneseeness in Urban Choreographies Four Qualities of MiQing () Dynamics of Monday School in Taipei

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*Award date:*  
2022

*Awarding institution:*  
University of Roehampton

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Feeling Taiwaneseeness in Urban Choreographies: Four Qualities of MiQing  
(瀟情) Dynamics of Monday School in Taipei

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD

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2022

## ABSTRACT

In 2011-2012, for the first time, I left my hometown of Taipei and went to Lyon. The pursuit of a nomadic life – feeling different cities with my body (Shentigan 身體感) – was ignited and thenceforth has been enacted. I returned to Taipei in 2013, moved to Tokyo in 2016, and I had a fruitful life in London from 2017 to 2020. The next city is summoning my body, and the research initiated and realised by my body's fascination for urban materialities will reinvigorate there. Carrying the fervent indulgence and investigation, this doctoral project analytically delineates the relationships between city, choreography, and body/ Shentigan and formulates a sense or senses of being Taiwanese (Taiwaneseness) through kinesthesia and affects, instead of the politically assigned or declined identities, the authentic/conventional markers of being Taiwanese. This research asks and examines how feelings emerging from the individual corporeal exploration of the collective city space may assist the understanding of the ways choreographies of certain urban spaces produce perceptions and notions of the potential attributes of Taiwaneseness. Benefiting from theorisations of Taiwanese dancing bodies, the historical transformation of Taiwanese identities, contemporary dance studies and urban studies, this practice-led project attends to the phenomena of how bodies collectively and individually move in urban spaces and provide experimental understandings of Taiwaneseness. The significant enlightenment from notions of body as knowledge, non-representational theory, and Asia as method encourage me to problematise the assumed postcolonial construction of Taiwan and the West. I am then able to distinguish my definition of Taiwaneseness as MiQing (瀰情), the filling dynamics, endowed with four specific qualities: circular viscosity, civic spiral energy, diversity of bodies, and empowerment of movements. With personal experiences and bodily participation in a free outdoor dance course, Monday School in Taipei, I address the intersection of the phenomenal observations of urban dancing bodies from the personal, the collective, to the social embodiments in a layered analytical approach called the 'concentric pathway'. Devising two research tools of the Geo-Choreo and kinesthetic

autoethnography, I unpick a localised dynamic, diffusing both from individual bodies and collective corporeality within specific urban environments to provide renewed perspectives of Taiwanese-ness that have predominantly been approached by cultural representational meanings and political ideologies. This research also aims to renew and diversify the discourse and the praxis of Taiwanese bodies with non-exclusive corporealities in everyday life by offering individual experiences and deciphering material, physical, and temporal connections that have not been fully discovered. Throughout the exploration of how the entry of bodies in certain urban spaces rewrites spatial meanings, in this thesis, Taiwanese-ness is for me a contingent amalgamation of various and ambiguous moving bodies of MiQing dynamics that is lasting and driven by the act of care, the attentiveness to feeling others, and feeling within others.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In his well-known article in Chinese-speaking world, 謝天 (Xie Tian), Thank Heaven (1997), renowned Chinese writer and scientific researcher Chen, Zhifan (陳之藩) once wrote that 'the people that I have to express gratitude to are so many, so I thank heaven'. I was too young and perhaps just too naïve or arrogant then to consider his remarks religiously vague and conservatively cliché. Some decades later, I have learned and realised that for the heaven, that cultivates a specific mind and body within and under it, to be formed, it requires tremendous unexpected blessings one is fortunate to be encountered and endowed with. Heaven, not as intangible as it sounded to the unexperienced me, is comprised of people, people who lend their generous care and support via their feelings that fill the space and time around the experienced me.

Throughout the doctoral journey, if I may, to borrow the inspiration from Chen, Zhifan, I would like to thank *heaven* as well. In this heaven, there are my parents, sisters, partner, supervisors, friends, dancers, movers, artists, writers, researchers, institutional, organisational and governmental staffs, and those who beautifully diffuse into my life and my walking/moving/writing/thinking on the streets in the cities at different moments. Without my parents' love (宜芸, 大陸), I would not have been able to complete the research that sometimes gave me a punch so profound that I could have just cowardly gone away. Warm and healing support came from my two younger sisters (家后, 家齊) and my dearest aunt (幼真) sustained my faith in the completion of this journey. Such profound antidotes for a demoralising body-mind were constantly and generously provided by my supervisors, Prof Adrian Heathfield and Dr Glenn Odom. Because of their selfless and patient care and understanding for an elusive drifter in academic disciplines, I finally managed to sustain a very individual way of conducting my research. Moreover, their impressive insight, depth of knowledge, and openness of knowing nurtured me to materialise my passion into tangible information that may interest someone who

may pleasantly spend their time accessing what I ardently and experimentally share. I thank Prof Susanne Greenhalgh, Dr Chi-Fang Chao and Prof Alan Latham for their valuable and critical viewpoints that urge this research into better articulation. For being offered the opportunity to unfold the dream of academic practice, I would like to sincerely send my greatest gratitude to the late esteemed scholar, my former supervisor, Prof Andrée Grau. Without her, I would never have experienced the tremendous joy and fulfilment that both intellectual and physical knowledge can bring.

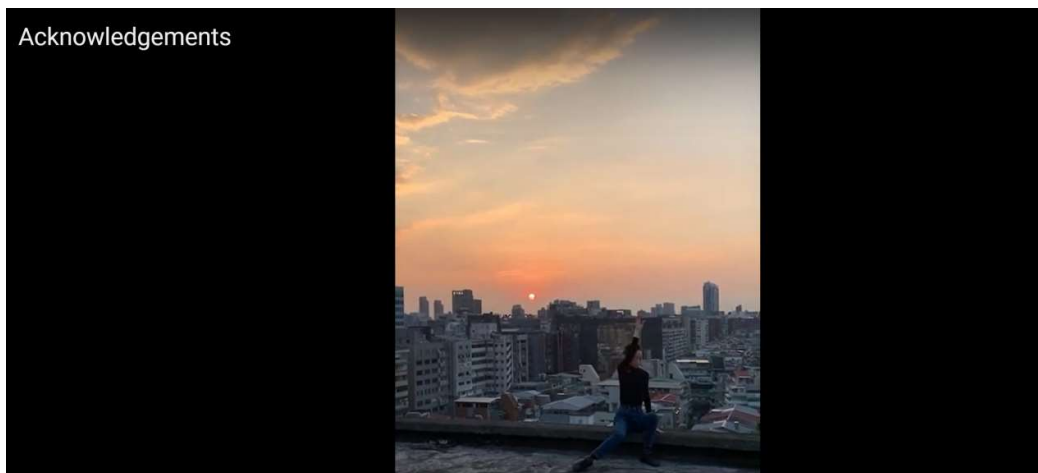
The final phase of writing coincided with the unexpected and perhaps unprecedented pandemic era the world has undergone. This is particularly those times when friendship eased one's mind and touched one's heart. Thank you Giita (宋老師), Chisan (其珊), Yi-Chin(宜瑾), Doris, MengTing (夢婷), Burong (不容), Howl (承伯), XuZhi (徐至), Chuanfei(川菲), Henry (宗翰), Xiaomin (曉敏), Wang (王濤) and Mandie, for your constant care as well as loving and inspiring companionship. I enjoyed your wisdom and perspectives, without which I dared not go far beyond and pursue values I believe in. I also appreciate immediate and considerate assistance from my friend Li-May(麗梅) as well as Hueichung (慧君) and Eileen of the Education Division of the Taipei Representative Office in the UK and the generosity of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan as well as Santander and Ede and Ravenscroft. I am truly grateful for the constant help from the faculties and staff of DTP and Dance departments, Prof Joe Kelleher, Prof Graham White, Lisa James, and Erica Stanton, the Graduate School of Roehampton, especially Miles Purcell and Merete Whittaker from the Welcoming Centre that removed the administrative and financial obstacles along the way.

I would like to thank Yang, Nai- Shuan (楊乃璇), the funder of Monday School (週一學校) and Les Petites Choses Production (小事製作), Lin, I-Chin (林宜瑾), the choreographer of Bare Feet Dance Theatre (壞鞋子舞蹈劇場) and those beautiful dancers and movers in daily life who generously shared their journeys and love of dancing and living with me. They helped to

immensely strengthen my theoretical and practical understanding of Taiwanese-ness, or the dynamic and organic silhouettes of who we are and how we move in trivial, but intriguing lives.

Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my husband, Max (韋志), a lifelong friend and critical supporter with sharp observations that has constantly illuminated the ways of becoming a down-to-earth dreamer and an out-of-the-box researcher. For that I am fortunate to enjoy his companionship in London and various cities, I deeply appreciate my parents-in-law's (愛鳳, 登賢) generous open-mindedness.

Thank you all very much for your warm hearts. With so many people that lent their care and support to me, I have to thank heaven for being fortunate to meet you, feel you and move my body with you in different corners of wondrous cities.



YouTube



Instagram



## **Ethical Statement**

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference DTP 18/ 029 in the Department of Drama, Theatre, and Performance and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on August 9, 2018.

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## Introduction

### Mapping and Moving in Global Cities: A Kinesthetic Genesis

Getting off the airport express, I arrived at the assumed centre of Lyon on the 8th of September 2011. I had missed the signs at the front entrance of the station on the first day of my arrival due to my body's disorientation in an unfamiliar city. My corporeal assumptions from experience, that an airport express train should always stop inside at the front of a station, close to the most apparent entrance that is 'clearly-signposted', led me to utterly confuse the back entrance of the station with the front. I later found out this embarrassing mistake in *Gard de la Part-Dieu* two-thirds into my one year residence as an international student in Lyon, when one day I was curious and critical enough to look it up. My dormant interest in cities had been evoked when this simple experience articulated the profound relationship between the body and the city it moves through.

During my first time living in a foreign city, an urban space that was very different from my home city where I had lived for more than twenty years, I had encountered a significant number of moments that sometimes nudged me, and several times forced me, to face the various ways the meaning and embodiment of identity differ. From where, and for whom was I being, and how did I move in the city? These are questions I have reacted to and continued to rethink within and beside my body. The cultural-geographical shock on Day One of my ongoing diasporic journey had provoked my keen interest in how the points of contact the body has with daily material environments have shaped or even transformed the identities of city dwellers, and the social collective.

I lived in Lyon in 2011-2012, back to Taiwan in 2013-2015, moved to Tokyo in 2016, and I had a fruitful life in London from 2017 to 2020. When I was being exposed to different social, cultural, and political moments alongside architectural materialities in cities, experiences of

living in other cities have cultivated my multi-faceted identifications and enriched my Taiwanese consciousness. I negotiated my previously constructed ways of operating, 'an individual's fundamental way of being in the world', with new encounters a city was offering (de Certeau, 1984: 100). Feeling the composition of streets, the speed of automobiles, and the way people pass by each other gives me a hint of the conventional manners to situate oneself in the place. My experience speaks with Chang's (2015: 64) idea, 'space significantly relates to self-awareness and identity'. Whenever landing in a new environment, I feel strangeness and insecurity simply due to the distinct height and density of buildings in each city. For example, the buildings on the streets of Taipei are like jostling shoulders, they are generally tall but never gigantic. The compacted space and the altitude of these constructions may have narrowed my body and perception as well. Thus, when thrown into a geographically larger city, my body generates anxieties to fit in. My body – in this unfamiliar disposition of space – loses its balance and generates internal conflicts. My 'operating' in a new city makes me trace back my roots in memories of Taipei, silhouetting the differences piece by piece. By physically discerning the city, I am then able to reconcile my body with it. From the phenomenal episodes in my diasporic lives, I experienced what Grosz succinctly argues: that cities contribute to the ways urban inhabitants perceive other human beings and the provided materialities, with which they build up certain 'corporeal alignments, comportment and orientations' (Grosz, 1995:10). Here, I would like to keenly add ethnic performances. As a 'female Asian', an apparent female foreigner, the urban settings of my host cities also affect how I see and act out my hard-to-miss race/ethnicity label. What kind of 'Asian' woman will I to present myself as or not? How will I perform my ethnicity that will support a smoother living in a Caucasian-dominated city? This had never occurred to me before I stepped on to the European continent. This research does not address the body of immigrants in my home city, Taipei; however, my diasporic experiences remind me of the importance of the reflexivity of individuality when I intend to theorise personal

phenomena and draw analogies of collective moving bodies from my individual bodily experiences.

The notion that cities shape bodies and vice versa is well-explored (Pile, 2013; Pile and Keith, 1997; Harvie, 2009; Sewell, 2011; Hou, 2010). It is the specific intersection of the phenomenal observations of both individual and collective urban dancing bodies, in a layered analytic approach – the 'concentric pathway' – to the personal, the collective, and the social embodiments, that distinguishes my definition of Taiwanese-ness from other discussions of the city, body, dance, and identity. Like any form of dance, my 'dance in the city' is the communication and negotiation of space, and the space is the city. The perception of a city foregrounds the organic process of how and with what I have been identifying. It is through the focus on both my dancing body and the danced city that I am grasping the idea of how I identify myself in a certain context that is constructed, not only via the representation and ideology of the culture, but also structuring practices and the space in which they are operating. I was excited to find my physical experiences resonate with Teresa Heiland's (2014) investigation. She discovered that choreographic tendencies in LA have been significantly influenced by the intense visuality of the Hollywood industry. Audiences have a taste for sensuality, objectifying bodies. However, female bodies in choreographic scenes are not forged into an object of the gaze, a casting of femininity that is ubiquitous in Hollywood films but are instead transformed towards androgyny. As 'dance retains the inner spatial pulls and shaping of release technique and adopts the use of strong force', the extreme physicality pursued by the female dancers complicates the identification of the locality, the 'Los Angleness' of gendered perceptions and a mesmerising capacity of senses embodied by the Hollywood production (Heiland, 2014: 69). The dancing body in the city reveals a complexity of the gendered body and the assumed capacity that may also differentiate LA, full of potentiality to be diversified.

While a dancing body reacts with and reveals potential cultural or political inscriptions of a city, for me, the emergence of smell, sight, touch, sound, kinesthesia influence the interaction my body has with a city. To be more precise, a body of embodied identities is often intertwined with the operation of senses and feelings. Besides a dancing body, I experienced how senses move with my body and, together, they unfold and (re)fold numerous identities I later depict as 'a way' of being Taiwanese. Working with a premise that the operations of the body, feelings, emotions, kinesthesia are intertwined, this research investigates the relationships between city, choreography, body, and identification to formulate the experienced and sensed sociocultural phenomena that may articulate the potentiality of Taiwaneseeness. I unpick a localised dynamic diffusing both from individual bodies and collective corporeality within specific—urban environments to provide renewed perspectives of Taiwaneseeness that have predominantly been approached by cultural representational meanings and political ideologies. The discovered interactions respond to and facilitate the cultural and societal experiences of Taiwanese subjects, especially those of the generation born after the 1980s, in the context of an unfolding of democracy in Taiwan, that I am part of. This project aims to propose potential contents of Taiwaneseeness by intentionally engaging in dynamics between moving bodies in Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan, and the generated sensory materialities among certain urban settings. The significance of this research lies in a reflexive alongside kinesthetic approach to ideas of Taiwaneseeness deliberately foregrounded in the individual experiences of the researcher to provide the phenomenological and experimental understanding of Taiwaneseeness as MiQing (瀰情), the filling dynamics, endowed with four specific qualities which are the circular viscosity, the civic spiral energy, the diversity of bodies, and the empowerment of movements, enacted as a work of care. I will introduce MiQing later on after exhibiting various ways my body has danced in four different cities to prepare my readers to

engage with the dynamics of moving bodies in a city that can be seen as a choreographic embodiment of identities.

I also embrace an intention to present this exegesis as a reflection of the awakening/developing process of my Taiwanese awareness, my 'Taiwaneseness', attributed to various affective meetings with urban materialities and the arising constellations of sensoria among my body and the bodies of others in cities. I first recognised this revealing of Taiwaneseness, be it embedded or cultivated, not in my hometown Taipei but in a foreign city: Lyon. This experience has imprinted my body and mind with a long-term curiosity of what Taiwaneseness is for me and perhaps for my generation, not in terms of ideology or as a taken-for-granted ethnicity, but as a set of affected, sensed, and embodied experiences in a certain locality.

I henceforth began a mission to probe the meaning of being Taiwanese in a local and global context. This project does not attempt to conclude what Taiwaneseness exclusively entails. Instead, I am drawn to the thinking of bodies as 'lively compositions crossing thresholds of intensive and extensive consistency whose limits are defined less by physical boundaries than by capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies' (McCormack, 2014: 2) to unravel the formation and the transformation of identities. Meanwhile, in terms of the resource of knowing in this thesis, I invited and emphasized a visceral format of thinking: my body as thinking against and on an orthodox textual enlightenment. It was through the involvement of my moving body within this project, step by step, that I managed to observe, describe, and pinpoint the feelings, senses, kinesthetics, and movements emerging from the intertwined dynamics of moving bodies and recognised identities. In this research, the formulated dynamic of MiQing 瀰情 sheds light on how the feelings and senses of identities are generated in the corporeal exploration of city space. It also assists my understanding of how choreographies of and within various urban spaces produce the perceptions and notions of what it means to be a certain

individual situated in certain spaces, in my experiential cases, a Taiwanese person in the cities of Taipei, Lyon, Tokyo, and London.

Although the phenomenological resources this research benefits from, and MiQing itself, are perceived within and predominantly generated in Taipei, experiential references from other localities also create conceptual and practical soils for the ideas that finally sprout and grow entangled together in this research. These bodily experiences of 'the feelings and senses of identities' present to me an elusive and tangled process of identification – where and when an identity undergoes formation and transformation is hardly to be marked precisely, and this undergoing is always environmentally spontaneous. In this preface, I submit my various diasporic experiences to invite my readers to grasp a sense of the complexity of the practised and felt identities revealed by a body's awareness of motion. These episodes of living in four cities also demonstrate how certain spaces spontaneously influence the relationships between body and space and how these interactions shape my continuous concern of the interaction of the body and the urban setting, as well as senses of identity arising within that interaction. This is what I call 'spontaneity of environment' and I intend to portray it throughout the following sections. Further, benefiting from this idea, I look at Taiwaneseeness as an active choreography in urban settings. I use choreography<sup>1</sup> in its common understanding related to dance. I also employ it to highlight a relationship between bodily movement through space and time. The most significant and perhaps unconventional purpose the term choreography proposes is to emphasize the feelings that arise when a body moves in and is moved by the encountered materialities and intentions. I believe choreography is a feeling<sup>2</sup> and to be more extensive, it is

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<sup>1</sup> More details on the ideas of choreography this research employs can be found in Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> In a series of talks held by the Siobhan Davies Studios, on 23/03/2021, choreographer Jonathan Burrows described his experiences of choreographing as feeling that resonated with my practices. His talk assisted me to clarify the relationship between feeling Taiwaneseeness, the moving of body, and being in a city. I am thus inspired to propose the idea and practice of considering Taiwaneseeness as

an immediate dynamic amalgamation of feelings, senses and the visceral. It is an embodied Shentigan (身體感) (Yu, 2015a), a more holistic and simultaneous understanding of bodily/sensate operation, which I will explain later in this chapter. In order to allow my readers to 'feel and read' what I mean by considering choreography as a felt sense in the urban setting, I will elaborate my moving/ Shentigan experiences in four cities. It is crucial to mark this necessary progression for the analysis and discussion of this research. The accumulated observations and actions throughout all the journeys have informed how and why I unravel what I perceive, such as being Taiwanese, in a certain way. The genealogy of Taiwaneseeness introduced in the following discussion of four different cities also serves as a preview of the concept of the concentric pathway, which will be explained in the next chapter. I have developed and employed this tool across the analysis in these chapters, which aims to concurrently array the empirical findings and the discussion of personal, collective, and social dynamics in cities.

### **Intimidated Asian Woman in the Meandering Maze of Lyon**

In 2011, I became an international student for the first time in twenty-eight years. Arriving at Lyon, I immediately found myself lost and intimidated by the unfamiliar contours of the city. The layout of the airport and the main city station contradicted my geographic senses that had been so long shaped by my home town, Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan. Being in an environment that hardly bore any similarities with where I came from had a significant influence on my self-perception and consequently a disempowerment of my body. There was a time I could not step out of my studio flat for a week due to potential threats on the streets based on several occasions where strangers deliberately frightened me with their voices or suddenly moved very close in front of my face. Apart from linguistic barriers in life, the organisation of the streets and the compact layout of the buildings also contributed to a sense of insecurity. Most

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choreography. Please visit <https://www.siobhandavies.com/events/continuing-conversations/> for more information.

of the lanes and streets in Taipei are straightforwardly arranged in a grid design, however, in the part of Lyon where I resided, they were like branches. There was a main road attached with different curved lanes of various widths, which did not provide pedestrians with a clear and predictable sight of who was approaching<sup>3</sup> (Lynch, 1960:56). The insecurity was embodied by walking on the streets with my arms crossed in front of my chest, and my legs tended to alternate as quickly as possible; responsive, fast, and mobile movements to allow for contingencies. This physical posture manifested the highly-conscious intention to obscure the labels of race and gender since they could render me susceptible to unexpected situations. At that moment, I was not only lost in the geographic backdrop, I was also lost in the psychological environment.

Cities help us sense the arrangement of space and navigate through the spatiality of power (Grosz, 1995: 109). As a woman and a dancer in the choreography of a city, embodying Tonkiss' (2005: 103) insights of 'gendered perception of safety in the city', I need to be more sensitive and alert to the environment. This cautiousness is heightened by being a female and an ethnic other at the same time. When I encounter verbal or behavioral mischief or a misdemeanor in host cities, I am unable to discern whether it is caused by my gender or my ethnicity. Eventually, I conclude it is a double discrimination that female migrants seem to undergo and share in many cities (Gruner-Domic, 2011; Chacko and Price, 2020). I then realise I have developed an acute and inevitable awareness of being a woman of ethnic embodiment. When an incident occurs on the streets, it is hard for me not to act and think with my built-up gendered and racial toolkit. Bodily feelings inform me of my reality of being a foreigner in the host cities, a woman in a male dominant society, a nonconformist against the urban imperative,

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Lynch in his seminal book, *The Image of The City* (1960), suggests that curved lines in the urban settings tend to cause more confusion than abrupt directional paths.



a complementary component of the diverse environment, and a Taiwanese person in the world. While the city is foreign to me, maybe, so am I to it.

However, I had a very different experience in the old region of Lyon. My arms were not as tense and sometimes hung loosely by my thighs while enjoying walking on the cobbled streets in Old Lyon. As my ankle boots contacted the cobbles, the generated sound struck a symbol of confidence and happiness. The composition of the old region was horizontal and open, negative emotions of uncertainties were erased through the flat layout that supported an immediate view of approaching pedestrians. Roads in Old Lyon were much wider, straighter and arranged in a tangible manner that enabled a better geographical orientation. The buildings were low and filled with decorative details, creating a historically immersive environment. Warm colours and the loose quality of this area nurtured a great sense of a welcoming enjoyment. Although this freedom and carelessness did not always persist in the area where I lived, the shaping of myself and my body according to what the city provided was approaching a balance where I felt confident with who I was and how I looked. Before I plucked up the courage to fully experience and explore the city, I found myself often bumping into obstacles, both physical and mental, unable to navigate around other pedestrians. By walking, the city was folded into me more and more. I then had a feeling that there was mutual communication, the city became more tolerant of my existence, people living in this city offered more kindness rather than the hostilities present in those early weeks of my arrival. My body was familiarising itself and gradually announcing its existence with more comfort, despite the persistent interference of verbal disconnection.

There was also an important emergence of Taiwanese awareness. Before studying in Lyon, I had never thought about the identity crisis of being Taiwanese or Chinese. Upon my arrival, there had been a series of documents thrown into my face by the immigration office, the rental process, insurance and other institutional and governmental authorities in Lyon. 'Filling out'

these forms with my body and mind, I consciously and reluctantly ticked the box of nationality followed by the words of 'Taiwan, China', which suggests Taiwan is not an independent country but some '(is)land' territory of China. A similar failure to recognise Taiwan's sovereignty by those who were not familiar with the political situation or politically ignore/simplify the complexity between Taiwan and China was vividly embodied by the repetitively encountered question, 'Isn't Taiwan part of China?' I felt and silently screamed 'I am Taiwanese'. Confronted with a system of power that identified me, 'a material ritual practice of ideological recognition' in bureaucratic and immigration processes, I felt resistant to being hailed as a taken-for-granted, nationally-opaque subject (Althusser, 1970: 70). However, I had no choice but to be subject to the 'rules' of being documented and allowed to reside as a foreigner. Anger and frustration were evoked by these experiences; they also provoked the awareness of being Taiwanese, an identity of Taiwan, that I did not want to be mistaken for being Chinese. The claimed 'Taiwaneseness' in Lyon differentiated me from other Asians, not to be generalised as 'those Asians', perhaps at that time, especially from Chinese people. For me to situate myself in a multicultural context, it was the first time I strongly felt the significance of being recognised as Taiwanese. It was not to deny the embedded Chinese cultures widely and variously shared in global pan-Chinese communities I have grown up with (in a cultural sense, not a geo-political sense). It was the political arbitrariness that hardly allowed any personal negotiation that annoyed me and fostered the sense of Taiwaneseness, particularly in contrast to the politically hegemonic operation of Chineseness.

Besides the antagonism of the violently assigned and manipulated identity of Taiwan, China,<sup>4</sup> I also noticed that appreciating my physical reality as a Taiwanese female in the city

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<sup>4</sup> Employing the idea of an 'assigned' identity proposed by Achilles Mbembe (Mbembe, 2017:12), I aim to emphasise the arbitrary and non-negotiable prescription of identity by any forms of authority. By adding 'manipulated', I imply that the prevalent agreement of the assigned 'Taiwan, China' enacted in many countries goes beyond the legacy of colonialism in the context Mbembe critiques. It involves the sweeping political and economic

also contributed to the emerging Taiwanese-ness. Unlike the enthusiasm of announcing my Taiwanese identity ignited by the confrontation with administrations, adjusting my body and its organic development to the shape, colour, and quality of the urban backdrop of Lyon informed a subtle embodiment of the awareness of Taiwanese-ness. I did not avidly perform my Taiwanese-ness in differentiation from Chinese-ness but I observed how my idea of Taiwan and being Taiwanese were encouraged, (trans)formed, and individualised as I interacted with the city and the materialities. Looking at the dynamics of identification my body generated through the contact of disparate cultures and the geographic materialities of Lyon, I became aware of the sensory and kinesthetic information in the urban environment, such as the way I walked, the routes I chose to choreograph in the daily commute and routine, the language I spoke with accents and the gestures I made. These practical movements hold sway over the formation of personal and collective identities that both delineate a certain feeling of Taiwanese-ness.

### **Choreographing a Body-City Hypothesis in Hometown Taipei**

Coming back from Lyon in 2012, I intuitively walked in the newly developed fashion that had been inscribed in my body as I strolled on the concrete streets in Taipei. There were also changes in posture and gestures. I walked and stood more upright. When I laughed, I did not cover my mouth with my hand as frequently as before. My family were surprised to see a more confident temperament in me. I also noticed that the physical transformation seemingly reflected a more proactive interest in what it meant to me to be Taiwanese woman and its relation to the layout and the places of a city I was residing in. I compared the ways trees are grown among the avenues in Taipei and Lyon and contemplated how the height and density of trees affected the ways in which I moved, and in which my understanding of being a citizen in Taipei and a resident in a foreign city had been reshaped. I enjoyed the green and nature arranged in certain parts of Taipei and realised that old trees were considered the identity of

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power, agency and capital of China.

the city and, for some, the practice of tree preservation foregrounds the identification of a Taipeier (Wu, 2005; Chuang, 2015: 232). The phenomenon of identifying with a city through appreciating an old tree was also seen in other cities in Taiwan (Wang, 2014). I was acutely curious and experimenting with what kind of identities I delineated, or intended to draw, as I interacted with the city by moving and movements. I sometimes displaced myself by acting as if I was in Lyon whilst living in the city of Taipei to see how each city inter-influenced me. I felt that my body was informing new perspectives of perceiving and creating identities before my mind had produced and comprehended them.

Drawing from these interactions between city, body, and identity, I hypothesized that the physical shape and material content of a space was a direct and immediate reference for the moving body. I further posited the generated movements and emerging dynamics within which an individual constructs and conceptualises certain sensory qualities were deemed as the marker of identity. I experienced my hypothesis clearly when I choreographed a short piece for myself in a local contemporary dance and physical theatre company. There was neither a theme nor a requirement for creating this work. With this freedom, my brain could not function precisely and yielded to my body when the body started to improvise in the studio. The studio was converted from a classroom in a tiny school, located on the lower part of a small hill. Most of the institutional buildings I had experienced before as a student, based on my memories and senses, were tall, with at least six floors. They were also wide, with a minimum capacity of approximately 200 students on each floor. There was normally a 400m running track and a sports field. The construction where the studio was located could only accommodate four levels and formed a squared U-shape, where the open end was a raised platform full of old trees without any track and field.

Though nature came into the space easily, the space of the whole campus between each building in the neighbourhood was very limited and the studio seemed squeezed and tilted into

the residential area. There was a sense of compression, and the air could only discreetly flow in from the open green side. The studio looked on to the green side and it juxtaposed the air coming from the front and the spatial pressure from the back. In my final choreography, the body was asymmetrically curved and inhibited by jagged movements, seemingly strangled in a deficiency of breath. This choreographic result was not intended but informed by the improvisation of my body in that specific enclosed, compressed and aurally paradoxical space. By supporting my assumptions around the relational interactions between the environment and the body, this experience inspired a bodily investigation of choreographic techniques and their relations with the specific energies, consistencies, and layouts of certain spaces that produce specific corporeal implications.

### **Experiencing Urban Japaneseness on the Densha in Tokyo**

In 2014, with a preliminary hypothesis, I visited Tokyo to further experiment and delve into the relationship between dance and city. In Japan, times spent in a dance studio provided me with different senses and sensations from than those of walking on the streets as a frequent tourist. The experiences of dance practices in Tokyo as a resident coping with cultural differences allowed me to observe the bodies in the city and their corresponding cultural embodiments. I attended four workshops of the prestigious Japanese contemporary choreographer Saburo Teshigawara in Tokyo in January and May. Saburo Teshigawara is a well-established figure in the performance field and has collaborated with renowned dance institutions and companies around the world such as Ballet de l'Opéra National de Paris and Göteborg Opera Dance Company. My intention was to investigate the attributes of his movement and moving philosophy and the urban material setting his company was surrounded by.

His workshop usually began by standing on the floor and feeling the whole body in proximity to stillness. I barely understood Japanese except basic verbs and nouns such as walk,

stop, raise, hands, and legs. However, by observing and feeling, I was able to follow the instructions and my body was simultaneously feeling the qualities and textures the instructor demonstrated. From a standing pose, the participants started to release different parts of the body and subsequently we were led by our bodies to further release tension. In the course of releasing, stillness seemed to be slowly expanded or melted. From this expansion each movement was magnified, and the physical feedback initiated bigger movements that eventually shattered the stillness in the space through rapid and chaotic shaking of as many parts of the body as possible. It was not only the upper body that was affected by an inner force derived from the core, the whole body and even the lower limbs were also incessantly bouncing on the ground, propelling the body to advance in a vibrating manner, where the body's energy accumulated. For me, it was releasing and exhausting at the same time, and my body needed and desired to exhaust itself boldly, beyond its imagination and limitation, in order to release and output more. As the peak was reached collectively, the instructor introduced an ending to the class, where each participant was led to walk in a circle, gasping then coming back to stillness to calm down body and mind as a whole.

After experiencing the technique of Saburo Teshigawara, I decided to stay longer in the city of Tokyo. Even though I had visited Tokyo countless times, I only started to pay attention to the body and its dynamics with the city in these four months as an international research student in the following year of 2015. Apart from my numerous tourist experiences of the country, my grandma had constantly provided resources on what constitutes Japan and Japaneseness (nihonjinrashisa 日本人らしさ) as she had lived through the Japanese Occupation and developed a dominant Japanese identity. However, my assumed familiarity with cultural differences did not alleviate the significant amount of mental and physical adaptation.

The morning scenes at the crossroads in front of the side exit of the campus in the public space of the main avenue in Chiyoda, the central region of Tokyo, have been imprinted in my body and my mind. Almost each morning of the weekday, a crowd stood in line on the pedestrian paths in an orderly manner waiting for the traffic light to deliver a sign to pass. While the colours changed, the crowds naturally formed in a tube shape, transporting hundreds of bodies to the opposite or diagonal ends. There was seldom an individual stepping out of place to form a singularly separate line. I imagined, if looked at from a higher level, the crowd might appear squarely threaded, advancing like a system of flowing water. From what I observed and experienced daily as one of the pedestrians at this specific junction, morning commuters moved in an intensely introverted way. Their arms were closely pressed to their bodies as if the armpits had been sealed; their bodies were compacted to limit one's space as tightly as possible in order not to permeate other people's space. It seemed that public space was pushing personal space to its utmost limits, which resulted in a clear and fast-forwarding shape of transportation, demarcating a thin but legible boundary between each individual and between each engaged space.

The inward force perceived at the crossroads for me resembled a feeling where the strings slowly and determinedly pulled into the centre of a body with a strong commitment to persist. The dynamic of withdrawal, initiated by the contraction of the core of a moving organism, struck a similarity with the body that I had practised and perceived in the workshops a year previously. Although the intention of the moving body based on that technique was to release the tension of a body, it required definite strength to reach the ultimate goal to attain a comprehensive state of letting go of the limbs. The moving seemed utterly free and full of possibilities from the beginning, at times the repetition of chaotic waving and bouncing limbs gradually accumulated, and the exertion of and exhaustion from controlling emerged. The force of introverted stillness continued and persisted subtly, even though the landscape of the body seemingly depicted a

continuity of crazily dispersing movements as I observed. Throughout spreading movements in the space, I empathetically felt, and simultaneously moved within the participants. My body needed to enunciate a grounding and contracting energy to facilitate the unlimited physicality.

The mixed dynamic trajectory of withdrawal and spread delineated by the body in the workshop bore a resemblance to conditions of embodiment on the famous Japanese rail transport 'Densha' (電車でんしゃ). While the pedestrians at the junction seemed to be conservatively, detachedly, and silently crossing the street, the passengers on the Densha manifested unexpectedly aggressive movements while their bodies were compacted, subject to the personal physical boundaries in the limited space on the Densha. Photographs taken from daily scenes on the Densha depicted incredibly compressed bodies and the techniques that the Densha staff used to squeeze in all the desperate people into a small carriage. To highlight the intensity of my experience of getting on the Densha, I would describe the scene as a smashed human body ball. It was intriguing and simultaneously terrifying when I was embodied as a tiny part of the ball. I once saw a middle-aged male passenger start to move like a worm, pushing his hips all the way out, vertically waving, physically signalling or expanding his boundaries through his body and his aggressive movements. I also witnessed fierce and intense hustles, where one man completely lost his balance in order to lean forward as much as he could in his attempt to get on the train. Based on these incidents, I wondered whether the Densha was a unique zone of the mixed dynamics of the concurrent withdrawal and spread produced by the blended desires of the body. While the body aimed to secure its place and be still on the Densha, it was also emancipated from the physical conformity and confinement seen at the intersection of the streets. That is to say, the body on the Densha utilised an excuse to justify its place and allowed itself to claim more space and spread out its movements more. It seemed to me that once those silent, timid, and isolated citizens stepped into the 'zone' the Densha offered, their temperament suddenly changed or was allowed to fully



emerge. The open door seemed to be a switch, a sensory cue for the passengers to not only release their bodies, but also their culturally ingrained etiquette.

Although the intentions and contexts to move in the mixed dynamics may not coincide, I feel there is a relation between the body in the Densha and that of the workshop. The resonance for me lies in how two, seemingly contradictory forces of body withdrawal and spread emerge among specific spatial and physical materialities. The space on the Densha encourages the body to manifest uncovered desire and competition between individuals through the careless and straightforward way that people physically occupy it. The body of the workshop undergoes a dynamic incubation from a restless stillness to an unlimited deployment of limbs. At the same time, the force of the core has to be grounded like those on the Densha to firmly claim a space, a space that persistently belongs to an individual despite the turbulent influxes, both exogenous and endogenous.

The body on the Densha may shed light on the dynamics that the city generates and may speak to attributes of Japaneseness. One Chinese saying may be a helpful description here: 暗潮洶湧 (turbulent undercurrent). The chaotic or untamed bodies on the Densha and in the workshop are similar in terms of the aggressive intention of a body to occupy, however, the operation and the relationship of each form with the ground or the floor are different. Standing on the floor of the Densha requires a determination to stand firmly with a loudly embodied claim to personal space in a limited public space. While the body on the Densha may present fierce, ruthless, and self-centred (both physical and mental) qualities, most of the body movements on the Densha still adhere to the steadiness and heavy steps seen in Japanese traditional dance or performances, marking a seemingly perpetuated existence in a certain space.

The body from the workshop and course based on Saburo Teshigawara's technique employs a flexible moving track by bouncing, initiated by the dynamic stillness of the body as described above. It is not jumping but bouncing. The focus was put on creating space, not only

between the ground/floor and the body, but also the space between limbs and torso, between bones and muscles, between bodies and bodies, and between breathing in and breathing out. It subtly emphasises access to flexibility in each visible and felt space of materiality while all are based on the inception of stillness. The discovery of the blended dynamics of stillness and aggressiveness of the body in Tokyo sheds light on how the speed and the physical capacity of certain urban spaces interferes with the stable and perhaps intentionally perpetuated setting of the city, where the embodied revelation of desire speaks to the quintessence of certain localised qualities of the city that the body dwells in. This realisation from my moving with a sense of Japaneseness underpinned the postulation of an urbanised body and an embodied city. Moreover, this observation of Japaneseness offered a useful kinaesthetic / choreographic lens to consider Taiwaneseeness in terms of urban everydayness of movements, which will be laid out mainly from Chapter Four to Chapter Seven.

### **Experimenting and Orienting the Kinesthetic Dynamics in Metropolitan London**

The compressed space on the Densha had, perhaps, already prepared me for the tiny tubed environment of the London underground. I had visited London as a tourist when studying in Lyon. I felt more of a sense of openness and tolerance of difference in London than I had in Lyon. London was welcoming and diverse, full of vibrant flows consisting of international brands, restaurants, commodities, and the historical and cultural materialities of the various communities a global metropolis was privileged to afford.

I enjoyed my stay in London in 2012. However, when I revisited this city to reside as an international student, I was offered a wholly different package of experiences. On the periphery of London, there were lives and living conditions hardly imagined by a visitor who enjoyed the splendid materialities this city offered for mainstream consumers. Whilst temporarily living at a friend's place, I realised living in London unveiled hidden daily urban scenes that a tourist walking in the centre might have little chance to experience. The very first conflict I encountered

was on the bus, where I was ostentatiously accused of dishonestly using a senior oyster card and verbally forced off the bus otherwise the driver refused to drive. This invited me to propose, think, and experience concurrently how my feminine and perhaps racial presence intruded into a city by igniting certain actions of joint racism-sexism. Searching for a decent home in London, I had been to places with substandard living conditions. I remembered one which was a converted storage room made to accommodate, at that time, a couple from Eastern Europe, and some with serious plumbing and air pollution problems detrimental to human health. As I unfolded and folded myself into the city, I felt that the city not only influenced me when I immersed my Shentigan into it; mutually, I shaped the city by the bits and pieces of the embodied ideologies of my body. In fact, I had to admit that like the city, I also acted upon the embodied ideologies of its urban materialities.

For example, what shocked me most were the sudden shifts of environments and atmospheres between blocks and areas. Recalling my experiences of viewing houses, it was not uncommon that I was walking in a more privileged neighbourhood with a sense of ease, the next second, only one block away, the previous community just vanished and turned into the construction of many small square boxes (social housing). The grids woven by each household could be clearly counted from the outside. Space to my vision was rigidly compartmentalised, a sense of compression and pressure emitted. My body and the city were not only interfaced as Grosz proposes, they seemed to (un)fold and fold within and into each other; and thus the (trans)formation of both began (Grosz, 1995:248) .

In some areas of Lyon, pedestrian sense of insecurity comes from scenarios of threatening uncertainty hiding in the serpentine layout of the streets. Some parts of London that I visited exemplify the intimidating messages buildings can send. Unlike the frightening ambiguity of the street arrangement in Lyon, the sensed environmental threats in London seemed, to me, upfront and open. The streets were straighter with plainer and lower buildings that allowed more

straightforward and predictable visions of what or who was coming. In Lyon, the entrance of a building in residential areas was oftentimes small and inconspicuous. As a tenant in London when viewing, I found the majority of the buildings with an obvious entrance. This realisation changed how I walked in London. In order to decrease the temptation for others to use my racial and feminine presence as an excuse for speaking or acting violently, I had to walk confidently and bravely. This was a strategic way to disguise myself and it served as psychological support. A deliberate change of posture, the tensing of muscles, the extension of the spine and the opening up of the chest, all together enhance my ability to cope with a strong statement made by the architecture-scape. I learned from a couple of random conflicts on the street and I realised I had to resemble the buildings and the atmosphere that dwelled within to first make my own statement and second to blend into the materialities and the emotions this city owned and demonstrated.

After some time living in the city, I noticed that through my walking, senses of tenseness and rigidity in my body gradually dispelled, my kinesthesia started to mingle with accentuated positive feelings. Most of the time, I could walk easily, releasing my arms with my spine comfortably and vertically aligned when my feet alternately contacted the ground. This transformation partially had been encouraged by my active participation in dance classes, courses, and workshops held in London. The diversity and the sense of welcoming and appreciating differences in these dance activities presented me with very different energy from what I had experienced before.

Through these dances, I made contact with people and, by extension, I developed a wider and deeper understanding of the city. I was surprised by the non-exclusive intention and ambivalence towards different and disparate bodies and ways of moving each class and workshop manifested. I did not expect to see various bodies, professional, non-professional, inclusive, and degendered in professional dance classes or activities. I started to feel the

enormously vibrant environment the classes provided, in the urban environments of the city. I was communicating with London from the viewing/walking/ wandering experiences to dancing on the streets in various urban spaces assembled with diverse bodies of dancing. Bodies in London can be organised, impatient, elegant, timid, or passionate. I felt and noticed this vibrant diversity marked a certain core element of London and the Londoner. These disparate traits intriguingly reflect the city and how the city identifies itself with an amalgamation of complex attributes. Having resided in the city for over four years, the longest period of my diasporic experiences, I found myself moving/living with 'the materiality of London', a Shentigan – kinesthesia, emotion, sense – of vibrant diversity. I felt that by being diversified by London and a diverse being in London allowed a transformational Taiwaneseeness to emerge or form. To be more precise, what I experienced in London – what my body was imprinted with by different incidents in the city and how I inscribed my materialities on the city, has contributed to a diversified sense of Taiwaneseeness.

### **Research Inquiries and MiQing Dynamics**

The above personal narratives in different cities are meant to demonstrate the concurrent complexity of the formation and transformation of identities and how the situated moving body plays an influential role both in the identification process and in this research. Reckoning with my proposed interests in the feelings and senses of identity, I attempted to blur where 'creating' and 'recognising' identities begins, ends respectively, and coincides. While striving to delineate the complicated bodily perception and production of identification, I found it less possible or useful to precisely discern a stable / conclusive way that a certain identity resulted from. In terms of the dynamic of Taiwanese awareness my body enacted in a city, I would temporarily encapsulate this as: Lyon meandering, the rise of Taiwaneseeness by bureaucratic embodiment; Taipei transforming, the strong confirmation of Taiwaneseeness; Tokyo withdrawing and spreading, the kinesthetic inspiration for thinking Taiwaneseeness; and London diversifying, the

vibrant ingredient for reconfiguring Taiwanese-ness. The Taiwanese-ness investigated by this research is not exclusively composed of ethnic, gender, racial, and geographic realities, it has been nurtured by all the realities my body, my Shentigan, owns.

The detailed practical and material phenomena in these narratives reveal nuances of how moving bodies in certain urban settings support (or undermine) one's cultural affiliation and personal values, how these values connect with and are expanded into societal values, and how they do so in a significantly entangled way. Here, the entanglement means the indiscernible implications of both personal and collective emotion, sense, feeling, concept, ideology, corporeality, historicity, spatiality, and geography embodied by the body. I decided to utilise my own body by putting it in various public spaces to investigate personal and collective embodied identities. During a project of filming myself dancing on the streets in different cities<sup>5</sup>, a sense of individuality was perceived. Apart from my individual way of moving, I also noticed there was a quality of floating thickness emerging in my improvisation. This struck me as similar to the experience of Lin, Yi-Chin, a female Taiwanese choreographer who has spent, so far, more than five years formalising a Taiwanese body inspired from localised folk and religious customs. In conversation with her, she told me she had this epiphany and concluded that there was a boomerang dynamic combined with the texture of thickness in Taiwanese as a local language.<sup>6</sup> She believed this was also manifested in Taiwanese traditional food, such as oyster omelette<sup>7</sup> or oyster sticky thin noodles.

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<sup>5</sup> This project is a research tool called 'Geo-Choreo' that I develop for the research and will be introduced in the next chapter.

<sup>6</sup> The language of Taiwanese Minnan features 14 nasal sounds, which may contribute to the thickness and how the sound seems to spread out and immediately retreat. Please see <http://www.edutech.org.tw/Pioneer/%E9%BC%BB%E9%9F%B3%E8%BE%AD.htm>. Yi-Chin used the Chinese terms 回勾 (Huei go) which I translate as boomerang 迴力鏢 (Huei li byoa) to depict the dynamic I understood she intended to highlight.

<sup>7</sup> This type of omelette usually contains corn starch to reach a viscous consistency.

This resemblance of a certain quality in a body and in the local cuisine reinforced my interests in how the individual, in an urban community, enacts the formation of a collective identity of a geographical location by performing certain qualities: shapes, textures, and values within their situated bodies. What are the relations between the dance I have danced and the city I have lived in? What are the dynamics between dance and city that fulfil the identity of being a Taiwanese subject? I am curious about how I build up my various Taiwanese identities, through what kind of practices, no matter how underlying a sense of Taiwanese-ness is in the everydayness of living instead of the political contexts, oftentimes situated in conflicts between Taiwan and China.

Travelling and living in different cities, I have become keener to discover the kinesthetic and the sensory that may be considered the attributes of being Taiwanese instead of the politically assigned or declined identities, the authentic/conventional markers of being Taiwanese as illustrated in the previous global urban experiences. I then wonder:

*How the feelings, senses, and kinesthesia emerging from the individual corporeal exploration of the collective city space may assist the understanding of the ways choreographies of certain urban spaces produce the perceptions and notions of what it means to be Taiwanese, and the potential attributes of the Taiwanese-ness?*

Along with my participation in the researched moving / dancing community, Monday School (MS) – a free outdoor dance / movement course for the public – I have discovered and thus propose MiQing 瀰情, the filling-in dynamics, as a crucial framework to formulate certain qualities of Taiwanese-ness. Unpicking the ways that choreographies of certain spaces produce perceptions and notions of what it means to be Taiwanese, I perceive that the Taiwanese-ness discovered and speculated in my research is MiQing dynamics. MiQing is the sense of movement and a moving pattern I felt and was moved by during my participation in MS. It is a crucial framework to contextualise what may be approached as the constitutive quality of

being Taiwanese by considering how the body represents and embodies different relationships. For me, if MiQing is kinesthetically channelled into the English vocabulary, it may draw a resemblance to the word filling-in. It is the active filling / moving force extended by and extending throughout the interactive materialities of a certain locality. The idea of MiQing dynamics will be elaborated in Chapter Two and the four specific feelings of movement associated with the Taiwanese-ness suggested by MiQing: the circular viscosity, the civic spiral energy, diversity, and empowerment will be expanded on in the second half of the thesis.

### **Shentigan and Non-Representational Theory**

This research is partly inspired by SanSan Kwan's work *Kinesthetic City* (2013), where she examines how her personal walking sensations in Taipei, Hong Kong, and China Town in New York correlate with her kinesthetic feelings and that of the bodies in the choreographies produced in those cities. By practising her body in different cities besides analysing performances, she is able to reveal why and how these Chinese-influence urban sites present varying Chinese communities. Her seminal work exhibits how geographical sensations resonate with local choreographies in terms of movements and dancing bodies. However, I am more interested in lived accounts of dance artists – the moving, the experiencing, and the affective bodies. I have found that the intercommunicated production of dance studies and human geography contributes greatly to the understanding of both how a body moves and how a body feels. An interdisciplinary investigation, such as mine, with the support of dance research and human geography helps to decipher the relations between place, body, and experience, and problematize identity in environments as materially informed not just in political or economic terms (Pine and Kuhlke, 2014: viii). This is what this research is keen to be engaged with and alongside focusing on the specific and informative context of Taiwan, a discourse which is still rare in the emerging research field.



With the aforementioned intention, I incorporate and deploy a specific stance from human geography, that is Nigel Thrift's (1997) non-representational theory. This application, more importantly, aims to complement the subtle observation and the critical analyses dance studies have provided in terms of dynamic movements/ dancing and the embedded socio-political and cultural implications/ meaning. With a wider collection of affect, sense, emotion, and feeling in certain spaces, Thrift (1997) brings the focus on body and affect into the field of social and cultural geography and aptly argues that the materiality of bodies in certain spaces makes relational connections more visible. The consideration of body in space allows the expressive side of bodies to emerge and to be noticed, which may potentially promote changed perceptions and meanings towards the given environment (Boyd, 2017). In the organic interplay between movements, spaces, affects, and thoughts, space is no longer settled and clearly defined, and therefore local actors can more actively participate in expressions of identity beyond ideology. Deploying their sense of space, individuals experience the space and make the space relevant and relational to their own practices within it. While affect does not necessarily directly refer to personal feelings, it aims to depict the varying contours of individual experiential states, where actions from bodies join (Massumi, 2004: xvii; Thrift, 1997). By employing and extending the idea of being affective, I see individuals are feeling, practising, and producing identities, communities and spaces in the space rather than being in, receiving, and being shaped by the space.

Positioning oneself in the encountered contexts by a dynamically engaged body and a series of sensate elements is indeed where the meaning is constantly generating; further, I propose the moving is the meaning itself. Reflecting on the similar representational limitation in the understanding of languages and meaning-making, Brenda Farnell proposes 'a multi-sensory concept of dynamically embodied acts' to actively shift the focus on the representational signs and symbols of linguistic significance to the bodily experiences and acts

that viscerally and emotionally contribute to the 'process' of knowing (Farnell, 2012: 118). Examining and bridging her argument with the phenomenon of my body in the urban settings, I found that what a body brought forth was beyond an embodiment, which suggests a stable or a temporarily framed result that could be clearly discerned and broken down into a catalogue of sensations. While meaning are making in bodily practices, what I experienced and experimented with led to the contemplation on meaning is self-emergent in moving. In my experience, meaning in moving is fluid and not to be designated or analytically defined by the experiences of moving. Moving forwards from Farnell's proposal of the sensory act of language and Thrift's non-representational style of thinking, I suggest in this research that meaning manifests itself in moving, and 'the non-representational' is deployed in a way that does not aim to pinpoint the 'meaning' in the process of operating and operated senses, acts, affects, and bodies but to allow a space, a suspension of knowing the knowledge, where meaning is muddling and manifesting. This is how I approach Taiwanese-ness: the 'meaning' of being Taiwanese in the project is a complex dynamic and non-representational relationships between the positioned individual and collective bodies with/in their perceptions.

The crucial aspiration of affirming experiences as a source by non-representational concepts allow this research to use daily practices to inform a certain process of 'being' Taiwanese. But how to affirm? How to feel, see, move, recall and record 'getting in touch with the full range of registers of thought by stressing affect and sensation' from my own body and the contingently encountered others' bodies? (Thrift, 2007: 12). Perhaps the question first came to mind is now locating beyond a way of 'representationally' reflecting the non-representational but how to experiment the aforementioned manifestation as much as possible. This ambition of doing prior to finding a proper way of thinking how to do locates its supportive resonances in Derek McCormack's succinct experimental endeavours to expose that the affective agencies in experiences are unstable, distributing and immanent variations. He argues that experiences

are processes of creating differences and is a modifying transition of chaotic openness (McCormac, 2013: 25). Thus, a more intuitive, practical and perhaps needed engagement of investigating the experience is to experiment with the body in the studied space and feel how movements give rise to the elusive dynamic transitions as experiences. The 'non-representational doings' in this research entangles and progresses from the affirmation of affective and visceral processual embodiments, the experience of self-manifesting of meaning to physically experimenting with the experience.

The abovementioned ideas while underpinning the research conceptually and practically, they also seem to confront my experiences against an underlining presumption that affects, feelings, and emotion, each strand of effective sensory contributions are distinguishable in experiencing. In fact, in my journey of moving in different cities, affect and sensation emerge together with my dynamic body. What I mean is that oftentimes it is hard to draw boundaries between affect, sensation, feeling, and the inception of body. They come to me as a chaotically amalgamated organism. Using the word and the idea of affective experience per se may risk noticing less complex, multidirectional, and multifaceted operations of the entire, the outside, and inside of the body. For that reason, I employ the idea of the sense of body, 身體感(Shen-ti-gan) proposed mainly by Yu, Shuenn-Der (Yu, 2015a). This Shentigan, translated as the sense of body, emphasises the sense and the feeling concurrently perceived by the body as it encounters other bodies and environments. It is associated with kinesthetics and affects; however, it means and aims for a more comprehensive, holistic, and simultaneous consideration of feelings and senses of the body. By seeing body, sense, and feeling as a material package in a reality, Shentigan does not assume a hierarchy or priority of one or another in terms of functioning and affecting. Shentigan also regards perceiving others' bodies and their environments. It stresses the fluidity and contingency of kinesthetic and sensory experiences from the observer and the mover and does not consider the two mutually exclusive.

In this case, the body and sense of the individual and the collective inform each other and could be inferred from one another. Looking back at what I discussed earlier about the kinesthetic method suggested by Kwan (2013), I find that the highly skilled alertness of moving and movements I bring from dance studies here enriches the lens of Shentigan. The sensitivity of motion/choreography adds a dynamic dimension to Shentigan that is often intended to locate a static mode of feeling and sensation of the body (Yu, 2015b). The application of joined senses, feelings, and movements of body, apart from approaching the affective and sensory body, also supports the strategic writing style and format of this research. By specifically juxtaposing sensate materialities that the body is operating and operated by, this research ardently expects the linkage of individual dynamics with Taiwanese-ness.

### **Style and Format of the Written Choreography**

As mentioned, I am fascinated by the entanglement, the indiscernible sensate implications, and willing to challenge myself to loosen it for a clearer look at the woven threads, if not entirely untwist it. In the coming analyses, I believe the readers will see my struggle to pin down varying experiential and material influxes from and by bodies and urban settings. This elusiveness of expression is deliberately designed, or rather, choreographed in the writing, to solicit an understanding that relies on the feelings a reading body perceives and suggests within arranged words, and to provide experiences in an anticipated proximity of the researcher's experiences. 'Re'presenting how I recalled and recorded my experiences in this phenomenologically reflexive manner also shares two similar intentions of the site writing proposed by Jane Rendell and the idea of text-as-it-happens experimented by Shelia Hones, employed in various ways in cultural geography (Rendell, 2010; Hones, 2008). The first unfolds as I strive to explore and delineate what happens as I feel my dynamic situations in given spatial materialities other than words, and it is manifested here by relations between images, alternative ways of presenting videos with QR codes, Chinese characters, and English texts.

The other lies in the spaces I intend to build up or reserve for the contingent dynamic collaborations and creations between research, researcher, and reader, whose relational connections arrive and shift from my embodied and embodying words. The original geographical sense of the term site is expanded by referring to it as the site of a (moving) body, the site of writing and the site of situating.

I am eager to sustain a specific flow of practices where all the informative elements of this research are swimming in and drifting around to support the (r)evolution of the meaning of being a Taiwanese dancing body in a city. Therefore, this research adopts a specific format of presentation to sensualise the analytical journey I have been through. I use grey boxes to introduce the historical context of case studies and white boxes for those theoretical resources and relevant temporal or spatial genealogies that require more elaboration. Disparate texts are juxtaposed with detailed experiential phenomena of personal and collective moving bodies so that the readers can choose to navigate them spontaneously or approach them separately to enable the kinesthetic immersion in varying analyses and discussions. The academic evidence for the claims my body has made can then be traced back. This format mainly appears from Chapter Three onwards. Presenting my research in this manner, I also aim to depict a mobile and fluid way in which my kinesthesia and my conceptuality are encountered. Admittedly, this option may seem compartmentalised at first glance, however, it attempts to depict how these dynamic trains of thought came into my mind as I was conducting, moving, and writing the research, in as much genuineness and proximity as possible. Another reason to deploy the visual format of a box is to simultaneously display how and to what degree the subversive power of MS relates to the dynamic attribute of Taiwanese-ness analysed in this study, which consolidates the premise of this research: the inter-transforming activity between dance and the city.

I would also like to note that names in Taiwanese Mandarin, Chinese Mandarin, and Japanese are in the opposite order of those in the European tradition. I will adhere to the original word order to address authors and researchers from these regions.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

The premise of the research, informed by my diasporic experiences, is the perception that three activities - moving bodies, urban space, and certain qualities of identity - are mutually productive. I am intrigued by the ramifications of dynamics generated through urban choreographies in Taipei and their relevant trans(post)cultural engagements that produce potential movements of Taiwanese-ness. In Chapter 1, I address an energetically crucial foundation of this research – the choreographic reflexivity – that ripples out with a vibrant fluid network of methodologies and methods. This reflexivity enables me to be wary of the imperative of Western epistemology, non-textual/written/conventional forms of knowledge, and the acknowledgement and application of my experiences. With these three reminders, I then employ Asia as Method (AaM) and Body as Knowledge (BaK), inspired by Chen Kuan-sing (2010) and other dance practice researchers to develop my two specific research tools: Geo-Choreo and a kinesthetic autoethnography. I have also developed three analytical methods: the movement cultivation, the concentric pathway, and the analogy of Chinese Characters and I exhibit how they support the sensory formulation of Taiwanese-ness, experienced and experimented with, by my dancing body in this chapter.

Once my readers may be able to feel the emerging and advancing moments of 'why' I see Taiwanese-ness as choreography in the city, I propose to consider a transformational process of Taiwanese-ness in Chapter 2 by explaining three decisive mo(ve)ments of how I am enlightened by the application of BaK: interviews with Taiwanese diasporic dancers, the reflection of Geo-Choreo and choreography by a Taiwanese artist. Illustrating 'how' to see Taiwanese-ness as choreography, I aim to understand the quality of Taiwan away from the

predominant interpretation of its identity crisis – the conflicts between being Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, among others – and its representational derivatives. I am also keen to offer a way out of the dual thinking of China versus Taiwan and Taiwan versus the West. Finally, I depict and analyse a less discovered individuality of Taiwaneseeness which subverts assumed coherent or universal ideas of Taiwanese identities and bodies. Arguing the varied individuality of Taiwaneseeness, I introduce MiQing (瀰情) dynamics to contemplate certain collective qualities I have felt among the various bodies. The idea of emptiness by Liao Chao Yang (1995b) partially inspires me to textually articulate the feelings of MiQing (filling-in) dynamics, that is the Shentigan of Taiwaneseeness. Comparing MiQing to relevant concepts of emptiness and wholeness by Édouard Glissant (1997) and the analytical philosophy of Nishida Kitaro (1970), I deliberately map out MiQing loosely to induce possibilities of its phenomenal applications. This facilitates the subsequent analysis of the personal, collective, and societal dimensions of Taiwaneseeness and achieves updated understandings and practices of Taiwaneseeness for a new era.

Chapter 3 starts with an experiential account and case study of my participation in the Monday School, an open dancing course in the urban space of Taipei. It means to prompt readers to better empathise two movement tendencies of MiQing: the dissolving of boundaries and the pleasure rising from participation. I address MiQing's effective and affective Shentigan on the movers who are engaged and produce MiQing to underpin analyses of the dynamic phenomenon I have witnessed, felt, experienced, and contemplated as an individual, a communal body, and a member of society. If Chapter 2 provides a flexible space for me and readers to conceptualise MiQing, Chapter 3 is intended to allow me and my readers to create sensory movements in the space of conceptualised MiQing.

Chapters 4 to 7 move MiQing dynamics forward to delve into its implications through three inter-related layers: the individual to the communal and to the societal. All four chapters deploy

movement cultivation to dissect the distribution, density, and pattern of the bodies, including mine, in MS. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 explore MiQing in terms of shape and direction. I focus on how MS differentiates itself from other dancing or moving groups sharing the same space, and how these attributes redefine dance and, by extension, this redefinition may not only reflect but also impressively enact/act out the transformation of Taiwanese-ness. Since MS took place in two different spaces, Chapters 4 and 5 respectively investigate how MS intervenes into two public open venues and marks these spaces with implicit political subversions and implications.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the diversity mentioned in the previous investigations, I compare concepts of motion freedom and motion inclusiveness with the social movements around the same-sex love parade and the marriage bill in Taipei to theorize more generally how body, choreography, and Taiwanese-ness intertwine with processes of space, time, and communal direction. Chapter 7 shows how MS subverts the limitation of female bodies as well as male bodies in public spaces and problematises stereotyped physical activities among genders and the underlying allocated responsibilities of the performed gender roles. A critical incident is introduced. Communicating with the key discourse on public policy towards women, I relate my personal experiences of collective bodies in an attempt to reconsider the perception of women and their situations in the city.

As a conclusion, Chapter 8 aims to encapsulate all the aforementioned and discussed qualities into a driving force: the action of care. By introducing an influential social movement of the young generation, the Sunflower Movement, this chapter explores the similarities between MS and the movement. It does not intend to claim that MS is an assemblage for social reformation. Instead, the intention is to extract certain qualities that propel a community to actively enact or define its identity by juxtaposing two distinct bodily practices in MS and the compared movement. Examining MS and its social and political counterpart in terms of moving and practising, this analysis may shed light on how Taiwanese-ness could be understood as



choreography in a city, movements done and felt in daily life, apart from political ideologies. Towards the end of this research, I felt a strong impulse to propose a manifesto, to assimilate and accentuate MiQing dynamics I felt, practised, and embodied with other bodies along the journey. The spontaneity of moving and feeling in the city has passed through me in various forces that leave the written lines in the mind and under the fingertips. I genuinely use this manifesto to temporarily perform the closure of an investigation of the MiQing dynamic that does not contain itself within the exegesis, disseminating its journey beyond it.

I close this research in Chapter 9 with an afterword of retrospective thinking on one particular methodology and documentary form deployed here: the video records of my dancing in the streets in different cities. In this thesis, the juxtaposing of personal kinesthetic narratives with the film clips is meant to viscerally enhance the original intention of this research as well as the fundamental objective of it, disclosing nuanced and dependent relationships between two sets of materiality, one of the body and the other of the city.

The active use of and substantial reflection on my body support the overall concerns of this research: the choreographic reflexivity and the individuality of Taiwanese-ness. As a researcher, I am able to situate myself in the research and examine how this situation has impacted the research, which in turn reveals an updated understanding of Taiwanese-ness. This research endeavours to depart from predominant cultural representations and conceptual dualities as a means to understand the relation between individual and collective qualities of felt experience. By resorting to my body, my dancing body, I expect this research to provide a unique experience of feeling the formation of identity through the personal, physical, visceral and interactive dynamics in daily lives of a diasporic Taiwanese.

## Chapter One

### Choreographic Reflexivity as Method in a Study of Urban Dynamics

This project is organically informed by the accumulating activities of experiencing, dancing, thinking, reading, problematising, conceptualising, seeking, and experimenting. These devoted practices are communicating with each other and elusively influencing and adapting back and forth or in a loop. This research navigates the conception of body, identity, and locality in the areas of Taiwanese contemporary dance studies, human geography, and Taiwan studies, where I place body in the conversation of individual experiences and kinesthesia. Based on particular and personally distinct 'moves' between praxis and theory, I suggest that the identity of Taiwan is not only to be seen or to be thought, but to be felt by an individual in a certain space. By addressing the relationship between Taiwaneseeness, city and body, I posit that the attempt to analytically articulate Taiwaneseeness as certain localised qualities of Taiwan, may rely less on the national, cultural, personal or collective identities respectively and exclusively, but more on the argument of how Taiwaneseeness is a felt progression. This does not mean that the understanding of Taiwaneseeness would bypass the discussion, discourse and operation of the above. Taiwaneseeness can be realised through diverse terminology, be it a cultural, political, national, discursive, or even sexual identity (Chiu, 2003a, 2003b; Chen, F.M, 2017; Chi, 2017; Wu, 2018). What I intentionally and specifically aim to pursue is an experiment where Taiwaneseeness is explored as choreography in the city of Taipei. The demonstrated entanglement of sensate operations in the previous chapter allows me to argue that Taiwaneseeness is a series of situated physical sentiments specific to the context of Taiwan, which could be perceived as MiQing dynamics.

Discovering and delving into the relations between Taiwaneseeness and MiQing, which will be explained in the next chapter, I do not commence my research with precise, concrete, and

clearly delineated approaches in advance. I have experimented with my body in cities when being overwhelmed by a flood of conceptual and methodological options. The methods of this research emerge spontaneously. The initiation of movement with(in) research is intuitive. The process of such practice has become reflexive; in fact, insofar as I have been committed to it, I believe it demands reflexivity to fulfil this practice. Excitingly, this equips my research with a kinesthetic/choreographic lens to probe into the attributes of being Taiwanese.

In this chapter, I will explicate the practical/conceptual backbone of this research – the choreographic reflexivity – that engenders a vibrant fluid network of methodologies and methods. Employing this reflexivity allows me to be keenly aware of what constitutes my research and its process in at least three aspects: the imperative of Western epistemology, non-textual, non-written or non-conventional forms of knowledge, and the acknowledgement and application of my experiences, as described in the introduction. With these three reflections, I base the whole project on two methodological intentions: Asia as Method and Body as Knowledge, which leads to the specific methods of this research: the Geo-Choreo and a kinesthetic autoethnography. The two methodologies also inspire me to analyse the moving bodies and movements I concurrently own and observe via three devices: the movement cultivation, the concentric pathway, and the analogy of Chinese Characters. In this way, I attempt to engage my readers with the activity of moving with(in) research upon Shentigan, the dynamic interweaving of sense, emotion, feeling and corporeality throughout the investigation. Through the introduction of transcultural and trans-textual/material passages of knowing, I finally expect to realise a decolonizing effect in this research – even an underlying one – to carefully recognise the dominant European genealogies and their resulting conditions, by which the knowledge of this research has been informed, cultivated and reflected upon.

## **The Practical/ Conceptual Backbone: The Choreographic Reflexivity**

Reflexivity encompasses not only the idea of recognising the gap between the assumed objectivity and the inevitable subjectivity of research, but it is also an anticipated, careful, and non-exclusive act to allow the subjective experiences integral to knowledge formation to reside in the research and to be witnessed by its readers (Dean, 2017; Kara, 2015). I intentionally and continuously practised this sense of reflexivity in this research. I call the practice of reflexivity in this study the choreographic reflexivity because further than acknowledging my academically conceptual 'position' in the process, I demonstrate my 'moves' in the spaces of reading, doing, thinking, writing, and feeling. Later, these 'moves' interface with the readers' space, which subsequently creates the reflexive choreographic space between reader and author. In this respect, I assume my readers are also doing, thinking, writing and feeling while reading my work. Creating and acknowledging these spaces, I am keen to acknowledge the limitations of how I research and the resulting outcomes (Beer, 2014: 46; Dean, 2017:149-150).

One of the 'moves' is to juxtapose my experiences with insightful scholarly works to renew the discourse on Taiwanese bodies and their embodied Taiwaneseness by diversifying studied bodies, offering individual experiences, and deciphering material, physical and temporal interactive kinesthesia of identification that have not been previously fully discovered. Another 'move' is how I struggle with, navigate, cohere, and reflect on the position of the dominant epistemology from the Western conceptual legacies I am installed with. I am expected to clearly articulate these while being less culturally-familiar with the 'orthodox' knowledge and way of researching and more familiar with a decolonising aspiration (Kara, 2015).

The other 'move' revolves around a different contemplation of epistemology, following an ongoing reflexive movement of recognising diverse forms of knowledge. It interrogates how the body could be approached as one of the many sites of knowledge, how the dancing body, particularly in this research, emerges as a phenomenon of decisive information. Further, without spectator, without theatre, and without performative intention, what knowledge can dance afford

and in what ways? These 'moves' of choreographic reflexivity constantly interlace with each other and unfold this research in a diffusive manner that highlights the accounts of the specificity of the situated and lived body, as well as felt and sensed collective dynamics – by me, as an experimental site of research, not conclusive fixity.

## **The Methodological Intentions**

### **Asia as Method**

Inspired by Chen Kuan-sing's work *Asia as Method* (2010), this research is driven by reflexive contemplation on how imperialism and colonialism have allowed the Eurocentric epistemology to expand into, or systematically be disguised as, the universal reality of knowledge. This consequently limited perspective should be subverted, perhaps by diversifying it in a denial of the exclusiveness of the authentic resources of the West and with an invitation to the active inclusiveness of experiences across neglected cultures in Asia.<sup>8</sup> (Chen, K.H., 2010: 358-359, 387-390) By deploying the aforementioned conceptual tool of 'Asia as Method' (AaM), I aim to contribute to the conversation between differently localised conceptions, where a decolonizing process may be facilitated by studying and revealing the corporeal negotiation of Taiwanese bodies and its identifying progressions. I set out this path by introducing insights from writers and scholars based in different regions in Asia alongside the thinking of Taiwanese-Chinese cultures, linguistics and philosophy that I am embedded within, geographically, culturally, and politically. For example, in Chapter Eight, I introduce Japanese writer Minato Chihiro's (2015) observant delineation of a collective temperament in a Taiwanese social movement and the etymology of Chinese characters related to his concepts. The approach of

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<sup>8</sup> I am keenly aware of the problematic and complex nature of the term Asia. I acknowledge herewith its complexity and its referential idea of a certain community and region, while often generalised, is beyond the intention and scope of this research.

incorporating a non-Eurocentric perspective enriches my investigations on the dynamic materiality of Taiwaneseeness.

While being wary of various forms of externally produced knowledge by integrating the researcher's body, I also attempt to be cautious about 'forming' trajectories of knowledge through relating my cultural embeddedness to other well-established theorisations informing particular understandings of Taiwaneseeness and its bodies. By highlighting different diasporic localities in Asian dance, as I do here, this other attempt at deploying AaM contributes empirical discoveries in Asian dance studies and thus aids the degeneralising effects AaM is accumulating. In the UK, Asia is often related to South Asia. Under this rubric, various topics, such as authenticity, gendered image, hybridity, and the connotation of geography have been broadly discussed (Kedhar, 2014; Meduri, 2008; Mitra, 2006). Bringing in the diasporic Taiwanese dance scene as well as the individuality of the (trans)formation of processes of identification, this research revises the generalized idea of locality and body around Asian performers and performances.

Valuing non-Eurocentric epistemological resources goes further than shifting the uncritical preference of knowledge from the West. I lend a bodily twist to AaM, allowing it to depart from conceptual and textual production by braiding Shentigan into its method in two ways. First, I deploy Chinese characters to explicate the dynamics I am feeling, discovering, and analysing to grapple with about what constitutes Taiwaneseeness. Chinese characters are generally logograms comprised of different units of characters indicating sounds, objects and senses. I benefit from the given sense of a character to reflect on the intuitive origin of a feeling and how that could shed light on the understanding of a specific dynamic. This will be detailed later in this chapter. Secondly, I use my body as a site where the operation of Shentigan and an embodied AaM refer to an unstable Asian. Floating in my apparent Asian female body are mixed French and British heritages from my maternal grandfather, an American, alongside a

Taiwanese-Hakka legacy of my maternal grandmother blended with her strong Japanese identity and persona. To further the complexity, my father is the second generation of mainlanders<sup>9</sup> and my mother is mixed American (French and British to be more precise) Taiwanese, and self-identified as Chinese Taiwanese. Presenting my body and its experiences in this research works to problematise the assumed universality of the components and construction of 'Taiwanese' and, in a broader perspective, to subvert the ignorant but predominant assumption of 'the Asian'. This is where the designed tools of the Geo-Choreo and kinesthetic autoethnography intervene, as I will go on to explain in later sections. These two ways of introducing Shentigan to AaM also relate to a second methodological intention alongside 'Asia as Method': 'Body as Knowledge' (BaK), which encourages me to consider authenticity in forms of knowledge production. I experiment with how the Chinese character, symbolised by feelings of the body, could be an analytical resource that has been embedded in my daily, social, physical, and sensory practice as I write and perceive these characters every day. I also recognise that my body, throughout the entire research process, carries an active role in enquiring as well as producing information.

### **Body as Knowledge**

The embodied methods and concepts – (dancing) body as knowledge waiting to be discovered – have been well established by the endeavour of dance scholars who ardently interrogate the relationship between practice and academic research and how this relation encourages variously unconventional ways of writing to produce the discovered knowledge (Vincs, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Moss, 2011; Barbour, 2011; Bryon, 2014). My intervention is to apply and experiment with the specific practice on and through a Taiwanese body, located in possible urban geographies. While further investigating with BaK, I found a sense of uncertainty

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<sup>9</sup> Mainlander is a term given to those who retreated to Taiwan from China in 1949 due to the war between the Republic of China and Communist China.

around doing dance within research, as it is shared in the experiential accounts of these scholars. Dance exceeds one coherent and fixed concern at a time and the comfortable, tangible practice of an academic writing formula may often fail to capture the dance made by the practitioner as a means of investigation. Practitioner-scholars see the making of dances as a new form of academic presentation and establish the independence of dance away from a subordinate object of analysis (Vincs, 2007; Moss, 2011; Barbour, 2011; Bryon, 2014). Despite different perspectives on what the making of dances with(in) research enables dance-making scholars to achieve, I observe that their sense of uncertainty is transformed into a specific subversive reflexivity. That is, dance is a delicate and necessary doing to concurrently manifest and unravel the complexity of the material and situated conditions of the body, as it has been shaped and cultivated in/by dancing. Dance is the already existing reality of the body that is carrying out the research and informing the academically anticipated results of the research, the knowledge produced by the researching and dancing body.

Michèle Moss vividly describes how the multi-sensory passages dance offers assist her in incorporating more physical and mental interactions with studied subjects (Moss, 2011). Utilizing her ethnographic dancing experiences and the capacities of communication and observation cultivated by her dancing background, Moss felt supported and more able to contextualise the ephemeral and elusive phenomena of dance, which significantly comprise her life and her knowledge, and to generate understandings of self-exploration, interactions, and feelings within traditional textual knowledges.

The uncertainty of researching can also be considered as an element of emergence by which research questions, reflections, and investigations are nurturing the development of all three activities unpredictably (Vincs, 2007). The 'emergent' quality of 'body as knowledge' through dancing as investigating, inserts a reflexive motion in travelling between methodology and research questions, alongside questioning the presumptions that lie behind methods. I am



excited and have been enabled to transform my own uncertainty into a research/enquiry tool when the accumulation of practices starts to dissent from my original essentialist assumption of 'the' Taiwanese body and the accompanied physical embodiment of Taiwaneseeness. This helps me to locate the individuality of Taiwaneseeness and the collective dynamic MiQing I have felt and observed from various conditions of my body and other bodies of Taiwanese dance artists. The findings are not predetermined by an organised toolkit; they emerge with the process where my body progresses throughout the research. I will elaborate how Taiwaneseeness is approached and located by operating BaK in the next chapter.

Unlike many practitioner-scholars such as Karen Barbour or Michèle Moss, my dancing body as knowledge neither exclusively takes place in a studio nor is presented on a stage. I intend to maintain the mundanity of my dances as they have been conceived throughout my life. The focus on mundanity is to allow accumulations in a subtle, almost transient manner where, ideally, certain phenomena occur and inconspicuously leave residues, which are conceptualised until the last emergent impulse to do so. The delay of knowing/being known is the most bold step this research aims to take with the practice-concept of BaK: to present 'a suspension of knowledge' as an alternative delivery of knowledge. I have experienced a suspension of knowledge in doing BaK. I feel anxious about the need for knowledge to be settled and stable. I then decide to rampage through the orthodox academic research and presentation on the anxious sensation of body as knowledge that subverts not only the form of knowledge, but also the way of receiving it. As well as reading to understand, there is a suggested 'opportunity' of feeling to know. This eventually fosters a specific style of writing, the concentric pathway, to depict the suspended state of knowledge. Experimenting with this diffusive analytical method, I wish to subvert the habitually expected comfort of settled-down knowledge in reading the stable text, and instead provoke a certain irritating anxiety that forces my readers to feel the Shentigan that a combination of words has diffused.

## Experiencing the Urban Mundanity

AaM and BaK assist me to persist in a reflexive journey where I feel obliged to show, as truthfully and vividly as possible, the existing realities of my social and material being as a researcher. As mentioned earlier, I invite the mundanity of dance embedded in my everyday body to observe and receive the provision of my Asian and informative body. Moreover, I experience its power to reveal to me who I am. De Certeau (1984) appraises the subversive capacity of (the) everydayness of an individual to survive in the penetrating culture of surveillance. However, I sense the energy of mundanity in a more self-reflexive way where its repetition and accumulation of movements, thoughts, perspectives, reflections, and enlightenments enable me to acknowledge the operation of imaginations, assumptions, individuals, and societies despite the difficulty to precisely demarcate the range of each of these elements. The everydayness for me shatters the "'natural" appearance of objects and relations' beyond philosophical endeavours (Highmore, 2002: 116).

Doing mundanity unravels the methodological decisions I have made for this study. That is why I situate my research in an urban environment. I have been experiencing being Taiwanese and practising Taiwaneseness in both home and host cities. The urban mundanity of Taipei is the accumulated and repetitive reality of my body, where all the methodological and conceptual buds begin to break. After attending the Mazu Pilgrimage,<sup>10</sup> considered the most representational cultural and religious activity in Taiwan, I profoundly realise and have to admit that while Mazu is shared by other Taiwanese people, as a form of cultural or religious life, it has not been embedded into my practical everydayness. It does not mean that what Mazu represents is excluded from my lived experiences. I was enlightened by the experience of pilgrimage, and the frequently referenced or identified local energy of Taiwan. It is however, a certain form of Taiwaneseness less present in and proximate to my everyday practices.

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<sup>10</sup> Mazu is a renowned sea goddess in Taiwan. The details of the Mazu Pilgrimage will be introduced in Chapter Eight.

This unexpected shaking of my concept of Taiwanese-ness embodies what I have read by Benedict Anderson (2006) on how communities form and consolidate as a result of imagination reiterated and reinforced by words, materialities and education. Thrilled by this understanding, I have learned by heart and body, and I am wary that my investigation on Taiwanese-ness may inevitably be one of these imaginations. Thanks to the critical power and the reflexive effect of mundanity, I acknowledge my imagination of the lived Taiwanese experience as one that comes from urban materialities, no matter how tempting it is to associate my study and my Taiwanese-ness with the overt Taiwanese-ness of the local ritual or the grassroots environment.

Imagination may greatly intervene in the understanding of a certain collective, whereas the scope of this research is based on the body that represents, embodies and makes society, through and within lived experiences. Bryan Turner (1992) offered the insight that the body is the organic and unpredictable nexus that makes society. My individual body is not an exception. Starting from the individual body, I am interested in how it encounters collectivity in certain spaces and times in the urban environment. This urges me to go to a field where I could observe, practise and juxtapose my dancing body with others' dancing bodies in a city. Monday School (MS) is a phenomenon where I could fortunately fulfil these intentions. It is a course held in certain outdoor spaces in the urban backdrop of Taipei. Regularly, there are two consecutive classes in a month. Each session is independent from each other but are all connected by the aim of dancing. I attended all the classes held in January 2019, on the 7th and the 14th<sup>11</sup>. MS offers a space to dance and participants come and go freely. Dance here is not limited to a specific genre or form, perhaps 'movement' is a more adequate word. MS accommodates various individual bodies and concurrently gathers a collective. I believe the mundane movements of the body, such as running, walking, and gesturing are informed and formed

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<sup>11</sup> To allow my body to feel more and experience the movings in the aura of the collectivity assembled by the dance company that founded MS, I also attended two workshops respectively in January 2019 and July 2019. There weren't any MS courses held during my field trip in July 2019.

through certain education in a given culture (Mauss, 1979). By observing and feeling within everydayness, these practices are a form of weaving as an individual in the collective, and I may gain a greater understanding of the social system in question and unpack the correlation between individuals, collectivity and the social. (Yu, 2015a). As I have reflected in this section, I consider the everyday life of a body living and experiencing debunks the operation, formation, adaptation, and revision of the identity of the individual within society, her, his, or someone's social position and practice.

### **Research Methods**

Benefiting from my various longstanding experiences of contact with dance and performance, I have employed a variety of methods to enrich investigation and diversify perspectives. I have drawn on interviews, mundane conversation, and participant observation to exchange ideas and experiences with dance artists and the moving people I met in the activity. I approached to the participants of Monday School as we were dancing together and initiated chats with them during partnering work when possible and after the class. Notes of their descriptive and emotional accounts were taken via the electronic application Evernote immediately after the class. Apart from that, I also met the dance artists and the director of Monday School in café shops to encourage more comfortable, spontaneous and open conversations to share our enthusiasm towards dances and how dancing have shaped various positioning of ourselves. These chats were noted down in my handbook during the conversation to designate keywords and specific gestures or movements they performed as relating, which later transferred into Evernote as well. I set aside a particular folder of the fieldwork data and that of my phenomenological reflections on the application with a function to juxtapose various chats and my experiences. This enabled me to see how my experiments related to others' experiences and feelings and to channel them into all the narrative in this thesis. Besides observing live and recorded choreographic works and dancing bodies, I engaged with

archival research on newspapers and magazines alongside online data collection from digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

The key methods I devised to elicit fieldwork knowledge in and by a reflexive, moving Asian body were a practice-led investigation: the Geo-Choreo, and a kinesthetic autoethnography. These two specific methods underpin my research with the focus on individuality and kinesthesia throughout the investigation of Taiwanese-ness. Geo-Choreo starts with an intention to improvise on the streets by projecting various sensations that pass onto my body situated in a city. It was subsequently extended into an ongoing annual project, where I video recorded my improvisation daily in an urban setting that I randomly encountered when running errands or doing routines. Geo-Choreo, through the technique of improvisation, aims to present and notate the spontaneous, unfettered thinking-moving process of the conversation between body and space.

I took a kinesthetic autoethnographic approach to textually record my feelings, movements, and senses during participation in workshops or courses in various cities. Instead of thinking through writing, the intention was to think through moving, which aids my argument and manifests an experiential, experimental, and subversive life-research framework. I used my experiences of sensorium repertoire, such as feelings, affects, and kinesthesia since these sensations float and create mutual surfaces among bodies (Wetherell, 2014; Ahmed, 2004). Addressing these surfaces that I am partially creating may allow those inconspicuously shared Shentigan and values to surface.

All the generated field notes assisted me to conduct choreographic analysis and movement analysis more empathetically and carefully. Each component of these practical methods was routinely allocated throughout the research years, and oftentimes they were woven together in the process. Although some of these corporeal and kinesthetic experiences of practising and observing may not be directly translated into the texts, they manifested to me the complexity of

body, identity and various intentions operated within aesthetics to (dis)embody identities. Phillipa Rothfield succinctly points out that the phenomenon of the body not only care about the muscles and bones engaged to move or to dance, they highlight what dancing and moving feel like; 'it represents a kind of kinaesthetic sensitivity' (Rothfield, 1994: 80). These gained kinesthetic sensitivities pushed me to consider Taiwaneseeness in a more non-exclusive way, which means being both aware of the assumed conclusion of the studied Taiwanese bodies and Taiwanese identities while delving into the local actors and acts deemed to embody a certain collective energy of a certain area.

### **Geo-Choreo**

The design of Geo-Choreo was intended to investigate how my body acts and reacts with immediate environmental materialities. The process responds to the individuality that occurred in the dance created by the participants of Monday School and also those primarily discovered in interviews on the individuality of the new generation in dance. SanSan Kwan in her seminal work *Kinesthetic City* (2013) utilises walking as a kinesthetic and reflexive method to inform her analyses of how the meaning of being Chinese has been constructed through the urban space in a particular country. Intrigued by putting a researcher's body into the environment where the researcher and her research were located, I commenced a one-year project of filming myself dancing on the streets from the 1st October 2018 to the 31st September 2019 to create a space for marrying theoretical consideration and physical contemplation. My reflexive Asian, Taiwanese, female body – among other adjectives people might use to label my body – intends to bring forth the sensation of moving in geographical settings that may sometimes exclude the body my dancing represents. I intentionally let go of thoughts of how I will be seen and how I should respond to the gazes of others upon me, the domination of vision, then invite what a flâneuse focuses on: the feelings of the moving (waking/dancing) body in a city (Hammergren, 1996; Kwan, 2013). The idea of the flâneuse does not privilege any element of the constellation

of senses taking place simultaneously. A feminist consideration of the inclusiveness of sense was emergent within the operation of this method, not planted or planned. My experiences, as displayed in the introduction, solicit the contemplation on the nuanced sensual order and duality between the operation of a (female) kinesthetic and a (male) visual interaction with the surrounding materialities. I practised Geo-Choreo with the aspirations of AaM and BaK and to fulfil the physical and visceral aspiration of the geographic feminist research sensitive to different experiences, senses, affects that interrelate to one another and act in the environmental dynamics.

Further, Geo-Choreo aimed to make the form more subversive by dancing instead of walking. The idea that dancing *should* occur in a studio or on a stage is unsettling for me as both a researcher and a practitioner. This destabilised activity, and the pressure from potential public judgments of me, encouraged an effective concentration on body thinking/moving and enhanced my sensibility of myself and the environment. I needed to be highly spontaneous and attentive to exercising my body in order to not be gripped by the fear and the anxiety that was generated by the self-consciousness in my mind. Geo-Choreo also aims to experiment with the dynamic process and integrative feelings suggested by the idea of Shentigan. In other words, a Geo-Choreo exercise viscerally does Shentigan. Moving the body in a more holistic way, as suggested by Shentigan, enables the researcher to be diversely aware of the specific personal interpretations provided by the materialities of the environment, and by the researcher herself, to recognise in what ways individuality of sense resides with a reflexive consideration.

Finally, I used Geo-Choreo to document the struggles of visualising and textualising these experiences of moving in urban settings. This practice of Shentigan questions the expectation of an outcome from a study and a tangible-visible form of presentation of the gained knowing/knowledge. I invite my readers throughout the entire thesis to witness my sense of uncertainty, articulated in the above and the introduction, as a way to provoke knowledge interactively. In

the conclusion of the thesis, I will provide several clips of the videos of these experiments to allow my readers to feel my moving.

The steps of Geo-Choreo exercise are as follows:

1. Awareness flow: eyes closed, I let awareness move from different parts of my body without any movement. This is repeated in half a minute to one minute. This exercise, derived from Bryon's (2014) theory of the difference between awareness and focus, renders the body in an open condition and ready to take on a state for the following tasks.

2. Feel the energy or the dynamics (also feel the shape, distance and vitality) between myself, standing, and the environment, surroundings and vice versa myself, surroundings, the environment, standing, to allow a sense of space to emerge.<sup>12</sup>

3. Feel the pace of the city, the time in the place, grasping a sense of time.

4. Listen to the sound of the place, such as the wind blowing through trees, pedestrians' steps on the ground, car horns, etc., and use solely the body to coincide with the quality of the sound, releasing techniques, just move and gesture as the body naturally does, being very aware of the task itself (body <-> sound), not performing it.

5. Smell the city, pronounce keywords in the mind and by movement simultaneously.

6. Open my eyes and see the colour of the place, the image it produces, the shape, the spatial layout of the place, and move body intuitively to respond to or coincide with whenever the visual stimulation arises.

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<sup>12</sup> A sense of space, in Geo-Choreo, is a holistic and ongoing identification of the in-between connection from body to the situated spatial materiality and vice versa. Through different perspectives of this relation that is assigned/ imagined in the awareness and the body, it first allows a more subtle and commonly-neglected sensory process in a body and awakens a delicate perception of the environment. It then subverts the conventional and normalized vision of human and environment, that human beings are able to travel from place to place while a place could be circulated from one individual body to another body may be considered rare. Actually, a place is never stable, it passes through us through time, objects, and materials, and through sound and smell, all the sensory moments it encompasses.



7. Witness my feelings, sensations, emotions, and above sensory receptions through my awareness (no movement involved).

8. Witness my feelings, sensations, emotions, and above sensory receptions through my body, inhibit thinking and being aware of things outside of the task that may come into my head, just move.

9. Geo-Choreographing: double-tasking, being aware of a performer persona and a witnessing persona.

Each component of the process was not devised to be carried out separately and could be conducted concurrently in the final geo-choreographic exercising.

While Geo-Choreo cultivates the sensibilities of the researcher with the environment, kinesthetic autoethnography highlights the recognition of diverse stances and the reception of knowledge generated from seeing, feeling, even listening through one's body to another. By textually annotating my moving experiences and my conversations with other participants and instructors in various classes and workshops in different cities and communities, I was equipped with the diverse positioning of body and thoughts. This method, later consolidated by the aforementioned methodology of body knowing, originally derived from the adaptation process of living in Tokyo. Dancing with local people in a studio helped me to recognise my deep assumption of the city in the mind and provided a new angle to feel and see the city. The core of kinesthetic autoethnography relies on participation by the researcher in the dancing assemblage of various dance activities. While living in the city is a way to apprehend the city, however, the process of knowing and adapting in the city may be dominated by the visual agent and pre-existing ideologies, overriding or over'looking' what the body may have also and already offered.

### **Kinesthetic Autoethnography**

Kinesthetic autoethnography is a means to observe the possible overlapping of the feelings and senses of an individual body and that of a community. Deidre Sklar succinctly points out that when watching others move, the individual can experience the sensations as he or she imagines the seen movements in his or her body (Sklar, 2008). Susan Leigh Foster extends the idea of feeling oneself to be in the other's body by positing the active role of movement sensation as a contagious stimulation that initiates the pulse of mimicking internally and externally (Foster, 2008). In kinesthetic autoethnography, I am simultaneously the creator and the receiver of the kinesthetic stimulation. Through the interrelated process, I constantly and concurrently experience the differences, and perhaps the similarities, between bodies. Moreover, this method reiterates and elaborates the constant reflexive process of autoethnography that not only addresses what one is seeing and experiencing, but also how the investigation on, and the conception of things that have been constructed in a detailed and intimate way as one is interactively observing and participating in a systematic network of social and cultural constructions.

## **Analytical Tools**

### **Concentric Pathway and Movement Cultivation**

While collecting my kinesthesia and thoughts, I felt that the conceptual process moves along with my body and its relation to the environment in a concentric manner, travelling between the individual, the collective, and the social terrains. In order to unpick different mobile forms of filling-dynamics in urban settings, I articulated how I encountered them personally, how they influenced space collectively, and how they illuminate certain social and cultural aspects of Taiwanese-ness. The analysis of the physical, discursive, and sensate data draws on what I propose as 'the movement cultivation', which includes movement distribution, movement density, movement viscosity, movement pattern, and movement tendency. This analytical lens was inspired by my own improvisational movements where I observed how my

movements were distributed. Distribute here means how I allocated the joints, the legs, and the arms in a particular space to designate how my corporeal materiality is spread in the space. It is the relationship my body builds up through and within the environment. I also noticed another generated relationship of the spatial allocation of the materiality within the scope of my body. movement cultivation focuses on what part initiates and dominates a dynamic combination of the bodily movement within the body that is moving. Simply put, it aims to discern which point, level, or surface of the body produces more movements. These two factors will later determine the texture of moving, in terms of viscosity, to feel the connection and disjunction of movement sequences. I would then be able to detect the pattern of these movements in the space. Finally, the amalgamation of all the elements allows a tentative observation of a movement tendency. The movement tendency, while depicting certain concrete and repeated movements, is concerned more with the kinesthetic significance(s) the first four elements have cultivated to be able to disseminate via the tendency. The movement cultivation helped me to specifically describe a body and how the collectivity of bodies move and pinpoint possible feelings and meanings of these movements that share qualities of Taiwanese-ness in this research.

I then experiment with the writing format of the analysis of this research. This intention is manifested through the 'concentric pathway' tool. This framework allows me to reflect my diffusively mobile approach to locating qualities of Taiwanese-ness as the analytical doing resembles a ripple effect of knowing. Guided by the corporealised framework, MiQing 瀰情, the filling-in dynamics, I have navigated the intersections between the personal, the collective, and the social. Four discovered qualities: the viscosity circle, the spiral of civic energy, the diversity, and the empowerment come under MiQing. Each theme is dissected by three analytical tiers: my geographical experiences (the personal), MS' choreographic interaction (the collective), and societal choreographic representations (the social) in Chapter Four to Chapter Seven. Since this study values the most capricious and ambiguous interfaces of various activities of

investigation, I felt a strong obligation to maintain the dynamic element and emphasis in the delivery of this exegesis. By doing so, this research keenly invites its readers to kinesthetically empathise with words, pictures, sounds, affects, movements, etc., in its unconventional format and to discover, experiment with, and relate to the studied everyday motion in everyday urban choreographies. Finally, it aims to enrich perspectives and possibilities to provoke conversations of Taiwanese-ness and the kinesthetic understanding of identity in urban spaces.

### **Chinese Characters**

Finally, another analytic tool is supported by Shentigan, as mentioned earlier, to demonstrate how a distinct physical practice of my everyday life influences and interacts in producing knowledge, especially in my academic life. The implication of Shentigan is not limited to the possession and production of theoretical and epistemic regimes, it is also manifested through writing characters. Many of the Chinese characters, to be specific, the 'traditional' Chinese character, are hieroglyphs, which means their creation comes from the imitation of images (Ting, 2015). Moreover, the framework of limited strokes of Chinese characters is often meant to encapsulate the sensation each unit of character may provide. The inspiration for using kinesthesia and the amalgamation of the bodily sensorium came from the reflexive experience of the first class of the studied case. I was struck by the resemblance of my sensation and through the image of the word I was finally able to depict it. This discovery encouraged me to recall and contemplate how writing in my culture has shaped my body and the feelings of it. The approach I have taken in the later analytical part of this research is to invite the Shentigan of the Chinese character to facilitate the thinking through my moving to pinpoint the relations between my bodily knowledge with the understanding of Taiwanese-ness. Analysing the Chinese character turned out to be a useful way to understand the dynamic quality of Taiwanese-ness. It supported me, through the historicity of materiality in a representational tool, to delineate the possible shape, texture, pattern, and mobility of the

feelings, and the choreography of Taiwanese-ness, without diminishing other possibilities that I may have not been able to notice or experience thus to articulate to my readers.

Ting Liang believes that Chinese characters directly demonstrate the significant function of Shentigan in symbols (Ting, 2015). He further suggests examining the embedded Shentigan in Chinese characters enables the delicate understanding of the operation of cultural and social systems. I remembered for my generation at school, there was a calligraphy class, a specific time was allocated to consciously write a series of characters. In the class, while the meaning of what we wrote was sometimes briefly explained, the focus was on how one's body related itself to the forming of the character in front of one's physical presence. Seetoo Chia-Yi (2013) argues that the temporal and spatial elements of this practice of calligraphy figures in the complex embodiment of past and contemporary memories is manifested in the forming and transforming of the subjectivity of Taiwanese people. Using the Chinese character as an analytical tool also inherits the aspiration of subversive forms of knowledge, which come from 'the body' that senses and writes. I am aware and confess that the idea of MiQing (similar to filling-in) is elusive in this research. There might be a more stable way to define it by exclusively applying dual concepts such as emptiness/void to filling/wholeness, specifically presenting the opposing existence or definition of a concept. This approach, however, would probably fail in relation to the reflexive dimensions of this research. The dual thinking ignores the diverse, flexible, unsettled, and sensational spaces of meaning or the making-sensing of meaning. Meaning means something when one feels it, and the feeling is individual. Deconstructing and recontextualising the relevant Chinese characters not only seeks to find a way outside duality to interpret main conceptions of MiQing and the idea of a localised act of care in the thesis. It also serves as a reminder to recognise that the analyses provided are based on my situated and practised realities that have led me to the Taiwanese-ness I feel, move, perceive, and

conceive. That is the choreographic reflexivity this research aims to practice, experience and experiment with.

## Chapter Two

### **Sensing Taiwaneseeness by Body: The Empty Subject and MiQing Dynamics**

The idea of the organic entity “Taiwan” and of being Taiwanese encompasses numerous affective and material qualities that derive from historical sediments and their accumulated transformative effect. Taiwan, located on the south-eastern coast of China, revealed its strategic position when the Dutch colonised the island from 1624 to 1662 (Chen, 2012). Spain had its counterpart in Northern Taiwan from 1626 to 1642. While inhabited by Austronesian aboriginals, as a political and economic retreat, Taiwan received Western colonisers and mainland Chinese immigrants around the 1640s (Chang, 2015; Lin, 2010). Japan colonised Taiwan from 1895 to 1945 and still influences it today. In 1949, when defeated by Chinese Communists (People's Republic of China, PRC), the Chinese Nationalist Party, led by Chiang Kai-shek, retreated to and built-up Taiwan as a sovereign nation (Republic of China, ROC) before the rising of China and when Taiwan ceased to be a member of the UN. Since then Taiwan has lost its international recognition as a sovereign state. Layers of colonisation, imperialism, postcolonialism and the diplomatic predicament with China have resulted in an array of complex understandings of nation identity and have henceforth instigated a long-term pursuit of the meaning of 'Taiwaneseeness', who we (Taiwanese) are?

In this chapter, I propose a transformational process of Taiwaneseeness which may depart from the identity crisis, the conflicts between being Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, among others, and its representational derivatives. I also offer a way out of the Chinese/Taiwanese dual thinking. Politically, this duality refers to a tendency to define or defend what Taiwan(eseness) is by gazing at China. I will provide more details on how the historical, linguistic, cultural, political, and societal differences between Taiwan and China are articulated

and promoted to consolidate Taiwanese identity when introducing MiQing dynamics. The premise of this research is the consolidation of an existing Taiwaneseeness rather than a conclusion or the exclusion of it. I then discover the attributes of Taiwaneseeness, not limited to those of the duality, from what has been perceived, felt, and observed on the island. Another duality I ponder over is how to be less dependent on the habitual way of defining a new concept/idea by other known opposites. Admittedly, the idea of emptiness by Liao Chao Yang (1995a, 1995b) partially inspires me to textually articulate the feelings I experienced in MS as the MiQing (filling-in) dynamics. That being said, I later find MiQing is far beyond an opposite of emptiness, if not precisely contained by the boundaries of definition. Loosely mapping out MiQing can induce more practical and conceptual possibilities of its phenomenal applications in the analysis of the personal, collective, and societal dimensions of identification. My research of MiQing provides updated understandings and practices of Taiwaneseeness for a new era, which has moved on from the historical national confusion and conflict.

### **The Transformational Process of the Confirmed Taiwanese Identity**

A survey conducted by Taiwan Thinktank in June 2021<sup>13</sup> found that 63.3 per cent of Taiwanese citizens identified themselves as Taiwanese, 31.4 per cent considered themselves to be both Taiwanese and Chinese, and 2.7 per cent identified as Chinese. The quantitative result supports the fact that a certain 'Taiwanese identity' has been prevailing and confirmed as my study suggests. It also shows that there is not a consensual and coherent perception of national identity in Taiwan, and the acknowledgement of double consciousness may indicate the intertwining of at least two types of identity: the national identity of Taiwan and the cultural identity of China. In fact, the idea of Taiwan and the Taiwanese may be stretched by different viewpoints and experiences from different communities with disparate memories of and

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<sup>13</sup> A Chinese webpage: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7804&id=6960>; A English webpage: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/eng/PageDoc?fid=7424> (Election Study Center, National Chengchi University. Accessed: 17 August 2021)



attachments to both temporal and geographical spaces (Chen, K.H., 2010; Hsiau, 2012; Chen, F.M., 2017). There is not only a Chinese identity and a (Minnan) Taiwanese identity in 'the' Taiwanese identity, there also exists, for example, the indigenous identities of Hakka (an ethnic community of Han), Amis, Paiwan, and other lived identities.

The transformational process of national and cultural identities in Taiwan suggested by the survey means the ongoing approach to the conception of Taiwan may have shifted from 'who' we are to 'how' we are who we are. A shifting of focus is observed and manifested in a new trend in Taiwanese literature, a fruitful entry into certain aspects of Taiwanese identities (Hsiau, 2012). Taiwanese writers born in the 1970s and 1980s have built elements of individual lives into their work. Literary scholar Chen Chien-Chung (2010: 75-79) considers the writer as 'the generation of I, me, my' (我我我世代 wo-wo-wo-shi-dai) . This focus of self may reveal the Taiwanese identity has been confirmed and motivates them to think of their situated being as a human being rather than a question of being Taiwanese or not. It echoes Chi's (2017) comments on why he titled his book *Gay Literature*, and not 'Taiwanese' *Gay literature*. As he is on this island in his country there is no need to accentuate the term 'Taiwan' as a branch of something else, it is intuitively considered Taiwan, because we are in our own country, not in a foreign land<sup>14</sup>.

Similarly, a small amount of Taiwanese dance scholarship demonstrates that choreographers born between the 1960s and 1980s emphasize their personal life, not their national identity, revealing variances in their work from preceding generations (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Mead, 2012). These emerging generations are taking very different paths from their predecessors in terms of aesthetics and content. Gaining more liberty and access to global dance scenes, young choreographers are no longer bound by their past. Instead, they resort to

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<sup>14</sup> 27th February 2020, a seminar held by the Education Division Taipei Representative Office in London.

self-inwardness and their relationship with the modern world (Wang, 2012:110 ) as content. This openness feeds choreographers such as Cheng Tsung-lung, Lin Wen-chung, Lai Tsui-shuang, Chou Shu-yi, and others, who quickly react to the Taiwanese cultural milieu, questioning its realities outside of existing dance conventions. The generations born after the 1970s start to use dance not only to reflect on the situated 'I', they also see dance as a movement. Though not directly claiming its political or activist agenda, these choreographers work to problematise the understanding of identity, be it a fixed or essential Taiwanese-ness or an unsettling, unsolved, haunting notion, drifting among residents in urban settings. Some choreographers, such as Yang Nai-Shuan, the founder of Monday School, have deployed dance to create a community that holds up and embodies certain values. This does not mean the doing of 'being a Taiwanese is abandoned', quoting a former Taipei-based British dance scholar, they are 'commenting on their Asian-ness, or at least Asian life [...] in a personal way' (Mead, 2012: 182). Here, I would like to be more precise and adjust the Asian-ness to Taiwanese-ness. From the aforementioned phenomena, the generations after the 1980s seem to locate and embody their Taiwanese-ness less in terms of identification with a nation state and its associated sedimented and unquestionable attributes. As a member of this generation, I also connect Taiwanese-ness to my personal ways of living through my moving body.

### **Taiwanese-ness by the Body as Knowledge: Three Enlightening Mo(ve)ments**

In the previous chapter, I illustrated the emergent effect of doing 'dancing research' by Body as Knowledge (BaK) that concurrently reveals multiple concerns for the research to enable a series of reflexive practices. In this section, I would like to reconsolidate the adequacy of the knowledge of body by pointing out three specific, knowledgeable mo(ve)ments of moving bodies from various resources that uncover some existing assumptions of corporeal approaches to Taiwanese identities and their representatives regarding or relating to Taiwanese-ness in the practices of dance and theatre. These inspirational mo(ve)ments of BaK

invite me to interrogate the assumed correlation between the Taiwanese identity and the Taiwanese body. They also prompt me to question the predominant employment of representations, the comparatively exclusive visual identifiability of the body, to claim the existence of a Taiwanese body. Such decorated bodies suggest a duality between the Eastern and the Western and the essential perspective this research aims to be emancipated from. Finally, my experiences of BaK illuminate diverse Taiwanese bodies away from the universal imagination of a certain Taiwanese body and its implied exclusiveness of 'the' Taiwaneseess. The subversive discrepancy between cultural assumptions of national identity and the experiential sensations felt through my experiences and body in fieldwork produces new understandings of the kinesthetic and individual Taiwaneseess addressed in the following chapters.

The first BaK mo(ve)ment is realised by interviews and movement observation of Taiwanese diasporic dance artists. Their bodies and experiential remarks subvert the idea that a Taiwanese body is undoubtedly a dynamic ongoing embodiment of the Taiwanese identity, an assumed connection between a corporeal representation and an ideological identity. The operation of the body-identity relationship has been active in the practice of Taiwanese theatre. Perceiving the introversion of the Taiwanese body during the time of authoritarian reign of almost forty years<sup>15</sup>, artist and critic Wang Mo-Lin, born in 1949, ardently addressed the urgency to construct a body of Taiwan away from the suppression and ideological constraint of the imposing authority. 'A visceral resistance', against an officially forged one, was the intention behind this and this proposal suggested that once a localised body— was established, it was possible to attain the Taiwanese identity (Wang, 1992: 118-119). When Taiwan anticipated the

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<sup>15</sup> A martial law was enacted in Taiwan from 20 May 1949 to 14 July 1987 (Hsieh, 2017). Also <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2016/05/15/2003646284>. (Accessed: 16 August 2018 )

advent of democracy, decolonial activities flourished more than ever. Wang's calling seemed to be an effective way of dealing with the identity crisis resulting in complex, contradictory, and deposited authorities on the island, as literary scholar Chiu, Kuei-Fen (2003b) observes, Taiwanese-ness lies in the local citizens' concurrent resistance against and compromise with governorship.

There have been various practices echoing that aspiration. A 庶民 (shu-min, laypeople) body was created by one of the most influential theatre companies, Golden Bough (金枝演社), founded in Taiwan in 1993 as its Taiwanese body (Liang, 2017: 224). This body partially comes from the temple culture in Taiwan, the origin of grassroots power, that manifests a jovial, energised and rooted atmosphere in the locals (Chiu, 2003b). Other practices by different artists include visiting rural areas of Taiwan on foot, introducing TaiChi and Qigong and other rituals to ground the body into the Taiwanese soil. A body cultivated by specific techniques or in specific local environments is a body rooted in Taiwan; thus it establishes, embodies and enhances 'the' Taiwanese identity, the awareness of being Taiwanese.

Although emerging Taiwanese dance artists between 1960 and 1980 seldom apparently claim their intentions to construct Taiwanese bodies, unlike their fellow practitioners of Taiwanese theatre, the idea of embodying the intertwined national and cultural identities through a body seemingly dominated choreographic creations, which became one of the choreographic legacies today. The well-established and extensively-studied Taiwanese dance company Cloud Gate Dance Theatre<sup>16</sup> provides fruitful and mainstream resources for the idea of 'the' Taiwanese body. The body of Cloud Gate has been known for integrating ballet discipline, Han cultural aesthetics, and American physicality, complemented by the conceptual narrative of literary works, nostalgic song or historical events among others related to cultural,

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<sup>16</sup> Founded in 1973, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre is the first contemporary dance company in any Chinese-speaking countries.

national, and societal aspects of Taiwan. The founder and previous artistic director Lin Hwai-Mim, born in 1947, purposefully deployed this dance style to articulate his conception of "the" dance in Taiwan. Through this choreographic statement, he was able to arouse the collective sentiment of the identity of the island. The Taiwanese body produced by Cloud Gate is a mixture of cultures that represents ongoing formations and perceptions of Taiwan perhaps especially for the generation Lin is part of (Chen, 2011, 2012; Kwan, 2013).

I had immersed myself in the genealogies of bodies in the Taiwanese contemporary dance and theatre, attempting to locate 'the' Taiwaneseness through the lens of the body. Admittedly, I thus had held onto the assumed concurrent existence of a Taiwanese identity and a (embodying) Taiwanese body. No matter how or from what material and physical environments the aforementioned Taiwanese bodies have been realised in dance or theatre, an assumption that the Taiwanese body and the Taiwanese identity are reciprocal or dependent on each other was made apparent. I carried this unchallenged idea to the field, but my mind was subverted by the embodiments and the accounts of the Taiwanese diasporic dance artists I interviewed.

In April 2018, I conducted a series of interviews for a pilot study with Taiwanese diasporic female dancers aged from 30-40 based in Cologne, Bremen, and Dusseldorf to delve into the relationship between identity, body, and daily practice in a certain locality. The conversations with Taiwanese diasporic dancers also continued in London, Lyon, and other cities where these dancers were based or touring to throughout the whole doctoral project. From these dancers' accounts and their staged performances, I realised and identified that the attributes observed in bodies do not exactly mirror the (imagined) ethnic and the cultural (the essential) definitions of physical form and capacity, by which presumably the body was biologically and institutionally forged. What constitutes a Taiwanese body as well as a Taiwanese identity varies from one dance artist to another.

The assumed close correspondence between a Taiwanese identity and a Taiwanese body, analysed in previous studies and manifested in artistic productions, was disrupted since the conception of Taiwaneseeness was not always essential to those dancers' thinking / moving / creating. In other words, the conception of being Taiwanese, the intention of embodying Taiwanese attributes, and the practice of Taiwanese attributes were not always present at the same time. There was no coherent understanding of the Taiwanese body, and even some of the dance artists did not consider their body Taiwanese but simply individually different. One of the diasporic dance artists I interviewed felt reluctant about the idea of being a 'Taiwanese dancer/body'. For her, belonging to or coming from Taiwan was not relevant in dance, and there might not be such thing as the Taiwanese body since everyone (including the current Taiwanese diasporic dancers) was different. She identified as an individual dancer more than a Taiwanese dancer. Another dancer, however, valued her Taiwanese identity as a dancer and human being from Taiwan and in our short interview, she actively incorporated "being Taiwanese" into her dancing body and visceral statement.<sup>17</sup>

The fieldwork significantly encouraged me to see the studied Taiwanese bodies as individual bodies, which may contain localised attributes to various degrees, where 'localised' means a series of memories and values built up in a certain place. Instead of assigning national and cultural representations and certain localised physicalities / materialities to a Taiwanese body in the context of political rhetoric and statements, I am interested in considering Taiwanese bodies as a contingent amalgamation of diversities and differences embedded in both individualized and localised corporeal and geographic histories.

My Geo-Choreo approach reinforces the idea of individual Taiwanese bodies and Taiwaneseeness as my body has unveiled different movements and attributes from other

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<sup>17</sup> This dancer was considerably proud that she had never been abroad to study and completed all her professional training in Taiwan. She was a local professional dancer for quite a long time and then obtained her position in a prestigious dance company in the West. Interviewed on 18th May 2019.

diasporic Taiwanese dancers. It is the second BaK distinct mo(ve)ment that brings forth the limitation of the dual thinking of Taiwaneseeness. The duality I refer to is East (Taiwan) and West (North America and Europe). The dichotomy is also related to consider Taiwaneseeness as a certain grassroots culture, contrasting with the Westernised, modernised urban living. Based on the comments from my family and friends and my own observation, my body in Geo-Choreo encompasses a variety of representations, such as TaiChi, Kungfu, contemporary flow and the locking or popping elements.<sup>18</sup> The audience shared with me that they could not categorise my moving body and my dancing did not seem local / Taiwanese to them. Instead, it was a specific, non-describable style, where sometimes a combination of Western and Eastern 'feelings' was perceived.

As I improvised on the streets, I did not intend to create styles but only to respond to the environment. The intention of reflecting the encountered environment may resemble the one that prompted an Eastern body aesthetic dance. However, the resulting movements were different. The Eastern body aesthetic dances variously developed rooted and representational bodies. When martial law was lifted in 1987, overwhelmed by democratization and globalization, post-Cloud Gate dance artists both in Taiwan and abroad began to address the meaning of being modern Taiwanese. Ambitions to redefine the relationship between Taiwan and the Western world (Chen, 2012) cultivated the emergence of an Eastern body aesthetic dance (*Dong-fang Shen-ti Kuan Wu-dao* 東方身體觀舞蹈). A fluid, abstract, and tension-free body was manifested by the infusion of chi, tai-chi, ritual dances or local and primal rhythms. Dance artists such as Lin Li-chen and Liu Show-lu attempted to discover an original body that reflected their being in this lived world when Taiwan was inevitably engaged with the conflicts and agendas between American and communist power. Focusing on how a body perceives and moves in its environment, the post-Cloud Gate dance artists were proactively creating a

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<sup>18</sup> Please visit the Instagram account of the Geo-Choreo project: <https://www.instagram.com/zoolinju/>

dancing visceral identity that considers the enormous influence of the social, political, and cultural impact of this conflict at that time (Chen,2012: xxv; Wang *et al.*, 2012: 110). Perhaps most importantly, they used their body to build up 'the' Eastern (Taiwan) body away from the dominant Western body techniques and styles. The Eastern body aesthetic dance derived from the dual operation of constructing a certain Taiwaneseeness by contrasting it with aesthetics of embodiment dominant in the West.

Based on the interviews and my bodily experiences and realities, this dual thinking may neglect the inevitably fused conditions of Taiwanese bodies of the generations following the 1980s. The Eastern body, like the body of Cloud Gate, speaks to one phenomenon of the Taiwanese body, not a universal summation of it. Even though the bodies I have discussed so far may be inspired by similar corporeal systems or philosophies such as Tai-chi, the ways a body demonstrates such hybridity are different. Sometimes the hybridity may not even be apparently recognised or categorised into specific cultural representations as the integration is subtle, mundane, and less performative. What I want to emphasise here is that although my body, the Eastern body, and the dancers' bodies are all Taiwanese bodies, we exhibit various or even varying bodies. We do not always embody a certain Taiwaneseeness and meet the expectation of 'the' Taiwanese body endorsed with cultural, national or geographical representations and ideologies. As I acknowledge in Chapter one, the reality of my life and resulting body is not primarily conditioned by traditional ritual or the authentic grassroots representation and practice, it largely emerges from an urban mundane life that draws on the hybridity that Taipei city has been given and is developing.

The reality of my body in urban settings is consolidated by a third distinct mo(ve)ment when I take the inspiration from the 'bodies' in the *Project Muomuo Work- in- Progress II*<sup>19</sup>(默默計畫 2 muo-muo-chi-hwua-ur) in 2014. Initiated by choreographer Yu Yen-Fang, *Project*

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<sup>19</sup> Please see <https://pareviews.ncafroc.org.tw/?p=18897> (Accessed: 2 May 2019)



*Muomuo* directly and clearly proposes the question 'what is the Taiwanese body?'<sup>20</sup> Instead of locating Taiwanese representations in a body, she invites various individually experienced bodies to delineate a spectrum of Taiwanese bodies. The presentation of her research involves the bodies and experiences of each dancer, an individual way to approach her or his Taiwanese body. There is no conclusive manifestation of belonging to Taiwan, each body and its lived materiality inform a perspective and embodiment of Taiwaneseeness, that is unlikely to be exhausted in any possible way. Yu's embodied insight echoes Bernard Lahire's (2014: 109-118) argument of the assumed generalisation of a community. He argues that people are constantly exposed to a plurality of environmentally shaped dispositions, thus their practices are not as coherent as the habitus – a distinction that is assumed to be consistently shared within certain collective formations. Yu's choreography becomes a solid BaK theory that offers a more flexible, intriguing, inclusive, and non-essential mundane perspective on the Taiwaneseeness of bodies. It also provides a way out of the essentialist approach to a universal and fixed Taiwanese body. Moreover, it responds to and embodies the interwoven choreographies, bodies, and places attributed to potential Taiwaneseeness in urban environments.

Through the lens of BaK with the three crucial mo(ve)ments, I am eager to experiment with the idea that Taiwaneseeness may possibly be understood as the individual choreography of the lived and interacting space of a specific body. The spectrum of Taiwanese bodies communicates with what I have discovered among Taiwanese diasporic dance artists, the individuality of Taiwaneseeness, with less emphasis on recognising physical attributes of the Taiwanese body and more on how a confirmed, but not always loudly repeated, Taiwanese subject is individually established among cultural and social contexts– resonating with the aforementioned 'I, me, my' (我我我) in the literary discourse.

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<sup>20</sup> Please see [http://projectmuomuo2013.blogspot.com/2017/06/blog-post\\_7.html](http://projectmuomuo2013.blogspot.com/2017/06/blog-post_7.html) (Accessed: 2 May 2019)

With the help of the three BaK mo(ve)ments, this research suspends the legacy of a specific body for formulating a particular Taiwaneseess and thus discovers various Taiwanese bodies and analyses a practised Taiwaneseess. Deriving from my personal experiences, I wish to highlight the less studied individuality of Taiwaneseess both in the fields of Taiwanese contemporary dance and Taiwanese research. This individuality also allows me to update the understanding of Taiwaneseess by offering analyses of perceptions and practices of Taiwaneseess through the younger generation that I belong to, even though I am aware that the Taiwaneseess I perceive, and practise, is constitutive and not conclusive. As diverse and disparate as these choreographers and their approach to the underlying Taiwanese awareness are, I attempt to consider Taiwaneseess differently. Firstly, I mean to shift away from the predominant focus on theatrical dancing bodies, especially those of Cloud Gate toward personal, private, and mundane dancing and moving bodies. Secondly, I invite an understanding of Taiwaneseess via senses and affects aside from the national and cultural identity and representation widely articulated in the valuable studies from various disciplines (Chang, 1997; Lu, 2019; Teoh, 2018; Wang, 2012; Zemanek, 2018, 2020; Lee, 2017; Chiu, 2003a, 2003b; Chuang, 2006; Chen, F.M., 1995; Hsiau, 2012; Lin and Um, 2017; Lin, 2010; Wu, 2016).

If identity or, say, certain qualities of a community, (to be purposefully vague to welcome more possibilities to understand what makes a community for its members) are not only the visible characters or cultural symbols, are there any other means to identify the existence of communal constituents of Taiwanese society? Zemanek (2020) suggests that, apart from visual and discursive ideologies, geographical knowledge and the bodily involvement of Taiwan, through the popular and governmentally promoted cycling trips, is the crucial actor to construct the idea of Taiwan. The daily, personal and routine events of negotiating and navigating one's life hidden under a social and national operation sheds light on the most trivial inception of

constructing the relationship and identification between an individual, the environment and the community through feeling. One of the dancers of *Project Muomuo* told me that she used her feelings towards her life in Taipei to improvise on and contemplate her Taiwanese body.<sup>21</sup> As well as 'to see' identity or 'to think' identity, in the case of my and other dancers' experiences, I argue that qualities of a community are felt and done through the body to perceive and practise an engaged collectivity. The body does identity. Melissa Blanco Borelli's (2016) idea of Hip(g)nosis demonstrates a possible way to look at identity as a certain way of performing movements of the hip. For the *mulata* in Cuba, the deployment of the hip and the feeling of moving the hip assists the negotiation between cultures and ethnicity. Considering the feeling of movement recognises a certain situated reality and certain localised materialities in the forming of a community by an individual and as a collective member. Choreographer Lin, Yi-Jin, who has studied and developed a Taiwanese body, locates the identity of a Taiwanese body as a swinging motion with dynamics similar to a boomerang, but a soft, thick returning one.<sup>22</sup> She is specifically aware her Taiwanese body is an individual one that is situated in ritual and religious communities.

While I discover and highlight the individuality of Taiwaneseeness, I do not preclude the possibility of considering community to discover a certain Taiwaneseeness. Despite the varieties of being a Taiwanese and experiencing a Taiwanese body in the dancers I interviewed, there was a distinct sense of motion shared by most of the diasporic dance artists. This kinesthetic phenomenon, observed both on stage and during the dialogues, disseminates feelings of uprightness, diligence, observation, competition, confidence, self-consciousness, and freedom. Most of them also described that they 'felt' Taiwanese dancers were 'all' very diligent, working-hard, committed, tenacious.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Interviewed on 28th January 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Interviewed on 13th August 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Interviews were mainly conducted between 11th and 24th April 2018 along with others contingently

The above qualities were sensed when the dance artists were talking in our conversations and chats and I also observed the shared energy in their performing routines of rehearsals and performances. This finding (or change to the shared Shentigan of the dancers) resonates with the 'common ground' proposed by a renowned and prolific Taiwanese activist and writer, Wu Rei-Ren (2016), as an unconventional resolution to reconstruct the content and form of the nation(alism) of the Taiwanese. He believes that by addressing what the Taiwanese on the island of Taiwan share in their daily lives and the generated pattern of interacting, it is possible to accommodate the seemingly incompatible, diversity and conflict within the understanding of the 'common', which is a spontaneous close-up on the space and time where each inhabitant composes, agrees and co-exists with the mindset of forming an agreed union (Wu, 2016: 28-34). The Taiwanese nationalism Wu expects is the dynamic functionality of psychological transformation in a public sphere, transcending ethnicity and nationality, and is used to foreground the potential solidarity of 'the' Taiwanese people. This advocacy is a wider, unconventional and flexible resolution of how Taiwan / Taiwanese is conceived in scholarly publications from epistemology, philosophy, and nationalism to taste, economics and the arts (Chen, F.M., 2017; GeoCorner and Hung, 2020; Shih, 2016). Wu's idea of a nation or a community is built upon a collective, shared, common mentality in a particular shared space where the societal community resides, and this mentality may consequently be construed as some attribute of the shared nation or community. His use of a collective mentality in a certain space as the foundation or definition of a community supports my understanding of Taiwaneseeness as certain collectivity of bodily experiences of being a Taiwanese locally and globally. If the understanding of Taiwaneseeness should be, and would be, beyond a certain essentialist existence, while unlikely as it sounds, the dynamics shared by the dancers may be one possible conceptual approach, deriving from feelings and kinesthesia to Taiwaneseeness.

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arranged based on the availability of dancers in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Looking at Taiwaneseeness in terms of sense and kinesthesia reveals an organic interaction between collective identities and individual identities. This perspective is informed by shared and self-interpreted experiences both in Taiwan, in the resident city, and in the imagination of how Taiwan and Taiwaneseeness are perceived/neglected and could be perceived/neglected. It shows the on and off interplay between personal identity and collective identity, which is unstable and unpredictable. Together, if not at the same time, these identities diffuse a certain perception of the content and form of Taiwaneseeness. Consequently, I have been encouraged by the dialogue between academic resources and my personal experiences to delight in the messiness of being unable to separate the national and the cultural, the personal and the collective, and other forms of Taiwanese identities. Thus, I do not specifically address Taiwaneseeness as an identity to encourage thinking and moving out of the identity box. In this study, I refer to Taiwaneseeness broadly as attributes culturally affiliated with the land of Taiwan. These attributes could be ways, statements, representations, and embodiment, among others, of identity and identification. I have been enlightened by the conversations I have conducted with the diasporic dancers and my body experiments in different cities, and from this I am certain that the sensory perspective and use of Shentigan dynamics will assist in pinpointing and subsequently renewing an idea of Taiwaneseeness.

The individuality suggested in the pilot interview, and reinforced in my investigations, also complicates the study of Taiwaneseeness and Taiwanese bodies and imparts a more nuanced and imaginative exploration and understanding of Taiwaneseeness. I argue in a visceral and experiential way that Taiwaneseeness is a series of physical sentiments of a geographically situated context-specificity of Taiwan. To be bolder and clearer, I propose that Taiwaneseeness is the MiQing (瀰情) dynamics, an active, filling, moving force that is extended by and extending throughout the interactive locality.

## **From a Passive Empty Subject to an Active MiQing Organism**

In this section, I aim to pinpoint the elusive feelings I had as MiQing emerged in and around me when I moved and danced on the streets and when I participated in the fieldwork at Monday School. The articulation of the feeling of MiQing is facilitated by the empty theory proposed by literary scholar, Liao Chao-yang (1995a). Drawing on historical conditions of colonization and domination by imperial forces and the result discourse on Taiwanese identity crises and conflicts, Liao argues that the Taiwanese subject is the 'empty subject' (the subject as void), which 'has to continually 'take in' (move in) objects' (Chen, 2012; xxii; Liao, 1995a: 119 ). It is constantly adjusting and perceived as a flow and a space for life experience. Liao's proposal aims to provide a potential solution that considers all the political and cultural complexity and possibility that Taiwan has sustained. Drawing on Slavoj Zizek's (1989) idea of void, Liao sees the Taiwanese subject as empty in terms of the absence of fixed content (Liao, 1995a). Liao notes, 'The emptiness of subject does not exclude content; rather, it is a space which receives, alters, and gives meanings to content.'<sup>24</sup> (1995b: 105). Based on the premise of the existence of the Taiwanese subject, he attempts to describe its functionality rather than determining what exactly makes a Taiwanese subject: what the subject did rather than what it was. He observes the openness and fluidity of Taiwanese identity by comparing the Taiwanese subject to a glass that one could pour water into. He does not specify what kind of water, and leaves the options open by emphasising the multiple and perhaps unpredictable things that could be put into the glass (Liao,1995b). Given the context of Taiwanese literature, the water or the 'content' that is poured in would most likely be considered to address the competing duality of Chinese and Taiwanese identity.

Liao's remarks on Taiwanese identity and the Taiwanese subject were part of the enduring literary confrontation and postcolonial discursive construction of the 1990s. Between 1995 and

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<sup>24</sup> My translation.

1996, there were particularly fierce exchanges on the problematic identifications in Taiwanese literature, the accompanying intertwined Taiwanese subject resulting from colonial histories and the political and cultural predicament of the relationship with China (Chuang, 2009). One consequence was a positioning of Taiwanese literature as either a branch of Chinese literature or as an independent style in which Taiwanese literature addressed its unique colonized past (Chen, F.M., 1995; Chiu, 2003a). The discourse on Taiwanese literature was entangled with competing ideas about Taiwanese and Chinese identity and, by extension, attitudes towards Taiwan's independence. The identity of the Chinese migrants arriving in Taiwan before 1949, called 本省人 (ben-sheng-ren, the islander) have oftentimes seen profoundly distinct from those arriving mainly after 1949, called 外省人 (wai-sheng-ren, the mainlander)<sup>25</sup>. Most of the islander writers recognised the Taiwanese postcolonial subject as independent of the Chinese, even if China remained relevant to the forming context or was seen as making a partial contribution, while the mainstream of the mainlander avoided the independent nature of the Taiwanese subject by purporting a collective Chinese subject that Taiwan or the Taiwanese should align with (Chen, F.M., 1995).

Although the focus was supposed to be on the cultural identity of Taiwanese literature, the entanglement of national identities and the political and cultural reality of Taiwan was not easy and not likely to be separated from China and the Chinese. Moving from literary analyses to the interrelated understanding of Taiwanese national and cultural identities, Liao aims to prevent the Taiwanese subject from being essentialised within certain ideologies by separating the content, the Taiwanese identity, and the form, the Taiwanese subject. An empty subject could freely take on different contents, different identities without damaging its reality of being a subject.

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<sup>25</sup> These two terms generally exclude other ethnic Chinese immigrants such as Hong Kong or Malaysian and those arriving in Taiwan after the end of the cold war.

The broader cultural-political problematic of the Taiwanese identity, the Taiwanese subject and their relationship is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, criticisms concerning the Taiwanese subject, Taiwanese identity and its independence derived from the implications of the empty theory assist me in contextualising MiQing dynamics in the context of Taiwaneseeness. First, the idea of the empty subject was challenged due to its potential invitation for a Chinese (national) identity (Chiu, 1995). The strong opposition between Taiwan and China demonstrates the first duality that MiQing is intended to bypass, if not to transcend, a common dichotomy of Taiwan versus China used to depict, define and differentiate Taiwan/Taiwanese by looking at its long-term 'opponent' China (communist China). Looking at Taiwaneseeness in its kinesthetic trajectory emphasising kinesthetic beside national or cultural identities, I aim to argue that it may not be as adequate as it was to oftentimes draw on the differences between Taiwan and China. It may not be a healthy way to rely on a comparative expediency of defining oneself by the others' existence (Chen, K.H. 2010; Fan, 2014).

MiQing dynamics is an attempt and approach to avoid the tendency of Taiwan-China dualism and thus to better delineate and address Taiwaneseeness as a feeling and moving organism nourished by nations, cultures, daily lives, memories, emotions and values. Multiple identities influence and contribute to the perceived Taiwanese identity in a certain moment in a certain space. An attempt to holistically and comprehensively determine 'the' Taiwanese identity may neither seem likely nor necessary.

Gayatri Spivak argues there is a 'strategic essentialism' of utilising a certain shared identity or representational belonging of a particular community to mobilise underrepresented groups to (re)gain certain political interests and to be heard (Spivak, 1996: 214). In contrast, MiQing serves as a strategy that may still manage to support diversity and the 'subaltern' group while departing from essentialism due to the focus on motion. To fulfil this task of examining Taiwaneseeness 'in motion' (referring to the critical lens and the dynamic quality of it), I dissect



who the motion is initiated by, and in what circumstances the motion is carried out or interrupted. The process of addressing the kinesthesia of an individual in the collective enables the discoveries of 'felt', rather than assumed sharedness and, of course, the differences in real practices within a specific community in a specific time and space. This understanding from moving with others promotes the subversive act of redefining what has been conventionally perceived as sameness and variety.

Focusing on the motion practices of dancing subjects of Taiwan highlights the actual experience of living Taiwanese-ness. The proposal of MiQing attempts to concurrently respond to the substantiation of Taiwanese-ness that has been gradually consolidated within the last decade in Taiwan, as evidenced in the survey mentioned previously. With the premise of a certain existence of being and living as Taiwanese, MiQing offers a dynamic and cautious way to feel Taiwanese-ness as a capricious entity with various moving tissues, be it subject, identity, consciousness, etc. MiQing can also examine the situated and woven materialities in a certain time, space, movement, and environment to capture a situated Taiwanese-ness at the moment of my investigation.

To be more specific, inspired by the empty theory where identity and subject are deemed separated, I argue that subject and content, the Taiwanese subject and the Taiwanese identity, are not separated, they are intertwined and together form an organism. This experience-led, viscerally informed interpretation could encourage a more intricate way to think of them as an unsettled whole to illustrate the contingent status of Taiwanese-ness more adequately and imaginatively. I then further posit Taiwanese-ness is a filling-in organism: that Taiwanese-ness is the MiQing dynamics. Without resorting to the content or the form, I examine its movement cultivation (movement distribution, density, viscosity, tendency, and pattern) to witness the characteristics emerging from the moving of the organism, an affirmed being of Taiwanese.

Liao's (1995a, 1995b) empty subject also seemingly suggests a sense of lack and a passive condition of waiting for action from a third party to fill the subject with the materiality of content (identity). Liao's empty subject originally expressed in Chinese is 空白主體. 空白, when translated literally into English means empty (emptiness) and white (whiteness). 空 is composed of the upper part 穴, the designated image of a hole, while the lower part marks the sound of the character 工. 工 also indicates a hole modified to be accommodation. 空 could be interpreted and described as someone living in a constructed hole.<sup>26</sup> One of the various interpretations of the visual origin of the character 白 draws the scene where rice is served, waiting to be consumed. These two characters reflect staticity and passiveness, implied by the idea of taking in within the empty theory. Chuang (2009: 9) also notes that the prevalent literary discussion on the identity of Taiwan seemingly tends to focus on the subjectivity of Taiwan as 'a framed/ frozen Taiwanese subject', leaving limited understandings of the process of subjectivisation or the dynamic patterns of identifying. Although there is indeed an action, suggested by Liao's idea of taking in, it seems to be at a fixed point, as previously discussed. The intention implied, referencing 空 and 白, relies on a wanting, a lacking and limited mobility to stay inside the space instead of stepping outside a delimited boundary. Such conceptions may cling more to a clear boundary between inside and outside, another dual implication and inhibition.

For 'filling', 瀾 Mi, not being 'filled', the journey continues; the space could be definite or indefinite; the boundary is smudged by this action. It is a way to give, to travel, to touch and to be touched. It is a proactive way for the filling subject to understand the world and understand itself. 瀾 could be dissected into three characters, 氵, 弓 and 爾. 弓 means bow and 爾 depicts a scene where arrows are secured to multi-shooting bows extensively. 爾 may also

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<sup>26</sup> The origin of Chinese characters is contended. I have employed the predominant interpretation among discussions available in the timeframe of this research. The most consulted digital resource is 象形字典 <http://www.vividict.com/Public/index/page/index/index.html> (Accessed 27 April 2020).

describe the collective and mass shooting of arrows. It indicates a profound amount of time. Moreover, 彌 accommodates the connotation of filling (滿 man) and converging (合 he). With the added 彡, a radical derived from 水 (shue, water), 瀾 renders the solid image of bow and arrow with a quality of fluidity and a blurring, an undetermined shape. The kinesthesia of 瀾 defines an expectation of floating out, the intention of meeting and contacting collectively as well as individually as manifested by the flying and shooting water-like arrows. The Shentigan (身體感) of 瀾 is about the momentum and the subsequent movement of looking for a new encounter by moving from one space to another, shuttling temporally. The radical '彡' of the Chinese character 瀾 assists me to consider MiQing's moving pattern curved apart from the straight shooting arrow; MiQing is improvisationally linear or meandering or in-between like the water. The Mi (filling-in) relates to my understanding of Taiwanese identity and that of my generation, the majority of us identifying as Taiwanese whilst also recognising Chinese culture as part of Taiwanese culture as reflected in the above survey. The conflicted identity and ideology between the mainlander and the islander contested in the literary field may have waned in our life times. Now, we fill ourselves from the world with our feet being set on the land beneath our skin. It is through my body that I realise there might be some perceivable potential qualities of identities; those that I danced out and felt on the streets and in the courses at MS.

During my visceral discovery, I felt that my body resembled a space that was continuously integrating into other spaces around me, autonomously flowing and expressing in space what it was able to offer and what it was simultaneously inspired by other participants to offer. It was giving, filling itself into the world while creating a life experience. If I see my body as a spatial and temporal form of life experience, and use it as a tool to approach certain existing notions of Taiwanese identity, what feels closer is the dynamics of filling rather than the action of taking in (移入 Yi Ru/ moving in). MiQing, in the sense of filling in, also invokes 'feeling in', that is the emotions accompanied by the motion of filling. The affective resources MiQing brings into the

dynamic process also articulate the crucial element of Taiwanese-ness, the effect of affects in forming a particular meaning of being Taiwanese. Zemanek (2017) finds the affective bond created by the involvement of the body through trips or cycling in order to solicit sensual and memorial connection with the space is an efficient way to construct a national heritage and brand. The feeling of Taiwan is generated and reinforced by the physical engagement and the consequent arousal of affects when the body feels. MiQing may speak similarly to the arousal of situated affects, not in a sense of national collectivity but in a sense of living and producing an attachment to time and space. It is not a state but a dynamic, capricious process where the environment and the body are both filled with sensation, motion, and emotion, and the state of filling in the space with all these elements operating. The empty subject depicts a stillness (a state) of waiting, some feeling is suggested but not observed and articulated: an underlying desire. MiQing is a clear announcement of the felt emotions, the filling affect with the filling act. This Shentigan of MiQing throws and manifests everything in space at the same time and reveals the situated characteristic of Taiwanese-ness in an immediate manner. In short, in contrast to the empty subject, MiQing is active, affective, and elaborate.

### **Filling-in, Emptiness and Wholeness: Conceptual Comparison**

Liao's (1995a, 1995b) empty subject deriving from the psychoanalysis of wanting/taking in something may induce the dual thinking of emptiness and wholeness. The emptiness of the empty subject suggests an idea / ideology that Taiwan is welcoming any possibility to fill its void as it is a confirmed form without a confirmed content in a state of approaching wholeness. MiQing moves away from considering the static state of Taiwanese-ness as empty or whole thus helps to portray Taiwanese-ness as a mobile action that seeks out to contact and to fill the space and the time as much as it is able to.

The use of Mi 瀰, filling-in, as specified above, is intended to invite readers to surrender a potential habitus of dual thinking. Apart from the dual pairs of Taiwan and China and content

and form, the English translation of MiQing as filling-in was based on the kinesthesia that the word 'filling in' engendered during both the practice of moving in the studied case and the practice of expressing feelings in a written format. It may intersect with philosophical ideas of filling. However, I do not attempt to reinforce the difference or further the duality between emptiness and fullness. On the contrary, I wish to make an effort to see Taiwaneseeness – a subject, its subjectivity, subjectivisation – as a blurring organism that is not confined to the arbitrary and assumed conditions of emptiness or wholeness. I intend to illustrate what MiQing is by putting it into dialogue with the relevant conceptual contemplation that is constantly passing and emerging as I move and think within MiQing. Identifying these mobile germinated particles of knowledge from my body immersed in MiQing, I have found the postcolonial work of Édouard Glissant (1997) and the analytical philosophy of Nishida Kitaro (1970) fill a functionally similar space that accentuates a creative reluctance to compartmentalise 'filling' and its oftentimes assumed opposing existence of 'emptiness'. While assisting in clarifying how MiQing operates, these two conceptual foundations also indicate the valuable flexible space created by not conceptually fixing MiQing on the opposite side of emptiness to fulfil a genuine welcome of bodily knowledge, by feeling and knowing, from moving-thinking.

Nishida Kitaro suggests emptiness is a transcendental state where an individual body is unconditionally accepting phenomena as one's own self (Baek, 2008; Abe, 1975). His idea of emptiness draws an image that releases the clinging to 'being and not being'. The reciprocity of the conceptual opposites assists my employment of MiQing, that aims to break through the dualism in the thinking of existence; the emptiness sees no dual pairs but a constant process of acknowledging each (and) other, a process of knowing-feeling the opposite instead of solidifying the opposite (Baek, 2008; Dallmayr, 1992; Dilworth, 1969; Ong, 2004). This emptiness, unlike what Liao's describes, indicates that the identifying of self does not rely on taking something, rather, it relies on knowing and communicating activities in a continuous

manner. However, based on the idea of Nishida's emptiness that the dichotomy of any entity still exists, Baek notes and suggests that, for Nishida, to know oneself hinges on a dynamic recognising, conceptualising and feeling moment where 'one finds one's self to be the being of warmth in reference to coldness enveloping and penetrating the body' (2008: 38). Emptiness allows the reciprocity of duality by discovering that duality is part of an ongoing process of being but not a static and fixed state of a conclusive condition of perception and knowledge. While Nishida refuses the mutual exclusiveness of duality, he does not conclude that the two could be synthesised.

In this regard, emptiness may be considered similar to the oneness/totality proposed by Édouard Glissant, a total diverse state that forms by constantly introducing and acknowledging multiplicity (Coombes, 2018; Glissant, 1997: 191; Wiedorn, 2018: 109). Nishida's emptiness in its inclusive capacity seems to visualise a universal and permanent being as a whole and the only reality of being. Steffney (1985) suggests that Heidegger's concept of being and nothing are two different statuses of being that respectively call for affirmation and negation. However, in the teachings of Zen, based on Abe's interpretation, emptiness in Zen Buddhism does not exclude affirmation or being, it is a dynamically alternating principle where the affirmation is the negation and vice versa (Abe, 1975: 186). In addition to Zen's approach to emptiness, Nishida (1970) implies a pre-existing wholeness that is capable of containing opposing entities within but not as a radical action that bypass the usage of duality. MiQing, the filling-in dynamics I am trying to describe, does not refer to the ontological thinking of what is being and the meaning of being. The proposal of MiQing, kinesthetically translated into the gerund 'filling' in, aims to avoid the haunting dichotomous approach to defining Taiwanese-ness. Although the comparison between my participatory experiences and the empty theory fulfils the idea of MiQing, the emerging MiQing is more intended to draw a possible moving pattern and

consequently potential borrowed qualities of Taiwaneseeness rather than to question the being of Taiwaneseeness.

MiQing, the filling-in dynamics, is meant to reflect the mobile texture of what I have been informed of and struck by in moving, the feelings of which later, on reflection, inspire my thinking of Taiwaneseeness. As MiQing actively moves and meets in the space, it speaks more to the relationship between moving, spacing, and practising in various conditions and environmental settings. Filling the space in my visceral experiencing and experimenting originally locates a conceptual domain dissimilar to oneness. It does not focus on a fixed shape and understanding of Taiwaneseeness as a whole, a 'being as whole' state, it concentrates on the diversities and contingencies encountered and encountering. Observing Liao's emptiness visualised by his metaphor of an empty glass, there is a boundary, as aforementioned, between what is inside and what is outside. Applying the concept of oneness indeed may erase the delimited borders of entities since wholeness contains everything, be it the duality or the diversity based on Nishida or Glissant's ideal realities. The floating existence of possibility in Glissant's oneness seems to strike a resemblance with Liao's empty theory where the content of the subject of Taiwan awaits and invites things, everything, perhaps. In consideration of possible diversity, MiQing is given a similar capacity, by contacting, it is constantly touching in, reaching out, filling in possible spaces of potentiality. MiQing is different from oneness as MiQing's moving is initiated by the intention of contact rather than a knowing of the difference and the result diversity. Thus, MiQing produces certain movements and moments that encompass contingent emergence and a combination of varieties and consistencies. The presumption of difference seems to be salient in Nishida's understanding of emptiness whereby he believes that the two entities are not blurred into each other but are maintained in a dynamically interactive motion (Baek, 2008).

The example of warmth and coldness above may serve as evidence of the perpetual state of relating opposites. The never-doubted belief that two opposite feelings are 'naturally' incompatible was startlingly challenged by one interview with the choreographer Lin, Yi-Jin. She told me a surprising experience where, chatting with friends when getting water from the water fountain to make tea, the hot water accidentally spilled on to her feet. She was suddenly shocked by a sense of coldness instead of the normal burning sensation of the hot water.<sup>27</sup> This experience has drastically changed her 'perception of the perceptions' she had experienced before. For her, she then realised nothing could be stable and fixed, even the most natural or imperative thinking of 'common sense'. Although emptiness encompasses opposite entities, it does not go further to subvert the unquestioned, permanent homogeneity in each entity. Even containing difference, universality is still applied, as is the homogeneity of presumed differences of the entity that is to be known. Universality may imply a belief that a certain authenticity exists. Moreover, Heidegger asserts that the life of the inauthentic is not to be whole; it falls apart from disconnectedness and inconstancy (McManus, 2015: 183). Authenticity also becomes a pursuit of universal coherence that used to realise and perhaps still justified colonisation and hegemony. It requires an absolute principle to fulfil the wholeness of being, no matter how diverse and plural the being is. The idea of authenticity assumes the absolute existence of the absolute itself. MiQing, depicted as filling-in, by practising and significantly emphasising the practising, may not expect to comprehensively contact 'everything'. It is not empowered with absoluteness; it is empowering with its contingent moving pattern. Along this vein, it is embedded with a potential intention to decolonise by knowing upon contacting, rather than knowing before contacting.

The moving of MiQing may also imply the emptiness of space, which may appear as a wanting to be filled. The emptiness of space does not draw the attention of MiQing, which

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<sup>27</sup> Interviewed 13th August 2019.



means 'filling in' does not only take place in the emptiness, an aperture of the space. As mentioned before, 瀰 can mean to diffuse or overlap, it does not search and occupy itself in a fragment of space, it is a constantly moving activity. The importance of MiQing locates the intentional attention on moving, not on the static being of a thing, of MiQing itself or of others. The possibility comes from the movement of contact, not from the emptying of space and time. In an interview, John Cage shared that by composing silence into a score he was able to wait for and invite possibilities and contingencies to arrive (Rolston, 1994). The creating power that emptiness enacts is the realisation of the current and on-going complexity, seen or unseen, heard or unheard, by the inclusion of emptiness and the accompanying fullness (Timmerman, 2009). MiQing, on the contrary, creates by moving, not inserting, and does not recognise the emptiness or the wholeness of space and time. It is mobile, a moving pattern, both intentionally and unintentionally, where pluralities and varieties may be emerging. MiQing, unlike the aforementioned concepts and conceptions of emptiness and oneness, which are static ideas, is dynamic, without determined shape. MiQing, filling in, is constantly acting and contacting, and through the focus of kinesthesia, attempting to release perpetual or assumed understandings of each entity as much as possible.

Through the constant comparative dialogue with the empty theory, I am experimenting with unpacking the elusive features of MiQing dynamics and I am aiming to discover a filling-in organism extending from it. The filling-in organism is an indeterminate shape without an end or a beginning, rather than a delimited glass of the empty subject which anticipates something to be poured into. This empty subject may implicitly suggest a hesitant recognition of Taiwanese identity, while the filling-in dynamics suggests a flexible, fluid, and ever-changing integration of the Taiwanese subject and Taiwanese identity as a whole filling-in organism. Their movements and movings are an integral approach to Taiwaneseeness practised by and from the individual, the collective and the social. Moving from a passive empty subject to an active filling organism,

I aim to address how the filling-in dynamics communicate with the empty theory, how the kinesthetic perceptions resonate with a current transforming Taiwanese-ness of identity. The various ways of utilising MiQing allow me to bridge different corners of the interdisciplinary and inter-practical considerations that foreground this research. After delineating MiQing loosely, I think now would be the moment to suspend what has been analysed and invite my readers to explore other parallel intentions I endorse and anticipate to experiment with when using the word filling. I use 'filling' as a metaphor to replace an "assumption of need" that the phrase "taking-in" from the empty theory may imply. The word 'fill', has the definition 'to make someone have a particular feeling' in the Cambridge dictionary,<sup>28</sup> and this also relates to the strong feeling I was left with during and after my first participation in MS. Filling of MiQing furthermore suggests that this investigation advances less from a fixed 'core concern' but diffusively navigates a complex network of affects, emotions, and bodies where a certain Taiwanese identity may be vaguely condensed, concentrated, or filtered.

With the knowledge of the relationship between the filling-in dynamics and Taiwanese-ness, I shift to the personal experiences of MiQing to locate two primary kinesthetic significances and movement tendencies of this filling organism in the next chapter. It is also where I start to adapt the written format of 'the coloured box' I discussed in Chapter One. This method of presentation is intended to demonstrate the researching and producing process where ideas and practices were floating in and out and forming interactive and influential conversations with one another. In this design, I intend to share the excitement as well as the spontaneous association and inspiration, valuable not only for the deducted outcome, but also crucial for the vitality of this research to be continued even beyond its temporary end.

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<sup>28</sup> Please see Cambridge online dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fill> (Accessed: 13 November 2019).

I unfold the next chapter with a detailed personal experiential account along with a series of entwining reflections on my body and the communal bodies to depict the emergence of MiQing and how that relates to redefining dance through MS. Across my encounters with MS, I felt a filling movement of dance within a everyday space and would like to introduce as well my reflection by the inspirational MiQing on the ideas of dance and choreography contextualised in Taipei. Chapter Three is a unique and experimental space created purposefully to display the unstable and chaotic dynamics of layered thinking-doing influxes, regardless of the limited capacity my literary affordance could sustain. A conventionally recognised organisation or structure may be less present in the following chapters to maintain its experimentality as much as possible. Even recognising the deficiency, impossibility, and elusiveness of this attempt, I still hope to encourage my readers, through such a bold invitation, to be open with and perhaps weirdly delighted by the materials and inspirations diffusing out to them. By presenting the synchronised thinking of MiQing in terms of its sensory moving and its concurrent emergence and influence on the field of dance, I wish to provoke the feelings of how dance is enabled to slide into daily life and how, because of this everydayness, the broadening of dance performs a subversive power conceptually and practically when it comes to recognising and constructing individual, collective and social identities.

## Chapter Three

### Experiencing Monday School and Two Kinesthetic Significances of MiQing

*We are invited to lie down on the tiled ground. When relaxing my body, I can feel each small piece of flesh slowly falling into the tiny gaps between the square pieces of ceramic and I am gradually embedded into the solid floor of the city. The calming energy of my grounding and permeating body feeds back with gentle touch of chi from each earthy pore – it allows me to close my eyes. Memories are given space to run, to shoot, to smell, or to stroll in my mind at this moment. Mother's face, my hands grabbing a spoon, her smile, cheerful emotion... While scenes keep surfacing, my body can't help but sense a circular, enveloping energy, and I feel secure. I know the wind is breezing not only upon me, but also upon those partners dancing around my body. We are all here for one purpose, to search for our bodies, to connect our bodies with space and time right at this moment. Breathing becomes a layer upon layer, then ripples outwards. Every-body is related to everyone whilst also being individual. Nearly a hundred bodies are lying in the square in front of the National Theatre of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. Regardless of this place's political history and prolific social activities, this time people are lying on their backs on the floor instead of standing upright, not claiming rights but feelings. A sense of caring is steaming up from this collective movement in the way that space is shared, and all of this is hardly seen and conducted in public. We are closing our eyes, tracing memories together, with individual memories entering communal space through the gathered bodies. Caring arises from proximity and shared stillness, releasing social personae, letting emotions take over in front of new people and the environment we first encounter. Later, it is softly suggested that we gradually open our eyes and find a way back up from the floor, each at our own pace. People genuinely follow their hearts; no one is rushed or stirred. I*

*choose to open my eyes when an urge comes into my body to rise closer to the sky and to perceive the crowd, while visually tasting the roof with its signature Chinese architecture, a curve with delicately sculptured patterns extending out, carving the clouds and characterising the sky with a colourfully solid statement of the building's aesthetic history. "One, two, one and two and three...", counting beats from the street dance groups of high school students, "yeah~~~," from the cheerleading teams, and the silence woven by the intersection of wide roads at night and tall-tree lined boulevards, occasionally underlined with the sound of cars. Sonic existences in daily lives together dilute the political announcements of this place and enhance how traditional or ancient heritage delightfully slips into our daily lives. I feel fortunate that my body can dance in this space; my feelings for the city are thus enriched by this opportunity. Being in a city is no longer an experience of isolation. A terrain delineated by bodies is forming which draws out one's vision. Subsequently, the convergence of multi-directional apparitions provides the individual with a smile or nod, sensing how integral each is to the realisation of this community.*

*Collective identity along with flashes of emotions sliding into my mind gently pump my eyelids with water, not tears, but round liquid impulses lining my eyes. Following these water balls and the simultaneous improvisation proposed by the instructor, my body begins moving, recalling memories, telling and sharing blurry silhouettes. I am deeply engaged with myself while a sudden temptation is arriving out of nowhere, I open my eyes and seek out others. Movements are not influenced but inflected by what is in my vision.*

*Under the sky of grey, patched with opaque clouds that are marching in time, slowly so as to be barely detected, he is dancing. Every vibration he creates may not be conventionally defined as dance choreography; it does not matter, he himself is dancing and so is his belief. Simply, he keeps bouncing on the ground, ground conditioned by tiles, ground often denied by*

*dance activity, he dances as he keeps releasing up and down in the air, back and forth in space... In one such moment, his body is his evoked memories, eagerly spreading out. It is to be seen, to be heard and to be felt. If someone consecutively takes a snapshot, his dancing body is smearing not because of the motion, but the merging of his mind, his consciousness, his desire, his self, and his physical outlines negotiating boundarylessness. He dances; therefore, he is his being...in the city of night, body is dance, bodies are dances.*

*Movements radiate within the space, perhaps from a body first. As my vision slowly wanders, body by body, each individual is influencing the space in a similarly contagious way. Every-body is filling and filled with threads of legible and illegible corporeal histories and these are synchronously filling the place. A place with historical and political memories now opens to a communal sense and feeling of identification that is facilitated by various and disparate bodies. This collectivity is fostered by moving carelessly in front of strangers. By committing oneself to the body, there is no worry that someone will judge you and there is not even a tendency to do so. While witnessing others, I can only see a convincing performance and I can only convince myself to perform. I, and then, we, are performing for our own sakes, not for artistic fulfilment or to solicit professional recognition. I am grateful and excited to know everybody is dancing with the need to probe the possibilities of moving bodies, and unconsciously to share the things we value the most.*

With a strong interest in the relationship between choreography and city, in January 2019, I participated in two open classes at Monday School (MS) at the Theatre Terrace of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, an outdoor, accessible space in the capital city, Taipei. The classes invited its participants to:

「非語言敘事」：情緒的肢體動態探索

肢體/呼吸/意識/情緒/動作

請帶著一個小故事來，我們一起嘗試不用說的講故事！

從自身故事中探索情緒、發展敘事線，進而共同挖掘身體動態可能的樣貌。

透過身體說說話，藉由 move 再次認識自己<sup>29</sup>

(Non-linguistic narrative: a dynamic discovery of the body of emotion

Corporeality/ Breath/ Consciousness/ Emotion/ Movement

Please bring a short piece of story, let us try together to tell stories without speaking!

Discover emotions from one's story, develop narrative lines and dig out the possible terrain of bodily dynamics.

Talk through the body, get to know yourself again by moving).

During the class there was so much to tell, to feel and to respond to within my own body, as evoked in the preceding description. The participants were invited to experiment with their occupation of this space and how they related to each other while moving collectively. Several tasks were given to help us become familiar with the spontaneous expression of our feelings. These included travelling in space in one's own way and at one's own pace, following someone without his or her awareness, and finding one's own space to reflect on a recent memory, or the most impressive task, to convey then the emotions this flashback provided through movement. We took turns watching others' experiences. There were a variety of bodies and feelings in this space as participants committed to the tasks. An emotional site was created through movement and dance. It seemed to me that while various personal stories and memories were scattering, bodies were spreading. In such an entangled cluster of sensations, there was one major theme constantly surfacing: a sense of filling, both kinesthetic and affective, in the space. The second class I attended was on playfulness, the efficiency of the body, and its relationships with other bodies. Even though the design of the class was different, this sense

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<sup>29</sup> A brief description of the class I attended, which was sent privately to the participants of Monday School by Les Petites Choses Production (LPCP) and also posted on the event page of the LPCP's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/events/228050864755279/>. My English translation. (Accessed: 06 January 2019)

of filling remained. I could feel the intention of MS to create a space where people were allowed to dance in their own ways and define dance through their own bodies, which are living in and lived out from each individual's life. I felt that I saw each body was moving through the recalling of memories and the physical response to these emotions. My body, in a similar way to what I observed in others, was filling in the space; it was expanding and diffusing.

The **Monday School** was started on the spur of the moment due to a lack of financial support for a production of its founding company, Les Petites Choses Production (LPCP). Without a proper studio to work in, the artistic director Yang, Nai-Shuan decided to meet up with her dancers in a public but hidden place to easily and freely provide training and rehearsal. She organised some bespoke classes by inviting physical practitioners from various fields to work with the dancers of her company. The first company class was held under Xinsheng Viaduct on Monday. In order to increase publicity for the company and its forthcoming events, she regularly posted relevant news of this work on Facebook. The rehearsals and classes on 'Monday' were no exception. Surprisingly, this routine task of building up a successful social network drew much attention and people started to ask whether they could join in. This is how the Monday School commenced and was humorously named, 週一 (zo yi/Monday) 學校 (shue shiao/School). With more and more demand, the artistic director decided to run the event on a regular basis, starting something unprecedented: an "open air" class for everyone. Even those with a tiny desire to dance are equally and passionately welcomed.

As I approached being a moving body at MS, I was fascinated by the freedom given to participants along with the use of open space that MS, as a whole organism, is capable of offering. What differences may occur between dancing in a studio and dancing in a public space?



The feeling of filling emerged, the open space allows more and unexpected contact. I also started to feel there might be something that Yang was attempting to fill in. 'I am hoping everyone can know that they can dance,' these words floated out by Yang as we were chatting and sharing our reflection on why we dance and continue to do so.<sup>30</sup> During the class, I was invited to move my body according to my own feelings, encouraging me to gradually disregard dance techniques and a sense of competition. I was moving to express – and embody – the phenomenon that passes on to my body in the environment with who I am. Perhaps, it was what Yang would call dance.

### **'What is dance'?**

My experience with Yang's MS has created an interactive ripple with this long-term dwelling question in my head and my body. I found my use and understanding of dance has been widened accordingly, as I had anticipated it to be, into 'as-ifness', which arises in an ongoing status when the body is interfacing with certain space. It is a spontaneous embodying of something more. Similar to what Nigel Thrift describes and believes, this research considers dance an alternative way of approaching the proximity of reality, and this 'as-ifness' prevents it from being confined into the denotation of the world (Thrift, 1997: 145-147). Conjuring up an as-if world offers a potentiality outside the assumed being in the world through the focus of being sensing and being sensed that a body holds. Moreover, this research liberates dance from a studio or stage and exerts 'an effort' to concentrate on the practice as it is, observing the body, sense, emotion, movement, and feeling, the Shentigan in a daily scene. Dance is kinesthetically eidetic. It cares the least about spectators or performative agendas. It creates and witnesses the spontaneous activities on the interfacing

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<sup>30</sup> Interview and chat on 06/01/2019.

surfaces of various and disparate phenomenological generations of materiality (Thrift, 1997; Jewett, 2008). The unfolding of such interfacing moments is where the choreography begins.

Choreography is sensationally hermeneutic. As mentioned in the introduction, I see choreography as an activity of feeling and embedded in this research in three ways. First, it is a structured practice of movement. The structure does not necessarily relate to one's intent but more to a sensational pattern that has been shaped by the environment, be it mental or physical. Another way to think about choreography revolves around the interactive (re)definition within and by the body-space. For example, the designation of gender in the urban setting is perceived and consolidated through the interaction between the body, the space and materialities in the scene. The space configures a certain quality of the bodies that move through it by the designed materiality. When a body, not intended to be accommodated, moves in the space, this body reconfigures the space. Finally, choreography is my research process as it perceives and documents movements of writing reading, thinking, and moving throughout a condition of production. Highlighting the choreographic essence of this research allows me to locate a way to articulate the heterogeneity, disjunction, and implicit communication of the academic, social, and personal activities involved.

I do not consider the ideas of dance and choreography to be mutually exclusive. By assigning different functions of each from my experiences, I aim to provide some references for my readers to situate the relationship between the dance and the choreography in this research, and also to identify that the generation of MiQing dynamics is specific to a certain way of moving in MS and

by my body. This understanding of dance and choreography suggests the limitations and the provocation of this research. In later analyses, I deliberately juxtapose what MS subverts in the field of dance with the discussed social phenomenon, intermittently – as when an interrogation comes up – to propose possible interactions and a correlational ecology between dance/choreography and a city that accommodates it. As explained in Chapter One, this means of diffusive presentation expects dance to investigate different concerns simultaneously and demonstrates dynamic layers of moving-thinking-writing.

In Taiwan, dance tends to be considered an intangible art form, and the requirements asked of dancers, both for personal enjoyment and professional development, are generally considered rigorous. Yang is eager to break through fixed ideas towards dance in Taiwan by introducing the ways in which dance is shared, not only taught; by reconfiguring who is allowed to approach dance techniques; and lastly, by rethinking what qualifies as dance. The advent and the development of MS creates a space that allows personal conversations with and redefinitions for the traditions and genres of dance. It also opens up opportunities to engage dance as an unconventional approach to lives and to who we are.

**Deploying forces from the spontaneity and mundanity** of 'the dance' redefined by MS, I attempt to apply this liberation to both the conventional denotation of Taiwanese-ness and to the studies of Taiwanese contemporary dance. Existing endeavours in Taiwanese contemporary dance study predominantly provide representational discourses on the fluidity and hybridity of Taiwanese identity (Chen, 2012). These valuable insights largely revolve around the prestigious and world-renowned local dance company Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan (Cloud Gate), which represents transforming Taiwanese

identities by its developmental process of aesthetics and the fusion of mainly Chinese martial art forms alongside American modern dance techniques. Significant analytical effort has been put into theatrical choreographies in Taiwanese dance scholarship. However, personal experiences, both local and global, that also produce Taiwanese identity have not been fully considered. The “Taiwaneseness” of lived bodies may need further examination to diversify and update understandings, not only to enrich the current ground of discourse with examples outside the domain of Cloud gate, but also beyond the theatrical or formalised dances, to directly target the dance by human beings, regardless of the square box of what dance is or should be.

While dancing within the group, I felt not only connected with people but also with the sentiment for my homeland that arose. I was excited to witness and participate in an unprecedented phenomenon that dance could be generously shared in a public space for people on this island. I am wondering what a tourist passing by would think about the city and the people here. Would they be surprised by the openness and diversity of the scene? Would they be able to feel a certain dynamic quality of Taiwan or the Taiwanese simply by being with the bodies in the space?

**Les Petites Choses Production**, 小事製作 (xiao shi zhi suo) arrived in 2014 as a professional company from Yang’s belief that ‘every little thing, though as plain and mundane as it is, is the most important way to understand the meaning of life’,<sup>31</sup> and her aspiration that everyone will love who they are through dance, which is never just a little thing.<sup>32</sup> After taking different roles in the field of dance,

<sup>31</sup> Intro descriptions on its Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/lpcptaiwan>, my translation.

<sup>32</sup> Interviewed on 06/01/2019, and please see a public interview for more relevant details:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5T9RUjaB3I> (Accessed: 1 March 2019)

from that of a performing teacher in high schools to a singer, an actor, and a freelance contemporary dancer, as well as a versatile choreographer in the performing arts, in her 30s Yang, decided to commit to her 'true vocation' in dance. Since then, she has played an active role in promoting dance, introducing dance to high school students and to various groups of the potential audience based on different programmes and events.

Yang does not explicitly claim that she is inserting dance into the public spaces and lives of urban dwellers. That being said, from what I have observed and felt, she makes an incredible endeavour to introduce dance in various manners. Besides Monday School, as the director of LPCP, she has organised plenty of seminars among elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. She also designs a mobile curriculum called 'one day of being a choreographer' (一日編舞家 *yi rih bian wujia*) that can be accessed through all forms of learning or sharing environment. Her practical effort to promote dance embodies every possible way of filling in certain recognitions of dance in everyday spaces of living.

Her enthusiasm to generate an appreciation of dance and dancing among Taiwanese people was realised by the inception of Monday School and my body received that clearly. While the construction of a dance identity is a means of promoting dance and the various appreciations of this art or life form, it may implicitly influence the condition of being Taiwanese. For example, a participant may identify with MS as a unique phenomenon in Taiwan and thus reform their Taiwanese identity by incorporating the appreciation and engagement of dance as promoted by MS as a certain component of being Taiwanese. Such an identity of being Taiwanese may also be influenced and informed by the values or beliefs of

MS. Along this vein, MS has potentially shaped values that urban individuals may developmentally hold on to by providing and promoting different practices in everyday life when they assemble bodies that move together. The materialities of these values and practices may consequently be perceived as certain attributes of Taiwanese-ness.

Yang in our chats shared how artists and the executive team of a French festival, Nuit Blanche (白晝之夜)<sup>33</sup> were impressed by the energy and potentiality MS demonstrated when they observed and joined the crowd (interview 30/01/2019). They believed the quality of vibrancy and the keenness to engage in the public artistic event made the city of Taipei, and the communality of these Taiwanese people/bodies, unique and diverse. These remarks resonated with my feelings and experiences with my own moving body. I kept associating the 'feeling of filling', MiQing (瀰 filling 情 affect) with the hidden Taiwanese-ness, if it exists. I believe the emergence and practice of this dance scene reflects the ever-shifting society in Taiwan as bodies navigate all the entanglements of being an individual, a social, a political, and a cultural being (O'Neill, 1985). Unfolding this chapter with my experiential accounts of dancing in MS, I see more clearly and would like to demonstrate to my readers how MS, as 'dance', is intervening in social phenomena and subsequently produces social discourse, no matter how modestly, through the space, the body, and the time in which it takes place. Although MS is not directly commenting on the Taiwanese identity and the socio-political situations in Taiwan, I will gradually explain in the later chapters how MiQing in MS elucidates certain dynamic senses of Taiwanese-ness unique to the social vibes in Taiwan (Briginshaw, 2009; Ness, 2004; Thomas, 2003; Kwan, 2013; Kennedy, 2019).

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<sup>33</sup> Nuit Blanche is a global dusk-to-dawn art festival established in Paris in 2002, and introduced to Taipei in 2016. See the website <https://www.nuitblanchetaipei.info/>. The commentary <https://opinion.cw.com.tw/blog/profile/437/article/6821> (Accessed: 2 February 2019)

In the previous chapter I suggested the conceptual components of MiQing by loosely pushing some concepts aside from it in order to allow its emerging meanings not to be arbitrarily demarcated. MiQing is a moving force; it contacts and fills at any given time. The dynamic activity does not imply a gap or a fulfilment; it just meets without being concerned by what to meet or where a meeting could be fulfilled. As I delve deeper using the tool of movement cultivation, I discover two kinesthetic significances, considered as the movement tendency of MiQing. The tendency will assist the understanding of MiQing in terms of how the bodies engaged in MiQing may feel and operate at the micro level of MiQing. The movement tendency explicates the emotive and sensory materialities on which MS redefines dance and reflects, and likely shapes, the formation of the dynamic attributes, the movement patterns of Taiwaneseeseness.

## **Two Movement Tendencies of MiQing Dynamics**

### **Dissolving Boundaries**

The feeling of my body filling in space was elusive. Originally, it seemed to be a mindful state, achieved by a body constantly reaching out. The dynamic continuity of my body engendered a sense of concentration and the particular awareness of bodies for feelings. To mindfulness, I apply the meaning which emphasises non-judgmental attention (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) with openness oriented by the present moment (Langer, 1999) and attending to an experience through my sense of filling. The body fills the world with physical histories and direct actions connected to feelings and emotions. Unlike other experiences of dancing in a studio with precise instruction and the subsequent thinking of performing well, when moving, I was aware of senses of vitality and self-expansion of life in my mind and honestly perceived the emergence of emotions led by a body, not by an expectation of performance. However, I was partly influenced by these sensations and was able to suspend these feelings by the moving of my body. It seemed that there was another 'I' which witnessed the ongoing process, and my

body had led to this way of interaction. This resonates with the notion of mindful meditations when one witnesses various dynamic trains of one's thoughts. I then felt and saw others' bodies forming and disseminating in different ways, which released the witnessing I and promoted I-body to take over more with its own vocabularies. In that moment, I filled the space with my movements, of receptivity and acceptance.

**Jon Kabat-Zinn** says mindfulness is to "commit fully in each moment". (Kabat-Zinn, 1994: 25). This full commitment is realised by paying attention to every moment and the experience unfolding along within it. The awareness generated and enhanced through the interfacing with each piece of time enables a non-judgmental way of perceiving and inviting things as they are. His theorisation of mindfulness succinctly describes and resonates with what I felt in MS. In my twenty years of experience of attending dance courses, I have rarely obtained an attentive focus as I did in MS. Indeed, in improvisation class, a concentrated awareness sometimes surfaces, however, it is hard to sustain and turn into mindfulness due to an indoor environment. The demarcated studio oftentimes fails to afford the physical and mental space a mindfully moving body requires. MS' open space, accompanied by its non-exclusive attitude towards dance, induced the body to take a mindful practice where an individual is not evaluating her or his dance, but just making direct contact with experienced movements. Kabat-Zinn supports my analogy here by his emphasis on the suspension of judgement through a practical tool of watching every moment happening in order to possibly attain a mindful state.

As in some meditations, there was a resolving of self, a blurring of the boundary of a cognitive entity experienced within the feeling of filling. With my full focus on body movements woven by my body, the sense of self became fluid and vague, and seemingly could "be



experienced as an event" (Dambrun, 2016: 92). Linking an emerging presence of being self-less within the filling-in dynamics of meditation, I found my body echoed some reported meditative experiences describing the boundaries of the body becoming less salient (Dambrun, 2016). Due to this less perceptible physical border, a sense of diffusing in the space arose and emotions only came and went. It was selflessness in the sense that emotions did not stay or dwell in my mind; rather, they brushed through perceptions and coloured movements as they travelled through me, as a composing part of the world. Moving was continuous and transformed in a very supple way, delicately sliding through others' movements or emotions in the space. The care for each/each other's moving, guided by a body, was sensed by the witnessing 'I'. There was no other thought of wanting to be seen, wanting to be elaborative, wanting to delimit, wanting to excel in a movement that would be perceived as certain feelings. Continuity led to embodied spontaneity.

**Michaël Dambrun**, by having participants experience a meditation session and conduct a self-report evaluation, discovered that mindfulness may be able to reduce the salience of body boundaries due to the production of selflessness in the process. He proposes that paying attention to specific parts of the body could direct the self, a personal entity, to a reduced mental referential state, where individuals, with attenuated self-centredness "experience [...] their contact to the ground as diffuse" (Dambrun, 2016: 92). The filling-in dynamics for me disclose a similar intention of diffusing a previously unified self, turning the self into a mobile, porous, and indeterminate organism. Its contact with the world does not resemble an encompassing of things described by the participants. It is just filling and maintaining the openness for contacting in every possible way.

**Ellen J. Langer** believes the openness arising from mindfulness serves several functions. One of them is to be open to new information, which leads to another

application of creating categories and distinctions (Langer, 1999: 223). The filling-in dynamics of my experiences address the moment when the opening-up to all possibilities manifests more an act of reducing boundaries by carefully and attentively moving in the space. The focus is on the content as a whole in the space, differences do not stand out and linger for a short time, but only pass by. I attempt to depict the filling experiences through relating to other kinesthetic and affective activities without affirming the exact mutual similarities. However, interestingly, when the filling-in dynamics operate at the collective and social levels (discussed in the following chapter), they start to provide a sense of perceiving, focusing on, and thinking about the appearing novelty, and things that are distinct.

### **The Pleasure of Participating**

There was also the arrival of the joy of sensing others through moving together at the same time. Motion was triggered first by the task of expressing emotions from memories, but the rest of its journey was an ongoing conversation with people around me. Within the mindful state, there were flows of pleasure, being aware of myself and my anticipation towards moving like others in the space. Mirror neurons motivate human beings' imitations in a collective activity and urge people to mirror others' movements (Ehrenreich, 2007: 26). In this filling-in, my body did not duplicate the exact movements of my fellow dancers, but echoed to a collective feeling of constant moving within this space.

**Barbara Ehrenreich**, when analysing how human beings want to dance together and gain pleasure from it, argues that the neural process in collective dancing actually persuades participants toward the synchronisation of movements in addition to the well-known social function of dance to unite people and build up a cohesive community (Ehrenreich, 2007: 24-26). She believes the

relation between communal dance and the emotional response of pleasure is a mechanism refined through evolution, facilitating survival and reproduction by creating a joyful sense as an incentive reward (Ehrenreich, 2007: 27). I found the filling-in dynamics exhibited a similar urge to respond to others' movements and kinesthesia, which may very likely result from the systematic function of neurons. However, the sense of a less salient bodily boundary in a mindful state spoke more strongly and directly to my experiences, just as Dambrun's research also observed that selflessness can increase the feeling of happiness (Dambrun, 2016: 95). By saying this, I do not assume an incompatibility between the neural process and the mindful process, I aim to acknowledge their possible co-operations and the complexity of the feeling of filling.

Another notion of physically filling in the groove in listening to the music is also helpful in my attempt to locate the origin of impulse and the pleasure from filling in the space, and the collective in my filling experiences. **Maria A. G. Witek** proposes that a gap in the music, the emptiness of silence, marks out the moment when listeners are experiencing the music (Witek, 2017: 145). A gap is a hidden presence of sound that waits to be manifested, which creates open spaces that a body desires to occupy. The desire here does not refer to the decoding of musical structure or meanings within. Instead, the desire is more similar to the enjoyment of a process that derives from the experiencing itself. When individuals are occupying the open spaces, pleasant emotions emerge from the integration of music and body. Along this vein, filling-in dynamics may provide similar appealing invitations for bodies to occupy open spaces, and the experiencing process of blurring boundaries between self and the world, as well as between self and a form of materiality (the music and the dance), offer

pleasure. Although the filling groove shares a similar pathway and a similar pleasure, they hold on to different intentions. Unlike a suggestive designation of the lack of the empty subject, the MiQing dynamics is not initiated by a gap, it is activated by the aim for a contact instead.

By filling-in, I expected to see my participation among others'. There was a calling for my dynamic presence, not a religious one to fulfil a gap because of duty, but in the proximity of dancing with the groove. A groove evokes a physical interaction due to the desire to fill the gap between beats. It is through one's own body that the music will be completed. However, this drive is not aimed at a certain goal as completion, but the pleasure process the filling-in the groove provides (Witek, 2017). In these two MS classes we danced without music but the enjoyment from the experiencing process was still generated. The completion of some structure at the time of my body filling in was not exactly the urge, since the anticipation was to sustain a form of dialogue by giving my body to the space. It was the process of sharing your body with the space and people that allowed the continuity to persist, to be part of it and fill in.

The sensation of filling was an unintentional continuity, triggered and sustained by others' willingness to move and create vocabularies. It was as one's movement is signalled to another and this mutual initiation and reaction diffused, activating the filling-in of the space. This filling-in of my body seemed not to be initiated by emptiness or a gap to be filled. An unknown force emerged and encouraged the body to express more with all the sediments held within. It allowed and maintained the speech of body by evoking and weaving into sensation, emotion, and memory. However, while a specific pattern, or a set of techniques, with which to conduct the moves were absent, the drive came from a collective agreement to do things together at this moment while also doing it differently from one another. The most important part was that I was moving with others, not because we were creating the same movements, but because we were moving at the same time in the same space. Filling in the space may intersect with a

feeling of ritual where personal concentration on the body awakens emotions, which produce more movement in a cycle (Wang, Jing Ling and Cai, Yi Jia, 2015). With the accumulation of personal movements and feelings, even without literal interaction, the aforementioned mindfulness diluted perceivable boundaries and generated kinesthetic togetherness which compelled the body to move more and feel others as a collective (Himberg *et al.*, 2018). What differentiated the sense of filling-in for me was that there did not seem to be an anticipation for the divine to fill in our bodies, a fear or a reverence of the sacred existence (Corrigan, 2015; Wang and Cai, 2015). There was neither a denial of myself nor a completely present self; I was fluid and flowing according to the interaction of my body with the environment and others.

### **Where the Tendency Leads**

I now utilise these two movement tendencies of MiQing – the filling dynamics – and the interaction between city and dance generated within Monday School to discover resonances, where some qualities intriguingly find counterparts in other defining moments and social identification movements in Taiwan such as the Sunflower Movement and the ratification of Asia's first same-sex marriage law. I take a closer look at corporeal entities, mine included, to see how these bodies encounter space and place in a city and how these meetings account for the action of care and its subversive potentialities.

In the following chapters, I continue to unpick the operations of the MiQing by categorizing them into four movement patterns: the circular viscosity, the civic spiral energy, the diversity of bodies, and the empowerment of movements. These four dynamic qualities observed through movement cultivation emerged side by side with my experiential involvement in MS. They have been contemplated by both the work of my body and mind to collect the pieces of feelings into a tangible pathway towards possible Taiwanese-ness. Throughout the analysis, I apply the 'concentric pathway', which contextualizes the MiQing dynamics in three tiers: the individual, the collective, and the social. I could feel my body and mind participating in the filling. MiQing

left grooves on my mindful experiences. While dissolving into the space of filling-in, I sense its distribution of movements, how a body interacts within the exterior space, and the internal space within the body; how a body contacts other bodies that lend the temporal-spatial state a texture of viscosity. Some choreographic patterns are perceived and I am moved within.

**Whilst participating in MS**, my body was immersed in a sense of **the circular viscosity** created by the gathering of different bodies. Later, from what I simultaneously observed and felt, I realised that MS is not only an event initiated to bring dance closer to everyday life, but also a social movement. Further, there was a **spiral form of civic energy** that kept flowing, and that encouraged people to creatively occupy the public space regardless of any national and political identifications. MS strolled in the city and met with people, and through its unintentionally fluid existence in Taipei, I was given an 'extra-ordinary' experience and opportunity to kinesthetically capture elusive feelings and doings associated with certain Taiwanese qualities.

Before 2019, MS was held under Xinsheng Viaduct in Taipei for three years. It moved to the Theatre Terrace of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (CKSMH) from the beginning of January 2019. So far, there has not been a clear determination as to whether this new arrangement is permanent or if MS will move back to its place of origin. Without an adequate and sustainable funding stream, Monday School is still struggling to survive despite continuing success. This contingency represents the mobile, active, unstable, and flexible nature that thus allows MS to continue attracting bodies as **diverse** and inclusive as possible. I find, as an organic entity, MS epitomises the transformational journey of Taiwanese society towards embracing different sexualities, fighting for political transparency, attending to the social situation of women, and identifying as a

transcultural society. All of this has been advocated by those physically, mentally, and emotionally bonded to the island. These sensory experiences I had may also embody Yang's vision of **empowering** people by dancing, which supports MS through their persistent navigations of their financial predicament and their simultaneous embracing of various groups in the city. However, the enlightenment cast by MS that 'Taiwan is a diverse place' is not a new perception. What most interests me is **the action of care** that is significantly felt and practised during MS classes. When the filling dynamics arose through my body, I believe it derived from and related deeply to the MS aspiration of redefining dance by variously filling forms into the space.

With the knowledge of feelings, affects, and movements, I maintain a wider conversation by connecting my Shentigan to how MS interacts with open spaces collectively. Finally, guided by the previous analyses, I provide an analysis of the potential Taiwaneseesness manifested through MS' choreographic representations of society. After introducing the four qualities of the filling-in dynamics: the circular viscosity, the spiral civic energy, the diversity, and the empowerment, I bring up a commonality among these four themes, the action of care, to consider the driving force of filling-in of MiQing dynamics, which calls forth a manifesto to sustain an active contact with the world around us. Now, let MiQing lead us to the choreography of the city, the Taiwaneseesness in the space of Taipei.

## Chapter Four

### The Circular Viscosity of MiQing Dynamics

There are four qualities manifested as the movement patterns of MiQing that I discovered through the lens of movement cultivation. They are: circular viscosity, spiral civic energy, the diversity of vague and varying bodies, and de-gendering empowerment. Experimentally introduced in the last grey box in the previous pages, these qualities emerged from the moving in MS. Thenceforth, I have been pondering on these qualities and transmuted them in my approach to Taiwanese-ness. My intention is not to conclude what Taiwanese-ness consists of. Instead, I wish to provide unconventional lenses of kinesthetic experiences in three layers of situating my body and the collective corporeality with the support of the concentric pathway. I may thus be able to contact the potential perspectives of Taiwanese-ness as a choreographic combination of various identities and practices: Shentigan in daily life.

In the following sections, I delineate the feeling of circular viscosity emerging from my experiments under the viaduct, where MS was first initiated. I found my viscous moving a useful lens to further contemplate the cultural and economic ecology, embodied by the velocity of the traffic and the electronic devices in this area, revealing the formation of the idea and the associated practice of being Taiwanese at the intersection of technological development and spiritual pursuit. The viscosity refers to the thickness and speed of how the movement spreads in continuous contact and meeting, initiated by both the personal and collective. A circular pattern appeared when the movements of my body, those of the bodies in MS and the environmental materialities were meeting and connecting with one another.

Although I did not participate in the classes held under the viaduct, I consulted textual and visual resources and videos digitally, had conversations with the participants from this site, and, of course, I visited the playground and danced in the space. These methods of collection and



recollection have allowed me to produce experiential accounts and to recognise the different production of knowledge between my body situated in individual and collective settings. These investigations were also in dialogue with what I had experienced in the classes at the second venue, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall,<sup>34</sup> where MS has been housed since 2019. The individual and collective moving and the thinking in my experiences are oftentimes intertwined while they are put into the layers of the concentric pathway. In MS, individual and collective moving bodies are lent different forms, shapes and qualities. In order to elaborate how these corporeal materialities are interfaced with the dynamic conjunction of the individual, the collective, and the social, I have employed movement cultivation<sup>35</sup>. When I was dancing alone under the viaduct, a sense of viscosity was emerging. Thus, I also used this viscos sensation to investigate the phenomenon of the bodies in MS and lay out the correlation in social and cultural environments. In this chapter and the following one, I focus on one location at a time, the viaduct then the memorial hall, to better articulate how these movement cultivations are associated with the discussed Taiwanese-ness. However, this does not imply that the Shentigan and the movement cultivation of each site are respectively distinct. In fact, as the analyses unfold, one may find the similarity and the singularity between the bodies in these two environments and feel how the circular viscosity evolves into a spiral civic energy.

#### **4.1 My Physical/ Geographical Experience: A Viscous Body in Urban Velocity**

The first MS took place under the Xinsheng Viaduct in 2015. The viaduct was both a start and endpoint that connected the north and the east of Taipei. On the ground, there laid the busiest street in Taipei, called Zhongxiao East Road (忠孝東路). Beneath the viaduct, a two-way street runs parallel to it. LPCP (Les Petites Choses Production) commenced the first class of Monday School right under the bridge, a place called Xinsheng Viaduct Playground,

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<sup>34</sup> The movement cultivation consists of movement distribution, movement density, movement viscosity, movement pattern and movement tendency. Details in Chapter Five.

<sup>35</sup> Please refer to Chapter One (p. 62).

surrounded by various types of passages at different levels. Before this playground was built in 2006, it was a deserted platform interfaced with the crossroads and a junction adjacent to two opposite directions of the travelling cars. The bridge and its pillars divide Jinshan South Road (金山南路) horizontally. The road runs both ways; there are slopes on each side with a flared entrance and an exit where people drive down to or mount up towards the north. The playground is like an island demarcated by multi-directional influxes. The layout of the playground is straightforward, shaped naturally by the linearity of the bridge. It is narrow and long, an old deserted space converted to a skateboard playground. Towards the end of the playground a basketball court is located. The playground and the court are delimited by metal fencing so that the respective functions of these two spaces might be fully applied, preventing basketballs from bouncing or flying across the line, and skateboarders from unexpectedly skating into games. As I was walking along the fence, sometimes carefully tracing the physical structures for skateboarding, I gradually came to imagine how it would be to dance and experiment with movements in a group of strangers in this unfamiliar place for dance. It was hard to virtually conjure up a community while being alone. However, my body started to move in a timid and constrained way in opposition to the kinetics the environment provided, reacting to the bouncing sounds, the jerky noises of the bridge, the jarring skateboarding rides, and the velocity of the traffic.



Figure 1 The grid at the entrance of the skateboard park (Shen, Chai Ju, 2019).

This playground, designed for skateboarding and basketball, disseminated a sense of speed enhanced by the constant streams of traffic upward and downward. There seemed to be no room for a pause or stop, which I found my body unconsciously resisted by intermittently contracting energy into the core; something viscous stretching reluctantly between my moving body parts. Each thread of this place seemingly served one goal, be it the basketball backboard, the mounting excellence of skateboarding skills or the expected destination along the viaduct. With cars passing by up and down, accompanied by graffiti, a strong sense of passing and fading, the 'flood' of direction was felt. Everything around was along a line going somewhere, direct, sudden, buoyant. When walking and dancing there, I heard the *zhizhi* sounds from the skateboards, scratching or gliding across obstacles. I could even tell the difference between materials: concrete, metal, the rubber soles of sneakers. The acoustic environment appeared to speak out loud the desire of this place to move fast and competitively in linearity, which my body was opposing in a slower flow and by several suspended, hesitant, liaised viscous movements. Cars streaming up and down on the viaduct displayed the

excitement, anticipation, and achievement of the technology of modern motion (Sheller and Urry 2000).

On the east side of the court, adjacent to an upward slope affording vehicles, one could spot two rows of electronic stores along Bade Road. This area from the junction of Bade Road and Jinshan South Road flaring out to where Bade Road and Xinsheng South Road meet accommodates many shops selling computers, cell phones, et cetera. There was even a huge motherboard attached to the grid above the entrance of the playground decorated with various IT brand names to enunciate this personality. This area is called the Guanghua Market (Commercial Zone). It used to be an old book market, then an antique market. After ROC left the UN, the American army left and a lot of electronic devices from the army were brought into this area and exchanged as antiques. As Taiwan commenced its investment into the IT industry, Guanghua Market, based on its previous advantages, quite naturally became a specialized area known for offering diverse electronic materials and equipment. As my body was influenced by the velocity of skateboarding, I felt that the grid and the fluorescent light from the various shapes and sizes of the banners from the east side, the flamboyant emblem of technology, discretely invaded the moving. The straightforwardness of the light projected from the area seemingly echoed and enhanced the speed of passing cars that not only adorned the visual mobility of fast movement afterimages, but also seemingly praised the linearity embodied by the ways shops were lined up along the streets with the disseminating light from the square signboards (Figure 1).

I found my body was predominantly facing the east side in this Geo-Choreo exercise video. With inhibited movements, I was absorbed in the light and brisk lines concurrently. I only turned to the west side of the playground twice, where one of the slopes spreads out, releasing rushing cars into the intersection of Zhongxiao East Road and Jinshan South Road. The well-known Cultural District called Huashan 1914 Creative Park (Huashan) is located here. Originally a



**Recording 1** A Geo-Choreo exercise at the site

wine factory, Huashan was converted into an art centre in 1999 with the encouragement of several art activists and it has become an iconic place that hosts many cultural activities and performances. It was also the space where art and trends were converging with boutiques, a cinema, studios, and theatres located on the campus, from the main section to the periphery of the park. College students, young professionals, designers and, of course, artists were frequent visitors coming to fulfil their taste for life, art, food, fashion, and music. In the night, through a decorative dim glow, the architecture suggests a quiet but enormous existence through its occupation of space and openness without a specific physical and architectural boundary. The underlying materialities of this park were outweighed by the speed my body attained in the environment of the viaduct. I noticed the velocity, sensationally created by the vehicles and the skateboards, they passed my body and influenced how my limbs and torso moved in the space with constrains and viscosity. Jumping, rushing, kicking, and other routine movements were carried out in this skatepark when those performers exhibited responses to the hustle of the traffic perfectly, which my body was predominantly analysing. The ambition among the drivers and the skateboarders, spreading across and above the viaduct, the linear ambitions of the drivers and skateboarders was vigorously fortified by the geographical, acoustic, and visual layouts. This space was moving towards the future, it sent away present movements to realize goals ahead, and my body resisted subjecting itself to this assertion of velocity.



**Figure 2** Section 1 Bade Road, Taipei. (Shen, Chai Ju, 2019).

## 4.2 MS' Choreographic Interactions: The Interruption for an Experimenting and Creating Crowd

The sense of velocity and the confinement my body manifested within this environment was similar to the participants who had been dancing and moving under the viaduct.<sup>36</sup> There was an alert sense of the fast motion nearby and the designed obstacles marking skateboarding accomplishments. Observing the movements and interactions at Monday School through videos, I noticed that MiQing dynamic varied in the shape of a circle: multiple circles and various scales of circles were forming in the site below the viaduct. Bodies demonstrated the quality that I felt in the two courses of MS, travelling between each other's space, but in a more condensed way. With contact and touch, bodies are cohesive to each other and to the space they occupy. This mesh of skin, bodies, emotions, and sensations may be better understood as 'viscous'. Chandler and Neimanis (2013: 78-79) describe the state of viscosity as a co-constitutive but not fully melded formation as the engaged individuals differentiate themselves as if by the function of membranes. In the cluster of bodies under the viaduct, individuals were connected but each singularity remained seen. From what I observed and felt, I sensed that the participants were linked through the radiation of their movements, without compromising individual devotion and engagement. This viscosity in MS reflects Arun Saldanha's (2005) understanding of the assembly of bodies through physical interactions conditioned in certain spaces and certain cultures. In her analyses, the viscosity was attributed to the coagulation and impenetrability of bodies based on the differentiation of race.

**Saldanha** (2005: 191) observed and argues that there is certain intended ethnic inclusion and exclusion, described as viscosity in Goa. It is the effect of the perception and function of visual labels of race and gender. She theorises that 'the physical characteristics

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<sup>36</sup> Informal conversations with two female participants in the session on 14/01/2019, a post discussion on 07/01/2019, an interview with the director Yang, the feeds from the LPCP's Facebook page.

of bodies are crucial to their clustering in space and time.' For example, the local Indians and the foreigners, mostly the white visitors, attend different clubs where the proximity of physical conditions make their corporeal presence inconspicuous. Viscosity, as the consequence of the purification of the present bodies in the site, depicts the phenomenon where bodies are attracted and repelled by virtual poles. The idea of viscosity sheds light on the phenomenon of 'the becoming-sticky of bodies relative to each other and certain spaces through certain behaviours and physical and cultural conditions' (Saldanha, 2005: 173-174). However, viscosity may not only be 'open-minded or flux' as conceived in Anglophone geography, it could also suggest collective and social impenetrability, a form of segregation (Saldanha, 2005: 172,174).

The viscosity in MS, similar to the clustering of body Saldanha, intends to delineate and additionally depicts the complex, fluid, flexible, contingent, and situational interactions taken on by bodies. Bodies under the viaduct are both porous and resistant. The resistance does not result from the awareness of other bodies and corporeal practices as Saldanha experienced, but from a certain rhythm this city imposes on the space, a velocity I felt in my own moving. The norm of speed in the space implies relationships between the urban users, the agency of city dwellers and the expectations of the city. Bodies in MS, by filling in the ground under the viaduct, congregated to feel each other closer and fill the space in a way neither precisely fluid nor solid but in-between, and enabled by collectivity to propose resistant perspectives and acts in the urban settings.

This viscous manner I perceived resonates with the conceptual metaphor Nancy Tuana (2008) deploys to undermine the prerequisite of binary distinctions embedded in thinking, such as fluid and solid, nature and culture. The viscous porosity also draws attention to the relationally dynamic inputs at various interfaces by various entities. In my experiences, I first felt a sense of viscosity and then I used this sensation to examine the moving bodies and their

interactive relationships in the space. The viscous Shentigan reveals the intricacy of a set of possible corporeal dualities in the urban environments of MS's interventions. The circular distribution presented by the moving bodies from MS's collectivity depicts a sense of reflection that does not move in linearity, with less attempt to be formed as a line. Instead, the formed circle seems to be coming from and continued by the body and the kinesthetic, the aforementioned Shentigan, situated in and rippling out of the space.

The circular viscosity in these senses, the challenge of duality, and the body-sensorium reflection raises questions about the performed dynamics of individual and group, and also advance and pause in this area of Taipei. Recalling the two kinesthetic significances/ movement tendencies by MiQing - the dissolving boundaries and the pleasure of participating - the phenomenon of these binary conceptions, I find a viscous resistance in MS does not mean a solid hard defence of rejection to things and other bodies. On the contrary, it is because of the movement of attentive contact and the desire of being part of and responsive to the provided materialities, that the bodies of MS are not distracted by what has seemingly been predetermined. By creating a genuine focus of contacting, MS, as a collective, produces a resistant (re)action to the environment.

**Tuana's (2008) viscous porosity** calls for attention to the resistant forces of interactions between human beings and nature and declares an ambition to meditate profound traces of ontological divides. The use of viscosity highlights the intermediate material quality and its complex way of functioning. The porosity delineates the forming and collapsing of the threshold of the worlds, the being and the body of lives, that is the material interrelationality between each dynamic behaviour and existence. The viscous porosity does not suggest a state of fluidity or solidity, it is an in-between ongoing interaction that potentially, and perhaps indeed constantly, resists changing form in a paradoxical manner (Tuana, 2008: 193-194).



### **Individual vs. Social**

When MS fills itself into a space, a sense of reciprocity gradually emerges from the body, moving with and juxtaposing itself against different bodies and movements. It calls forth the joy of being in physical and emotional proximity formed by the viscosity. Such collective corporeal and sensational interactions are often not allowed or interrupted by the fast pace of a city (Simmel 1903). The participants were thrilled to dance with others simultaneously in an open public space<sup>37</sup>. Bodies in MS fill in the space with an awareness of collectivity which has not been the main theme in the skatepark under the high-speed viaduct. According to Chiu (2009), skateboarding on the streets and in a skatepark are perhaps two different practices. In the latter location, the predetermined routes for practising inhibit mutual interactions with a city and its dwellers/pedestrians demonstrated in street skating. Skaters under the viaduct, similar to the observation Chiu made in New York, focus on repetitions of physical routines and watch each other with limited interaction. 'It is all about practicing and advancing individual skills' and is conducted in an individual way from arrival to and departure from the park (Chiu, 2009: 35). This individuality and isolation resonate with the passing cars on the bridge, both being carried out in the pursuit of velocity. The automobiles flashing in the air 'cut mercilessly through slower-moving pathways and dwellings' (Sheller and Urry, 2000: 745).

MS, a clump of slower-moving, viscous individual bodies, introduces social relationships into the space, a cohesive quality of how each body is connecting and reacting with one and another. The collective in MS does not attempt to cultivate skills or improve speed; rather, it seeks contact and a certain mutual pleasure in the meeting of each other's bodies. Image 3 and 4 show that the participants were experimenting with various and, perhaps, uncommon ways of encountering people in an urban setting. From this initiative of an individual body,

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<sup>37</sup> Descriptions on the webpage of MS' fundraising campaign: <https://www.zeczec.com/projects/mondayschool> (Accessed 26 July 2018) and informal conversations with the participants on 07/01/2019).

communication at a social level is attempted when one is putting oneself in front of others and by being responsive to each (other/body's) action. The interaction from and between an individual with others manifests social practical schemes of perception, evaluation, and action as noted by Bourdieu (1984). While promoting a sense of collectivity, MS does not foreground conformity. Bourdieu believes that the social practice draws dispositions, inclinations of doing, that eventually informs a distinction between an individual and the community he or she fits in. The encounter in MS subverts social practices by reconfiguring movements and displacing these movements into unexpected environments. MS intertwines the social and the individual in a complex and unanticipated way as it invites a variety of bodies that perform different dispositions which may less likely congregate in a shared spatial and social proximity.

Another form of the circular viscosity of MS that intrigues me is that it not only attracts a physical community, it also recruits a virtual community by the use of a social media application. LPCP has a LINE<sup>38</sup> group, through which the company connects with the participants of MS sessions. After the class, one of the dancers enthusiastically invited the participants to join the chat group.<sup>39</sup> The viscosity generated by bodies has been expanded to a virtual setting, where the former and current participants of MS can continue to share their feelings and senses of moving initiated or inspired by the corporeal meeting points at the physical site in a virtual environment. The bodily practices of MS not only introduce the eccentric social dynamics of viscosity that were not intended by the architectural functions and materials under the viaduct, but also nurture the formation of the viscous sociality virtually among each body's mundane life partially composed of and embodied by the everyday engagement of electronic devices.

### **Advance vs. Pause**

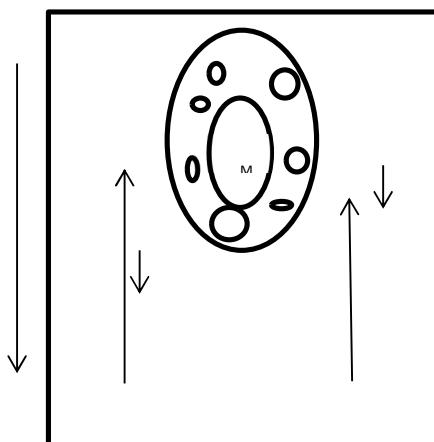
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<sup>38</sup> LINE is a freeware instant communication app operated by a Tokyo-based subsidiary of Softbank Group and Naver Corporation.

<sup>39</sup> The LINE chat group closed in 2020 due to financial constraints.

Among these shuttling scenes in the city, MS invites itself into a fast, non-stop, and linear space through the shape of a circular cluster, claiming a slowing-down or a pause. This space seems to be continuously pushing to travel fast towards a goal by the fragmented movements from the skateboarders and the passing cars. The corporeal sameness of park skating and the directional and linear movement of driving on the viaduct both represent attempts at progression. Robertson (2007: 303) explains that the Westway in London, marked as 'Europe's longest, highway', was a symbol of Britain's progress by virtue of its large scale construction and influential function as an image in the urban environment. It is not only the vector of vehicles that proposes the idea of advanced progress; the vehicle itself also provides drivers with a sense of hope through speed and power (Sheller 2004).

The linear advancing and continuous mobility suggested by the environmental characteristics under the viaduct seem to echo with the symbolic function of electronics, found in the Guanghua Market. People visit Guanghua to update electronic devices, fix their computers, and discover the cutting-edge equipment that 'moves their lives on'. It is a place to guarantee a form of velocity in mundanity. If someone is gripped by a hiatus in the march of technology, such as the malfunctioning of an iPhone 12, or the inability to affordably purchase an iPhone 13, he or she would be reassured in the Guanghua Market. A pause in electronic everydayness would and should be troubleshot here. Pause, in the sense of machine and technology, oftentimes would not be expected in this area of city. By filling this linear line with a



circular community, MS has transformed a functional place built up by relations between body and objects in space into a viscous place that releases its inhabiting subjects from the desire to advance. Moreover, MS uses the body to demonstrate resistance to advancement in two ways. Firstly, by proposing and

affirming the body as both a tool and solution of everyday life that may not be able to compete and evolve as fast as the speed of the technological advance. Secondly, by the intermittent stillness the body produces during the physical contact and movement in the environment. The dancers are not pursuing something sited far away at the end of a journey; instead, the body itself is the journey to unfold. A process, not progress, is taking place. A blurring and cohesive cluster of dancing bodies manifested by MS contrast with an advancing of (e)motion supported by the city and its technologies, geographically and virtually.

As MS is creating numerous scales of circles of viscous bodies, by being part of the circular viscosity, one is able to pause and discover oneself accompanied by people embracing similar aspirations, in dialogue with one's body and collective dancing. This binds the participants together mentally and physically. While people in the city are led and pushed by the directional imperative and speed of the urban, MS's occupying of space encourages people to declare a pause in and resistance to the conformist rhythm/speed of the city through this viscous quality. This reifies the belief of Mielle Chandler and Astrida Neimanis (2013) of an inherent resistant force of viscosity generated by our bodies in a communal field.

Bearing the care of others through the process of sticking together, co-constituting each body physically, mentally, spatially, and temporally, the viscous relationships with others and our own selves move MS away from being subjugated by the velocity of chasing better materiality or physicality. This is not to say the acquisition of improvement is absent in MS. The improvement is not intended and the definition of improvement is not limited to what could be visually detected or a securitising sense of self-accumulation. A different feeling, reaching, meeting, and moving within a collectivity brings a sense of enlightenment. Examining this experience of viscous interaction within the realms of consumption and production, I argue that occupying the space and assembling the bodies without specific commercial intentions in MS is a resistance to avoid capitalizing dance as a skill and a profitable approach to the body-mind

balance or physical advance in the body industry. Moreover, the viscous resistance of MS through the MiQing dynamic reveals the competing ideas of economic development and cultural cultivation by the body. The history and the cultural and technological formations of Guanghua Market and Huashan 1914 Creative Park embody and epitomise the complicated intentions of technological development, creativity and nationhood Taiwan has faced.

**MS** has been continuously persisting in its voluntary nature for years, regardless of financial obstacles. It still strives to invite people to 'freely' connect with their bodies through a variety of dance and movement practices. Apart from the physical contribution under the viaduct, by filling into the space, MS refuses to be annexed within an economic value system. Lacking monetary support, Yang, the director of MS and the founder of LPCP, has still managed to adapt to the conditions and to create a welcoming environment of dance and her definition of dance she had long envisioned with the realisation of Monday School under the viaduct. Her approach was simple and direct, by using social media to mobilise the bodies that are eager to move in the space. Although MS has never directly announced its subversive intention, from the dissection of how they have moved into the viaduct, I see their movement manifesting both singular and communal tactics that have the potential to disturb the orders and the imperatives of the city, the urban velocity and the pursuit of linear continuity.



**Figure 3** The moving bodies/circles under the viaduct. Courtesy of LPCP (2019).



Figure 4 The viscous/ pausing bodies. Courtesy of LPCP (2019).

#### **4.3 Societal choreographic representations: The Viscous Resistance to Economic Development and Identification**

Having discussed the circular viscosity, a movement texture of MiQing dynamics in terms of the collective bodies and the materialities imbued in a specific urban environment, a sense of Taiwanese-ness may possibly come into consideration. This analysis is facilitated by looking at the velocity of the city as the embodiment of economic progression and the viscous bodies as a resonance with the cultural development in this area. Deploying the corporeal framework of MiQing, I discover the resistant interactions between the collective bodies and Guanghai Market and Huashan 1914 Creative Park may speak to a certain Taiwanese-ness, a feature of the Taiwanese, in terms of social and individual practices of economics and culture. Juxtaposing the circular shapes that MS's filling in the space produces with the voluntariness of the unpaid courses of MS also unearths another embodiment of viscosity, which is against the velocity of the monetary stream: not being capitalised by a price system commodifying bodily practice. MS's becoming viscosity in the city echoes a continuous act of inserting ruptures/pauses in the normative system of Taiwan and subsequently creating a non-conforming space. The social operation of this viscous resistance resembles Michel de Certeau's (1984) 'tactic' in the way that both aim to sustain individual creativity against an imposing authority. However, what MS

generates when entering the architectural space does not take a fluid form and is not the calculated actions that 'vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers' (de Certeau, 1984: 37). MiQing attempts to contact rather than surprise. The subversive effect is not planned but emerges within the filling process. The viscosity developed by MiQing dynamics at the specific site exhibits the interactive influxes of the mundane, economic, and social aspects of the urban setting, which evidence the dynamics of Taiwanese society carried on through historical currents, the constitution of Taiwanese-ness. The Taiwanese-ness in the sense introduced in this chapter is a certain moving characterized by the viscous quality generated between the body and the situated temporal and spatial conditions in terms of economic and cultural/artistic developments in the city. The representations and the practices of the architecture and material layouts of these two sites facilitate and echo such a way of moving. Moreover, they manifest the velocity of the inevitable Chinese economic agency and the viscosity of the forming Taiwanese cultural/national identity.

**De Certeau** (1984: 37) believes that tactic is 'a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus [...] The space of tactic is the space of the other [...] It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a manoeuvre' Tactic's resistance to being into a certain state, lingering between spaces of manipulation, resembles the dynamic of the circular viscosity. The tactic accommodates accumulated and contingent operations that individual practices employ to appropriate the available resources, catering to spontaneous needs. MiQing, as discussed before, is subversive and spontaneous in terms of its none goal-orientation but reaches to contact the space and the surrounding materialities. The timing of when bodies converge and congregate varies. However, with the kinesthetic attribute of assembling and filling, the tactic of MiQing dynamics is not performed by MS in a fluid manner, but through a thick approach.

De Certeau (1984) further suggests that the individual in daily life has the ability to avoid or alter the imposed imperatives of a certain systematic authority. This adaptation is a practice of singularity. It is contingently produced in encountered mundane situations. This approach of adapting the environment, while it is composed by individuals, also unveils the shared characteristic of operations among collective practitioners. The contingent and singular content of the tactic assists my understanding of the physical confinement presented in my movement in relation to what I observed from the viscous visceral gathering moving with MS. I am then enabled to interpret my own experiences and the relational phenomenon between body and landscape as certain physical/choreographic productions of Taiwaneseess.

As delineated in the previous section, the Xinsheng Viaduct playground is located precisely between the biggest IT market, Guanhua Market, and the biggest creative culture and art centre, Huashan 1914 Creative Park in Taipei. Guanhua Market was established in 1973 and became known for electronics around 1980 before gradually transforming into the established commercial space for relevant devices and computers since 1985.<sup>40</sup> It marks a historical embodiment of the IT industry as the main economic agency, hard power in Taiwan<sup>41</sup>. Huashan

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<sup>40</sup> Please see Guanhua Market's official website

[www.gh3c.com.tw/index.php?app=articleandact=viewandarticle\\_id=35#:~:text=1973%E5%B9%B44%E6%9C%88%EF%BC%8C%E5%B8%82,%E6%9C%80%E6%97%A9%E8%88%88%E8%B5%B7%E7%9A%84%E5%85%AC%E6%9C%89%E5%95%86%E5%A0%B4%E3%80%82andtext=1985%E5%B9%B4%E5%85%89%E8%8F%AF%E5%95%86%E5%A0%B4%E7%9B%B8,%E9%80%9A%E8%A8%8A%E8%88%87%E9%9B%BB%E8%85%A6%E5%B0%88%E8%B3%A3%E5%BA%97%E3%80%82](http://www.gh3c.com.tw/index.php?app=articleandact=viewandarticle_id=35#:~:text=1973%E5%B9%B44%E6%9C%88%EF%BC%8C%E5%B8%82,%E6%9C%80%E6%97%A9%E8%88%88%E8%B5%B7%E7%9A%84%E5%85%AC%E6%9C%89%E5%95%86%E5%A0%B4%E3%80%82andtext=1985%E5%B9%B4%E5%85%89%E8%8F%AF%E5%95%86%E5%A0%B4%E7%9B%B8,%E9%80%9A%E8%A8%8A%E8%88%87%E9%9B%BB%E8%85%A6%E5%B0%88%E8%B3%A3%E5%BA%97%E3%80%82) (Accessed 19 April 2020).

<sup>41</sup> In order to advance economic capacity given the removal from the UN and the first oil crisis, the government of Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) determined to invest in the IT industry, founded the Electronic Research and Service Organisation (ERSO) in 1974. Since stable growth in the IT industry was witnessed in 1990, its predominant economic role has continued to persist (Nelson, 1993; Chang and Yu, 2001). The development of IT and IC (integrated circuit) successfully renders Taiwan the first largest semiconductor material market in the world for the ninth consecutive year in 2018 based on the data from the global industry association SEMI



1914 Creative Park, on the opposite side of the playground under the viaduct, represents a soft (related to culture and humanity) shift in Taiwan that aims perhaps not so much to catch up with technological development in the first place, but to cultivate cultural and artistic contemplation and activities.

While my body informs and supports me to consider Taiwanese-ness in the city by how it advances and pauses alongside the dynamics between the individuality and the collectivity, I further discover and analyse the viscous element of moving embedded in the cultural and economic blending style of this area based on three perspectives: the duration of corporeal occupation, the spatial and temporal provision for bodily involvement, and the potential resistance to economic efficiency.

The first social phenomenon the circular viscosity of MS speaks to is the duration the body is encouraged to occupy and aggregate in the space. The layout of each site plays a crucial factor and corresponds to practices of the body. In the area of Guanghai Market, stores are closely aligned along Bade Road in a wall-to-wall fashion, which renders the space, as described, a conspicuous shape of linearity. People come to solve problems and perhaps select or compare products. From what I observed and experienced as a consumer; people spend less time lingering to enjoy the space than attending to the products. They may wander from one store to another, but the intention is set: a future purchase. Bodies in this space generally do not congregate but pass by each other, responding to the designed urban setting. This stream of consumption driven by a commercial intention and practised in the area was disrupted in 1997 in a public and apparent way. The founder of Golden Borough Theatre (mentioned in Chapter Two), Wang Ron Yu, was arrested under the accusation of invasion into the public space due to his performances at one of the barns located in the geographic area of today's Huashan 1914 Creative Park. This subsequently resulted in an official negotiation of space for

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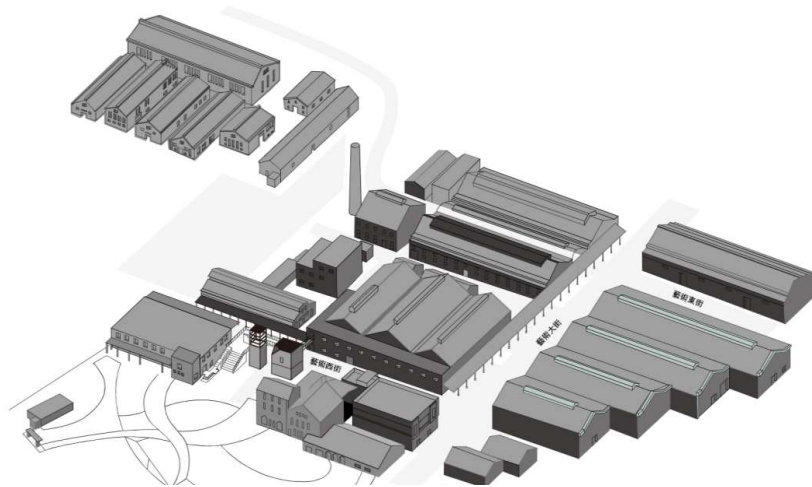
<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/ast/201904030007.aspx> (Accessed 02 October 2019).

artistic practices. This claiming of space eventually turned the deserted factory and its parking business into an arts event venue, the Huashan 1914 Creative Park,<sup>42</sup> to deliver and receive art. Huashan henceforth has hosted various forms of the performing arts.

By introducing artistic activities, Huashan, opposite Guanghua Market, has fostered an environment for the viscosity moving in this area. Without a specific boundary, the campus of Huashan depicts an undetermined shape across the spatial terrain that is far from the perception of linearity. It is similar to an uneven and curved circle. Huashan, with its plain, flat, and wide coverage of the ground and artistic and cultural activities, possesses the capacity to be still and to be mobile at the same time, a resistant statement against the desire for infinite advancement. This spatial occupation can be witnessed in its various grounded barns with openness on each side of the surrounding roads and buildings. The geographical features of the park, along with the layout of the buildings, resembles the circular pattern of the viscous moving by MiQing: people can stay and gather to enjoy exhibitions, performances, artistic crafts by local designers. Some also assemble to rehearse in the barn-converted studios. Bodies are not hurried to consume products or patronise numerous stores to activate the monetary stream. Bodies are invited to stay, gather, and linger in a collective scene. MS' visceral intervening echoes and reflects such durational pursuits by the moving of MiQing, and constantly secretes viscous space for viscous contact.

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<sup>42</sup> Huashan's official website <https://www.huashan1914.com/w/huashan1914/index> (Accessed 23 April 2020).



**Figure 5** The layout of Huashan. Source: Huashan 1914's official website.

The second social manifestation of the circular viscosity lies in a spatial and temporal provision for an individual body to feel and stay, supported by a collective environment. This initiation of the viscous movement in the space arises from the attentive involvement with the body mediated by the other bodies with shared corporeal intention and pleasure<sup>43</sup>. In addition to its line-up of performances, Huashan, in collaboration with Taipei National University of the Arts, provides various open artistic and somatic courses such as Tai Chi, performance, sound, and imagination in body movements, to name a few. These material and physical resources and the spatial-temporal facilitators of Huashan attract different bodies into its space to form a condensed site with feeling and experiencing bodies. They enable a certain slowness through the viscous assemblage of bodies that ignore the goal of velocity, emitted by the viaduct, represented by the Guanghua Market and realised through electronic devices sold across the road.

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<sup>43</sup> This resonates with one of the movement tendencies/kinesthetic significances of MiQing. See Chapter Three.

The active role of Huashan in promoting the arts and a cultured lifestyle fills this area with the pursuit of the feeling body in daily life, allowing the body not to conform to capitalist operations upon the body in long and busy working patterns producing economic agencies but instead enabling the creation of the body's own process for its own purpose. Creation, as mentioned in the last section, of MS' choreographic interactions means moving existence by spontaneity in collectivity, that acts as a surprise in the surrounding material environments. As MiQing dynamics manifested in the area, unlike the motion of the passing cars and skateboarding practitioners, lie in their intention to fill and contact, to allow the generation of the creative body that feels, tastes and contemplates, suggesting a state of viscosity.

The attention on the sensation and experience of the body differs from and defies the bodily labours in capitalism, where the body is deployed for accumulating economic capital for an authority. The economic strategy of the government of Taiwan is also a means to consolidate its sovereignty against China. Before unpicking how Taiwaneseeness could be perceived by the economic dynamics in later sections, here I continue to locate the circular viscosity in the neighbourhood of the viaduct to demonstrate the surprising and intriguingly close correlation between the dynamics of MS and that of the surrounded spaces. Paying attention to one's own body and allowing its own intentions to emerge require a pause to do so. Alongside potential conversations with other bodies, the attentively feeling body performs a tactic that compensates the labour exhaustion. By nurturing the body with pause and ease, the body may escape from the exploitation of production and consumption. Setting aside the non-stop linearity of the operating body in the artistic activities of Huashan, I see the body as a resistant existence. The resistance is fulfilled by how the body can decide what and how to contact in the space, which assists inner retrospections on the situatedness of the body. This contemplation again produces the texture of viscous fluidity, carrying the individual to move, but move slowly, with the thinking of the body. Though reaching out continuously, in the participatory experiences, my body did

not intend to move on but move in-between. There was not any determined shape of destination or ambition, the mission was to contact and touch, activated by the body itself and other bodies. Reflected in the emerging social phenomenon by MS' insertion of moving body, Huashan is inviting ephemeral stillness in the city, and an interior examination of the contact of body.

The focus on body in terms of self-enjoyment/pleasure within a collective environment, instead of the labouring body for the authority's imposed goal of economic interest, draws attention to developmentalism as form and norm (particularly in Western countries). This brings into consideration of the third viscosity in this area, where bodies may not necessarily aim to increase economic efficiency and agency, to be a certain form of labour for requiring economic and social capitals.

Kate Manzo (1991: 6, 14) succinctly points out the Western ideology that developing countries are like children and they need to grow up to become like adults . Development in this regard means the disappearing of 'some-body' and the on-going process of tracing the becoming of 'some-(intangible)body'. An individual body needs to be moulded into a certain body without a thinking and feeling of it, perhaps a universal one that materially functions well in the system of production and consumption. The thinking and feeling of a body not only purposefully slows down the marching city, as MS's viscous invention in the space enables, but also depicts a discrepant availability, function and position of body. The legacy of developmentalism anticipates the incessant becoming of the body along a path that starts from a point where the original body is meant to be replaced by another well-functioning body with the adequate capacity of labour. A body fits in the socio-economic system and thus consolidates the socio-economic system by keeping working in order to produce value. The IT market in its praise of speedy technology, however, requires cheap labour in the 'developing countries'. The body in the IT market is utilised to support an absence of embodiment in technological usages and cultures. Huashan, through its courses and promotion of artistic

events, is calling for a body that releases the profitable practices and seemingly cherishes the primal impetus a body owns to reach a body-mind homeostasis, and well-being of life. One of the visions of MS is to help the individual to know their body, to talk with their body to relax properly in the fast-paced city.<sup>44</sup>

The pursuit of the feeling of body and the creative components of the body manifested in Huashan echoes the emergence of the Eastern body system developed in the 1980s. The Eastern body aesthetics that emerged in Taiwanese contemporary dance<sup>45</sup> (*Dong-fang Shen-ti Kuan Wu-dao* 東方身體觀舞蹈) demonstrated an ambition to create a localised body not informed by Western formality. A huge part of Taiwanese dance scenes before this period exhibited systematic dancing techniques brought predominantly by the prestigious American modern dance companies and the overseas dancers engaged in those companies or relevant practical contexts. On one hand, the Eastern body system was to create something / some body by revisiting the rooted philosophy and practice of a geo-culturally cultivated body, by releasing and replacing technique-oriented operations with profound rediscoveries of the relationship between body and mind. On the other hand, by pursuing a seemingly disparate 'function' and subjectivity of body, this emerging aesthetic and philosophy also expected to provoke comparative reflections in the dance field that concerned political and economic agendas of the Taiwanese. By doing so, Taiwanese dances would be further developed and be more culturally and geographically independent and thus to catch up the dances of Western developed countries. MS' body values may continue to promote the idea that investment in the body is oftentimes the remarkable solution to the exhausted individual in a busy and speedy urban life. The corporeal components of the courses and the artistic events of Huashan, along

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<sup>44</sup> Yang's remarks, interviewed on 06/01/2019.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter Two in the section of Three Enlightening Mo(ve)ments (p.72).

this vein, suggest a need to anchor or localise a body to look inside the body rather than the normative suggested by conventions.

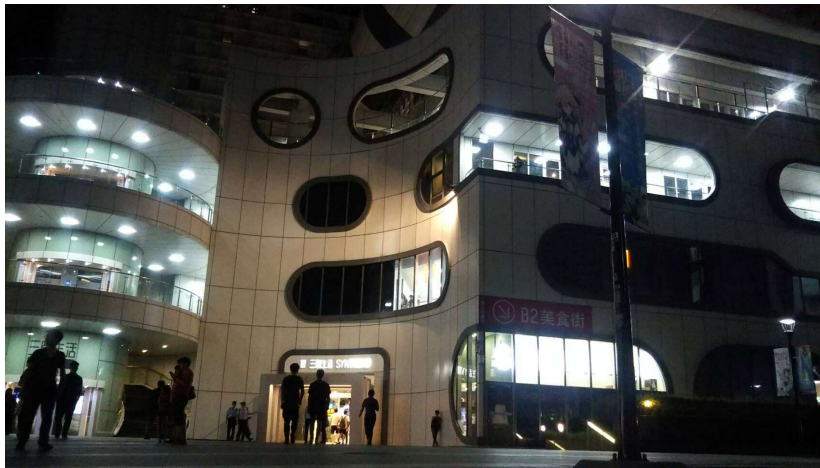
The Eastern body system, with the attention on one's own body, holds the assumption that there is an entity to compete with by creating a body that is different from a Western body. It intends to delineate a boundary that categorises bodies. Through MS and what is correlatively reflected by the operation of Huashan, MiQing does not itself consider the body as categorised. Acting on MiQing the body focuses on filling and contacting in the space and with other bodies. From the perspective of the body put into focus, MS blurs the boundaries between bodies, between differences, and between what has been imposed as the imperatives and givens through the viscosity of an assemblage that performs attentive engagement profoundly enough to resist what has been set up in the environments and what norms have been embedded in the scene. So, the duality of Eastern and Western become less significant or, in the case of the bodies in MS, blurred into a scene of Taiwanese dynamics– MiQing – where bodies are vague and varying in moving and constant contact.

The viscosity movement quality of MiQing manifested by the pause for creativity in Huashan, and its contrast with Guanhua Market, reveals the Taiwaneseess formed in the negotiation and delicate resistance against the velocity of the economic agency from China. Standing on the opposite side of Huashan, located at the northern side of Bade Road on Civic Boulevard, is a significant symbolic construction of the Taiwanese economic legacy, Syntrend. It is situated behind the alleys in the Guanhua market, protruding among the aligned variety of electronic stores along Bade Road. This shopping centre was commissioned and run by the son of Guo Tai Ming, opened in 2015. Guo is a Taiwanese tycoon, founder of Foxconn, the world's largest contract manufacturer of electronics. He had successfully run electronics factories in different countries<sup>46</sup>. He was invited to a private interview with the then-president

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<sup>46</sup> They are mainly in China. Some of the factories are located in Japan, USA, Brazil among others. See

Trump and was subsequently invited to deliver a speech at the White House. He embodies the ambition and transformation that Taiwan has undertaken, to catch up with the world and to influence the world. His proactive and active interactions with America and Japan reflect Taiwan's economically intertwined history with these powers but also its quest for survival in the strategic battlefield of international relationships. The IT industry has been the main economic strategy Taiwan employs to survive and resist China's political and economic power (Andreosso-O'Callaghan, 2018).



**Figure 6** Partial view of the building Syntrend (Shen, Chai Ju, 2019).

With the new shopping centre Syntrend, this IT area on the east side of the court embraces an ambition to continue its prestigious and representational role in the prosperity of the Taiwanese electronic industry. By boosting its prosperous IT industry as a hard power, Taiwan secures economic resources and then uses that as political currency to confront China (Andreosso-O'Callaghan, 2018). Taiwan's identity as a country has also been marked on the IT industry, and positioned itself in a resistant role to the imposing force and the competing power of China.

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<https://www.moneydj.com/kmdj/wiki/wikiviewer.aspx?keyid=1e5327a8-db1d-4f31-9bab-aec837c45c53>. Foxconn acquired Sharp, a Japanese electronics firm in 2016. (Accessed: 13 January 2020)



Taiwan has been building up an economic foundation by becoming the essential IT industrial manufacturing agent internationally for many years. However, with the economic rise of China, Taiwan is losing its privilege in the market. A paradox has emerged that Taiwan, in terms of being a profitable market, has to ally with China, becoming more and more dependent on China for economic prosperity. Wu (2016) depicts the political dilemma in Taiwan regarding this situation through the metaphor of the centrifugal force and the cohesion/centripetal force<sup>47</sup>. The centrifugal force, possibly interpreted as a divisive factor, is the economic materiality provided by China and therefore evokes a politically Chinese identity.

The political cohesion of Taiwanese, according to Wu's observation and proposal, hinges upon 'the democratic system of Taiwanese sovereignty and the created civic consciousness and national identity' (Wu, 2016: 266-268). This reflects and complicates the economic and political dynamics between Taiwan and China, a frenemy, or a two-force organic entanglement of contingent identification. Wu's proposed moving pattern of identifying may provide another perspective to see MiQing as the cohesive and viscous energy that not only aims to suspend the velocity of the advancing capitalism from China and its imperative of being Chinese, but also to squeeze in the time and the space for the development of Taiwanese-ness, which requires a pause in order to contemplate and foster.

While the pursuit of the feeling body may account for a pause in linear capitalism, an implicit legacy of developmentalism in Taiwan may still be perceived. It is interesting to notice that the emergence of the viscosity of pause/non-development and the existence of velocity of advance/development may sometimes intersect and intertwine with each other, which complicates the viscous resistant movement. As observed, the emphasis of the body on the educational and theatrical events in Huashan seems to advocate a holistic lifestyle that

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<sup>47</sup> Wu uses the term 'cohesion' to translate 向心力(xiàng xīn lì) in Chinese. However, 向心力 is oftentimes translated in English as centripetal.

encompasses bodily and creative practices as much as possible through experience. Besides art venues, there are restaurants, boutiques, yoga clothing shops, et cetera, under the umbrella of "creativity" in Huashan. The space allows a variety of bodily experiences and produces a self-identification, not through the functional body in the context of labouring and the financial streams, but by the engaging and engaged body being in the contact with aspects of living and life. The fusion of these creative tastes, however, implies a modern Western lifestyle that Taiwanese people are now able to afford. This signifies that Taiwan is on a journey from being a developing country towards an ultimately 'developed' Taiwan (Taiwan, as a member of the WTO, opted to declare itself developed in 2018). The newly emerging identity of Taiwan, by joining in the iconic Western standards, is established, between the viscous congregated bodies for pausing and the velocity of consumers for purchasing.

The filling in of Huashan also reflects the transformation of Taiwanese identity from one based upon competing with dominant exterior powers, be they the Western nations or China. Huashan has established an artistic and cultural space rendered with the viscous quality of MiQing by encouraging attention on the body and the slowness generated from the contact of body, mind, and self. However, to survive and turn a profit through establishing a culturally iconic landmark in such a privileged region, Huashan will not be able to sustain its mission to promote the arts without employing commercial approaches. This problematizes the relationship between the space of velocity and viscosity and the reflected identification of the city, and by extension, the Taiwanese. Huashan is negotiating between the imperative of money flow and the performance of the collective resistant viscosity MiQing that MS manifests. Exhibitions of pop culture from all over the world are an income stream for Huashan. Another is the fancy restaurants, boutiques, yoga clothing shops, et cetera. The commodification of lifestyles brings a monetary stream to sustain the place. By filling up these lifestyle stores,

Huashan, on one hand, is marginalising the arts by yielding much more space and priority to commercial activities.



Figure 7 Map of Huashan. Source: Huashan 1914 official website.

However, the corporations of Huashan aim to strategically preserve space for experimental performing art, which is neither economically efficient nor highly productive in the sense of a capitalist system that expects profit generated from a voluntary exchange (Jenks 1998). This is further embodied by the layout of the whole campus of Huashan. Spaces are predominantly offered to shops and restaurants and filled with dance and theatre at the margins of the campus, along the wide main road on the right-hand side to the front point of the whole factory campus. The live music house and the exhibition area are opposite the performing arts venues. All of these cultural and artistic places are geographically led by one pizza restaurant on the right-hand side of the main road and a yoga clothing store on the left. The viscous filling-in, MiQing by MS has introduced a pause into consumption and capitalism, which resonates with and perhaps enhances the viscous moving between these two seemingly opposite forces. Interestingly, the IT building, Syntrend, provides the space hire for performances. There are

also spaces for co-working and entrepreneurship, which promote the gathering and the creating by the body, the congregating and experiencing bodies. A sense of viscosity by the body may be perceived in the pursuit of technology and economic advancement resembling the movement of velocity.

This is not to naively claim that this viscosity is immune to the velocity of the economic, or to suggest that simply by gathering, the body can avoid the drives of consumption and domination by capitalism. What I am experimenting with here is how to consider and interpret these two perceived forms of moving as a certain forming and transforming of Taiwanese-ness. I see Taiwanese-ness as certain corporeal movements in certain urban conditions. Further, I aim to problematise what I have perceived and delivered in the above-discussed pairs of dualities. While I am formulating Taiwanese-ness as the viscous moving in the city in a more precise way by resorting to binary concepts, I am aware that the viscosity and velocity are not mutually exclusive in the designated geographical settings; and the dynamic negotiating co-existence of viscosity and velocity that makes the viscosity Taiwanese, localised and conditioned in certain but ever-changing time and space.

## **Conclusion**

Through the discovery of MiQing in my experiential moving, I am able to use MiQing predominantly as a lens to see the potential of Taiwanese-ness from a kinesthetic perspective. The ecological interactions generated around the geographical, economic and cultural contexts between Huashan and Guanghai demonstrate the on-going formation and transformation of the identification between Taiwan and its people. The MiQing of Huashan depicts a tension between economic strategy, a developmental identity, and a culture-abundant island that Taiwan aspires to be endorsed as, apart from being a manufacturer of electronics. The combination of economic power and cultural and artistic

agencies are employed in the generation of the viscous bodies of MS to consolidate Taiwan towards/as a specific and culturally characteristic country in Asia.

Circular viscosity puts on hold the velocity of the city, Taipei, and by implication that of the nation, Taiwan. The practice of MiQing, is similar to de Certeau's (1974) tactic, in that it enables the individual to adapt to the ever-changing and transforming environment realised by the imposing ideologies of power relationships. Through the process of contacting and the ambition to converge with more than yourself, MiQing emits a sense of viscosity integral to subverting ideologies that have been advancing in the environmental materialities aimed towards development in the urban setting. MiQing is not a universal or unidirectional phenomenon; it serves as a reminder that problematises certain stable and exclusive states, oftentimes thought to accommodate only one layer of moving or situation of moving. MiQing complicates the formation and transformation of Taiwaneseeness by addressing its potential quality of viscosity, reflecting the waxing and waning of various local, systematic, economic, and political powers intertwined and operated simultaneously. The moving entanglement lends viscosity to the identifying process of Taiwan in terms of the cultural cultivation and the economic competition socially and nationally, which may explain the incessant interactions between resisting and reaching out that this nation and its international recognition, for a long time, has hinged upon.

## Chapter Five

### The Spiral Civic Energy of MiQing Dynamics

In this chapter, I further investigate the circular momentum of MiQing with the analytical tool of movement cultivation. I propose that the density of moving in MS produces circular viscosity, which neither forms impenetrable borders between bodies nor performs fluid velocity, but manifests a thick and sticky non-discernible variety of bodies. In conjunction with my experiences in MS at the second venue, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, I locate another movement pattern of MiQing, the spiral civic energy, an evolving dynamic of circular viscosity. It is worth noting that circular viscosity and spiral civic energy are not mutually dependent. They are two different patterns of moving and manifest different movement distribution and density. The spiral civic energy as the evolving dynamic here means the extent to which the sensory/Shentigan's impact of the corporeal collectivity has in certain urban settings. The circle of viscosity is transformed into a whirl due to the openness of the specific site of a plaza and the volume of the gathering bodies on-site; the circular viscosity is enlarged, becomes even blurred and loosened. With such extension, it elongates and produces more circles of viscosity within itself. Spiral civic energy is generated and displays a similar but different movement distribution from the circular viscosity.

The spiral civic energy with a whirling movement pattern exerted the power of absorbing bodies and materialities. The absorbing was facilitated by the lack of a mirror, or in other words, dancing without the impulse of looking at the mirror and the reflected self. When dancing in the plaza with its openness and the ease of not examining my reflections, I was emotionally and physically encouraged to feel more of other participants around me, there was no specific centre to focus on but a dynamic fluid plural form of focus. The crowd, seemingly by this feeling with each other, vaguely diffused out and formed a site with multiple centres, continuously

coming in and fading out. The corporeal collectivity was absorbing people and deconstructing borders of social and physical categories. Not only did the boundary between various groups fade but also those in-between bodies in the dancing and moving community. There were two distinctions in the scene. The first one was the absorbing act of multiple centres; the other was the crucial absence of a mirror that allowed the whirling to be decentred. The spiral energy of MS enacted the potentiality of sharing and equality in the urban setting. These embodied aspirations based on my experience, both as a Taiwanese of the generation born after the 1980s and a moving body, have shed light on the transformation of Taiwanese mundane life and its implied Taiwanese-ness, that is the spiral gathering which aims to release the centre of authority and the imposed normative.

### **5.1 My Physical/Geographical Experiences: A Body Whirling Up from the Collective Now and Then**

In 2019, MS moved to Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (CKSMH) where I took a couple of classes and experienced the thickening of bodies by first filling in my body into the space. Recalling my corporeal journey at MS, I felt different forms and textures afforded by the filling dynamics. The circular viscosity evolved into a spiral that was constantly inviting, welcoming and absorbing due to the geographical features of the space. My physical experiences generated in each site are not mutually exclusive and sometimes do apply to one another. However, I want to acknowledge that dancing alone and dancing with a collective formation each leads to different generated emotions and kinesthetic experiences. As mentioned before, I did not have the opportunity to dance with MS in the playground under the viaduct. That being said, I still observed and felt that the environmental materialities in the plaza seemed more influential on how my body moved than when I danced alone under the viaduct. I did feel I could engage myself more profoundly and specifically with the offered geographical attributes when dancing communally. For me, it might be the shared and accumulated kinesthetic intentions diffused from others' bodies that fostered an environment to immerse the body into a deeper

interaction with the city, leading me to be almost engulfed in its correlative dynamics. What was strange is that, when I reviewed the experiences both under the viaduct and in the plaza, looking at how I was embodying my civic memories at CKSMH as an urban citizen, a sense of viscous circling emerged and unfolded into a sense of slow but energetic whirling. The feeling of the texture of the movement distribution seemed to be more salient than that under the viaduct, the kinesthesia of the shape and the momentum of the moving bodies of the plaza stand out.

For me, the circular viscosity and the spiral civic energy, two relational forms of the filling dynamics, are entwined and braided together. Separating these two themes in each chapter is a means to better articulate the contingent relationships between body, city, and choreography. I bring forth the various intriguing ways that my body perceives certain 'information' and how I experimentally utilise the feeling of the body to understand the elusive collective phenomenon in the urban materiality.



**Recording 2** A short video of the bodies in MS, mine included, on the plaza. Please see Appendix for the transcription of narration



**Figure 8** The Airscape of CKSMH. Source: CKSMH's official website.





**Figure 9** National Theatre. Source: bonvoyageworld website.

Leaving the CKS MRT station and turning right, one arrives at the east side of CKS. Authentic Chinese architecture immediately occupies the vision. This is the National Theatre in Taipei, overlooking Theatre Terrace where MS takes place. The external design of the National Theatre is identical to the National Concert Hall, the twin venues constantly hosting performing art events by local and international artists. CKSMH is comprised of three large buildings and a gate. The entry archway used to be 大中至正 (Dajhong Jihjheng Gate, the Gate of Great Centrality and Perfect Uprightness) and was changed to 自由廣場 (zi you guang chang, Liberty Square) in 2007. It features a tall main archway, with smaller but similarly designed archways attached to each side. The blue roof has layers of flying tiles and sets of brackets. Each of them is supported by two white pillars, standing side by side. These five archways based on 風水 (Feng Shi) function as the shields of the statue of Chiang Kai-shek standing at the end of the square (Lin and Chang, 2002). The main hall, in the shape of a temple, where the statue of Chang Kai Sheik is situated, can be sacredly perceived through the linear vision created by the arch of the most gigantic archway. Sitting at each side of the five

gates are the National Theatre and the National Concert Hall. These two buildings are 11.1 metres tall, reaching almost four stories. Both of them have ramps for cars to drive up. As the typical construction of a Chin Dynasty palace, the National Theatre and the National Concert Hall have the belt-like encircling corridors externally. These corridors lead to the doors of the buildings, where a wide space is available for people to stroll, dance, or sit. These adjoining structures serve as a grand porch. Some of the doors are like French windows, with panels of glass. The temple and the memorial hall praise elegance and solemnness by the simplicity of their blue and white colours, while these two erections are flamboyant in orange, red, blue, green, golden shades resembling the colours used in the famous palaces of the Chin Dynasty. In the architect's description<sup>48</sup> of his inspiration and the meaning of the design, these twin buildings explicitly speak of their Chinese cultural heritage. 'China' here does not refer to the political entity of PRC but the cultural and geographical sense of China.



Figure 10 Dajhong Jihijheng Gate. Source:Theodoranian by Wikipedia.

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<sup>48</sup> The architect of CKSMH is 楊卓成. A piece of brief description of the inspiration and meaning of his design could be found on the webpage of CKSMH: [https://www.cksmh.gov.tw/content\\_276.html](https://www.cksmh.gov.tw/content_276.html) (Accessed 1 May 2019).



Figure 11 Removing Dajhong Jihjhen. Source: Newtalk News.



Figure 12 Liberty Square. Source: OCT travel (華僑城旅行).

**Chiang Kai-shek**, after being defeated by Communist China in mainland China, retreated to Taiwan and set up his government in exile. He had been the president of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for twenty-five years. During his reign, Taiwan began its

constant confrontation with China and was under a series of dictatorial policies to prevent the possible invasion of Communist Chinese forces from the mainland. Among these policies, a thirty-eight-year martial law was enacted, which led to the severe suppression of any forms of assemblage, free speech, human rights, and the local cultures and languages (Gold, 2016). The presence of the statue was intended to remark his legacies in Taiwan. However, as Taiwan has enjoyed a mature democratic environment and unfolded its journey of transitional justice by reflecting on colonial and authoritarian histories, the statue is now a tourist attraction and an invaluable reminder of democracy and liberty.

There are a lot of physical activities here, spreading out into the different corners of CKSMH. Social dance groups for senior citizens, street dance groups predominantly formed by college and senior high school students, and cheerleading communities also made up of participants from the same age group can be often seen. Martial art practitioners composed both of locals and foreigners also take up their space on the corridors or a small piece of space in the Theatre Terrace, where the side gate of National Theatre sits. Theatre Terrace is also where MS is carried out. This is a place I have been familiar with since childhood. I enjoyed walking along the passages surrounding the campus with my mother and have attended numerous performances inside the theatre. In January 2019, I took part in MS and experienced the same old place in a brand-new way by dancing in it for the first time in thirty-five years.

CKSMH composes a nostalgic part of my civic memories. Growing up in the neighbourhood, I had led my mundane days of life sometimes near, around, and in this space of abundant political and cultural representations. I used to look forward to visiting various gigantic lanterns, creating a splendid spectacle of lights, figures, shapes, colours, folklore, and traditions at the Taiwan Lantern Festival.<sup>49</sup> I enjoyed walking in-between the buildings and the

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<sup>49</sup> Lantern Festival is a Chinese traditional festive day falling on the fifteenth day of the first month in the lunisolar Chinese calendar. It also marks the end of the Chinese New Year. The Taiwan Lantern Festival, different from the Taipei Lantern Festival, was initiated in 1990 and held exclusively at CKSMH.

corridors, imagining I was strolling through a garden owned by entrepreneurs or even the royal members of an ancient Chinese dynasty. CKSMH for me, even now, is a site located in the busy centre of Taipei that retains a delicate trace of Chinese culture. Such culture is enlivened and enriched by how the citizens comfortably allow themselves to move in the space. Apart from the variously woven colours of the buildings, the lines, curves, terrains, and silhouettes, these constructions carved out in the sky and the city and interfaced with the citizens depicts a Taiwanese scene; a piece of liberty tenaciously fought for by many activists risking their lives. It is a specific historical site and an everyday corner one can materially touch, smell, observe, listen, and travel back and forth between an imagined time and space and that of urban reality. This is a place, for me, where the memory of growing and interacting with people situated in that reminiscence always dwell and a part of my localised cultural reference informing my identification.

Feeling slightly shy and mostly excited, I stepped out of the MRT station and began to fill myself into the group and the space with them. The average number of participants at these sessions is at least 80, while a hip-hop dance cohort or a cheerleading community numbered approximately 30.<sup>50</sup> It is phenomenal for me to see and move with 80 people at the same time on the Theatre Terrace, in this corporeal assembly that does not attempt any political manifestation at the central plaza (called Democracy Square) between the twin buildings.

While the task of improvisation or partner work is being suggested, I began to dance. Unlike experiences of the conventional studio-based dance class, there was not a 'model' to imitate. This dancing had to come from my own self: how I feel myself entirely, how I react to the given environment, the ignited emotions and the encountered partner.

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From 2005, the government decided to deploy a more fluid and diverse manner in terms of location and started to change the hosting site.

<sup>50</sup> Information from the interview with Yang on 06/01/2019 and observations on 07/01/2019 and 14/01/2019.

There were sounds, fragments of movements, from different communities around me coming into my kinesthetic, acoustic and visual range as I rushed to the periphery as far as I could, and occupied this plaza as much as my body allowed. They were not interruptions, but inspiration. I felt the connection ripple out from my filling in the space to other communities sharing the space and time. MiQing, the filling dynamic, carried me on in a constant moving circle without a clear centre or with multiple centres, as elaborated in the detailed emotions and movements in Chapter Four.

It seemed like everyone was a small circle. When seen from a distance, it was an enormous circle consisting of myriads of small circles spinning together. One minute my body, crawling, rolling, jumping, strolling, striding, was heading inwards, and the next minute I found myself whirling outwards through wandering, running, curving, leaping. There was a spiral simultaneously developing from the inside out and the other way around. Incessantly facing various directions as I danced, I was not locked into one direction, unlike people in the fellow communities who formed the apparent shape of a square, composed by their lined-up bodies, sometimes based on individual physicality. I was free from being directionally oriented by an instructor or a mirror. In contrast to the numerous delimited squared spaces of the different dance or movement groups, I enjoyed the circular freedom provided by this spiral energy to move along with the spatial expectations of my body. Everything began with my body and its company.



Figure 13 The multi-directional bodies in MS. Source: LPCP (2019).

## 5.2 MS' Choreographic Interactions: Spiral Bodies in and out of the Decentring Space

The contrast between the square and the spiral is the embodiment of the power relationships between the groups of the collective body. A square also forms an apparent boundary and with a clear collective direction in the space. From my observation, dancing or moving bodies of these squares of groups form such distinct shapes in space in order to facilitate specific instructions and orders of movements, a purposeful confinement to manage the movements. The spiral energy of MiQing allows MS to provide freedom for the body in the situated space. It allows the space and body to possibly move away from the authority.

Moreover, MS' body, moving, spatial disposition, temporal arrangement, and environmental location acting on the openness of the environment and the openness of the definition of dance blurs the borders of each community physically and metaphorically. Carol Brown (2015: 219) indicates that the site-specific dance has the ability, due to the geographical openness that a theatrical space is not able to offer, to welcome a variety of languages, and connect diverse zones. MS was diffusing into other communities as the site-specific dance that Brown has envisioned. Beyond the framework of the dance for the spectatorship, as I explain in Chapter One, I see the bodies of MS as even more subversive than a site-specific

choreography in a way that the MiQing of MS promotes the bodies to be moving out without the concern of entering other movement communities, such as a group of students practising street dance or learning Tai Chi and the Chinese martial arts. Reaching and contacting, MS is connecting diverse zones and blurring boundaries. This movement distribution and tendency reflects the aspiration of the founder and the enacted practice in the class to release the idea of what has been defined as the 'dance' and who has been identified as the proper body of a dancer. The removal of the limit of the space and the bodily standards forms an energy of absorbing.

In the dancing, the collective body as a whole is whirling because it continues to discover the space and choreography itself in the spatial consciousness of contacting (Gil 2006). Gil describes dancing as a continuous movement whereby the body of a dancer eventually internalises the exterior and externalises the interior. The body is infusing and infused into space, a twisted ring, with no obverse side or space (Gil, 2006: 34). The openness supported by both the environment and the body generates the energy of spiral absorbing, inviting connection and creating the contact.

### **The Spiral Intervention into the Square Tendency**

Due to the larger scale of MS, the way MS participants occupy the space is unlike the other groups. Whether street dance or cheerleading groups or martial arts and social dance communities, the participants in these activities tend to face one fixed direction and stand in a straight line facing the instructor or mirrored panels. The space between the individuals is clearly demarcated, even for the social dance group. Each couple has its own territory to practice in, as arranged through the authority of an instructor. All of these factors forge these communities into squares, resonating with the shape of the plaza and an authentic ambience marked by the National Theatre on the Democracy Square. Whether it is a group of hip-hop dancers facing in front of the glass door, each individual in a cheerleading group standing line-



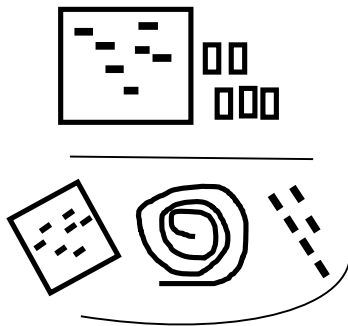
by-line in front of the instructor, or the couples from a social dance routine, they all form the shape of a square. The crowd of MS does not face a particular direction but is instead shifting direction all the time.

Squaring pursues the learning and performing of a required body format. Due to the clear directional lines of a square, these communities draw a clear territory in the space. The limits of each community could be perceived and a sense of closeness that is intended to enhance an order among the crowd, as described by Elias Canetti, 'gaining a staying power' of the closed crowd (1962: 17). Laban Movement Analysis likewise suggests that direction implies the unified attention towards something that focuses on the cohesion of a group (Newlove and Dalby, 2004: 187-195). Wringing and floating movements are considered indirect and a sense of directness usually associated with pressing movements. By thinking the body as diffusing into the space and the space as internalised by the body, the square shape of the community may be perceived as an entity of accumulated pressure that forces a limit, resulting from a specific direction upon the gathering of the bodies. With rigid borders, the square retains a closed space for this particular purpose and for a particular bodily practice and body/movement.

I noticed that even though MS group's movements varied in each class, there seemed to be a fluid and spiral tendency realised by the openness arising both from the environment and the mobile/flexible ways the courses were conducted. An instructor was engulfed within the round gathering, the participants were scattered around and increasing the space by randomly occupying the space without any specific order informed or centres formed. Without a specific direction, the absence of a centre – as the instructor was strolling sometimes submerging into the crowd – allowed the gathering to encompass as much as possible of the materialities, the attention and the emotion from the environment and the forming crowd. MS, an open crowd, absorbed more and thus it intended and tended to consist of more people (Canetti, 1962: 17).

The precise direction in the squared group, reflected and, perhaps, reinforced the environmental disposition of the CKSMH, while the whirling roundness of MS is intervened and, as it used to interrupt the linearity of the speedy urban scene, complicated the order and habit of this site. The architectural disposition of CKSMH is predominated by a long-square that emphasises the boundaries it has demarcated between its proximate areas. Through the walls and the stiff lines delineated, the overall landscape of CKSMH seems to deliver a purposeful solemn atmosphere. The bronze statue of Chiang Kai-shek is located at the deepest end of the whole terrain of CKSMH. The two twin buildings, as described in the previous section, are similar to a physical guard protecting and reinforcing the leader's authority and control. The shape of a square tends to create an ambience of order and security. This sense of order is present in the square communities. As in this gigantic square there are the numerous squares of each practising group, one and the other together seem to intensify and maintain a tradition of shape in this site. Unwittingly or not, these squares, reflect the sense of authority that CKSMH used to represent and now is continuously surrendering to.

The square shape, from the point of order, obeys an environmental imperative and urges



an understanding of MS as an intrusion of pleasure and flexibility.

Kayvan Madani Nejad finds that the curve line can elicit more pleasure than the square edge and yield the complexity that encourages positive feelings among the researched residents (Kayvan 2007; Williamson 2013). The spiral energy performed

by MiQing, with MiQing's participatory pleasure,<sup>51</sup> creates countless points of contacting through those curvy routes in the open space. MS is gliding and floating in the space of the square and that then transforms the atmosphere and the expectation the site has been establishing. Consequently, this spiral movement distribution, evolving into a pattern and a

<sup>51</sup> Please see Chapter Three for the two kinesthetic significances/movement tendencies of MiQing.

tendency, brings to the city a destructive effect of order and power that aims to germinate more spinning circles, more centres and creating a decentring.

### **Multi-Centring by Bodies in Sharing the Space**

In the delivery of MS, I felt and observed that the hierarchy of teacher and student was collapsing when a centre of certain bodily demonstrations of the conventional dance class disappeared. Thus, a sense of imposed authority was replaced by a sense of feeling each other in sharing the space. The absence of a mirror in MS allowed the multi-centring power to emerge as an immediate embodied authority. A mirror in a studio not only serves to facilitate learning, discipline, and ameliorate performative results (Dearborn and Ross 2006; Ehrenberg 2010; Berg 2015; Diehl 2016). It relates to the psychoanalytical operation of the mirror stage; a mirror initiates both mental and physical drives to acknowledge the unwanted difference a body may perform. In the case of dancing, a mirror is intended to amend a body into a certain physicality (Ehrenberg 2010). Foucault's panopticism assists us to understand how a mirror further initiates a self-surveillance mechanism onto (elite) dancers enhanced by the concurrent perception of one's body and that of one's peers (Berg 2015). Complicated relational power dynamics are vivid between an instructor, a dancer and his or her fellow dancing bodies. Without a mirror, I was not led or moulded into a certain physicality. MS transcended the control and authority that a conventional dance studio has implemented.

A mirror in a studio also indicates a pursuit of excellence, a sense of unconscious or conscious competition. A hierarchy between students occurs partially due to the preference for a certain physicality from the instructor, immediately shown by a mirror. It is like a display of bodies; the difference between the right body and the wrong body is straightforwardly present. An interesting point is that, at least in Taiwanese and Japanese contexts from my experiences in Taipei and Tokyo, there is a perceived hierarchy in the studio in terms of the position of the participants. Those who are considered to have a better command of technique

tend to stand in the front row and those who are self-conscious about their bodies or technique will recede to the rear line. I have noticed that several dance classes I took in London manifested a similar phenomenon, which, however, was not prevailing in all the technical classes such as the ballet or the contemporary dance class. In some cases in Taipei, I heard participants complaining about those who 'dance badly' intruding into their space, suggesting 'those people' stand back. Not every participant is equal in a studio; they are classified by the capability of their body, a situation which is reinforced by the instructors in the institutions. Artistic proficiency is realised through the standing of the National Theatre; the construction of the campus itself reinforces the emphasis on the most crafted type of sophistication associated with culture and art, which indicates the outsider and the insider in a recognised field and community.

MiQing was rising from avoiding surveillance due to the lack of mirror and lifting the imperative to teach exact movements. Consequently, while MiQing encouraged each individual to share with and feel the bodies drifting by, it produced the multi-centring of emotions and motions in the space. Multi-centring of emotions and motions in the space of collective dancing means when the de-obsession of a core, a central point of a standard begins, the attentive care of the relational dynamics between one and the others emerges and expands; a spiral whirling in and out then forms. As the focus was constantly floating along different bodily contingencies and the connections between individual bodies, in MS awareness and sense are made possible through interactions.

### **Decentring the Space and the Energy of the Absorbing Collectivity**

Traditionally in a studio, no matter which genre of dance is being practised, the instructor is at the head of the room, usually in front of a mirror, and there is a top-down power relationship. When practising in outdoor spaces in the course of MS, the instructor either travels around the participants or is temporarily in the centre of the space, surrounded by students.

The instructor also has to move into the crowd to see and connect to everyone. When I was experientially engaged with MS, within an enormous collectivity, the direction as discussed before seemed to melt into the ground; MS and I did not face a certain direction a specific centre. Further, MS's and my orientation intermittently overlapped and dislocated, or diverged in a de-centring pattern. It felt chaotic, not intimidating. Pleasure arose along with or from the excitement and anticipation of the unknown, the disordered or the tumultuous. My experiences in each class were informed with kinesthetic turbulence generated by how MS was constructed and instructed through its multi-centring by sharing the dance and its decentring chaotic phenomenon. When MS was taking place under the viaduct by providing a street dance class, the deconstruction of the conventional square shape of the participating group was still visible.

I had similar experiences when attending choreographic courses in London. In these courses, the centre and a sense of centre disappeared only when each participant was given time to create their phrases. Some instructors would blend into the participants during introduction, it was when I could also feel the arising of the multi-centring dynamics. I noticed that the arrival of this sense depended on an intention or awareness of the instructor to deconstruct the conventional centring environment. The decentring and multi-centring of MS was a result of the openness of the environment, the mission of MS, the contact with urban settings, the capacity of movement, the mass of the crowd, and the distribution of the moving. Such an amalgamation of corporeal materiality and geographical potentiality informs spontaneous and complicated connections.

MS, riding on MiQing dynamics, made connections not only with the construction and the materiality of CKSMH but also the delimited squared groups in proximity. The chaotic and spiral energy formed by the bodies of MS intended to blur boundaries by expanding the spatial capacity of the participants. MS encouraged participants to reach as far as they could, and did not confine them to a particular vacancy and direction in the space of the plaza. From my

experiences, from what I felt, observed and moved in the space, I saw the participants explore the space and experiment with his or her capacity to boldly contact other groups. MS was constantly contacting the localised materialities in various forms and with various content. The emerging spiral momentum, as MS endorsed, thus transformed a situated symbol of solemnity and order into a mobile and circle joint civic cluster, contacting and welcoming people.

When MS's decentring subverts the spatial and historical definition of CKSMH, this decentring also redefines what dance should be or be like. Moving bodies in MS are writable choreography that enables multiple interpretations of dance and therefore blurs the definition of a conventional idea of the space. MS 'writes' out different urban settings. The bodies of MS fill themselves into other dances, the movement communities. By extension, MS allows the intertextuality of body to emerge. Classification of the dancing bodies becomes hard to recognise, the body in MS is capricious, attainable and unattainable, recognisable and unrecognisable, readable and unreadable. It writes and rewrites the city, the urban material representations and practices.

**Roland Barthes** (1977: 156) purposes that the text 'cannot be contained in a hierarchy', with its openness carried out by a reader, a contingent encounter of ongoing defining. The text thus is out of the limit of a fixed centre. The being of text reveals the borders of limit while encourages potential transverse intentions and acts on the limited— that of assumed understanding and communication in assumedly completed work. When I looked at MS in this conceptual light, the bodies of MS seem to be the text in this urban setting compared to the recognisable and readable choreography created by their neighbouring movement communities with a comparatively clear centre. The centre of the bodies and the centre of the pedagogical system of moving, such as street dance and social dance, the discernible way of moving, in each confined square. Bodies in MS without precise movement combination attempt to contact indecisively, and have the mobility similar to the text that Barthes theorises.

It is scripting the space, it presents and practises the known limit of dancing but continues to smear and undermine the limit of readable bodies to explore more while redefining the body and the conventions perceived and practised.

By removing the classification of dancing bodies by virtue of technique, MS introduces the idea that a body is its own dance. Without mirrors and while everyone moves around you, not in a line but in a circle or whirling out, occupying the space. There was hardly a standard to compare to or compete with, no physical 'square' to squeeze into and no authority to be subject to. MiQing's attempt to contact is produced and practised by releasing the power oftentimes felt in a studio environment under the convention of instruction. The decentring dynamics also influence the hierarchy among participants. Contrasting with the performance inside the theatre with certain imperative norms, MS' absence of excellence and precision of dancing movements provides firstly the friendlier and welcoming space for the body to fill in and secondly, it does not prioritise the attention and preference on those who execute in closest proximity to known standards.

The space seems to be created by the bodies, not to be a competitive centre that creates a perfect body for any gaze. The ability to decentre a standard of form and content brings forth the redefinition of the geographic composition of CKSMH. MS is not the first movement group that has interrupted the original function of CKSMH. The street dance community may be the pioneer of this (Lin and Chang 2002). They turned inside out the relations of spectacle through the glass doors that preserve the elite performance arts within the theatrical containers of the twin buildings. By its occupancy, the street dance claims its long-time neglected artistic existence 'outside' these architectural representations of the invited prestigious companies and a certain authentic understanding of the arts – the elite standard of the 'inside'. MS juxtaposes ordinary dancing bodies with an architectural statement of artistic elitism in order to challenge fixed ideas about dance technique and trained bodies and to bring forth dance as a social

practice shared by everyone, and not only to be seen by exclusive spectators. MS furthers this aspiration by also breaking the shared shape of the dancing pattern that reinforces the reflection on CKSMH as the centre of the arts, the centre of the political authenticity, the centre of the life citizens following the legacy of Chiang Kai-shek, the centre defined by the government. The consolidation of the symbolic centre of CKSMH, because of the calling for more public participation and openness both in terms of space and body from MS, has been shaken, questioned, and moved. Physically and conceptually, this spiral energy by the civic crowd is not following a centre, a norm, or an authority. Instead, it decentres by collapsing the system of centre and creates multi-centring by attending to the motion and emotion of the materialities in the space and within collectivity.

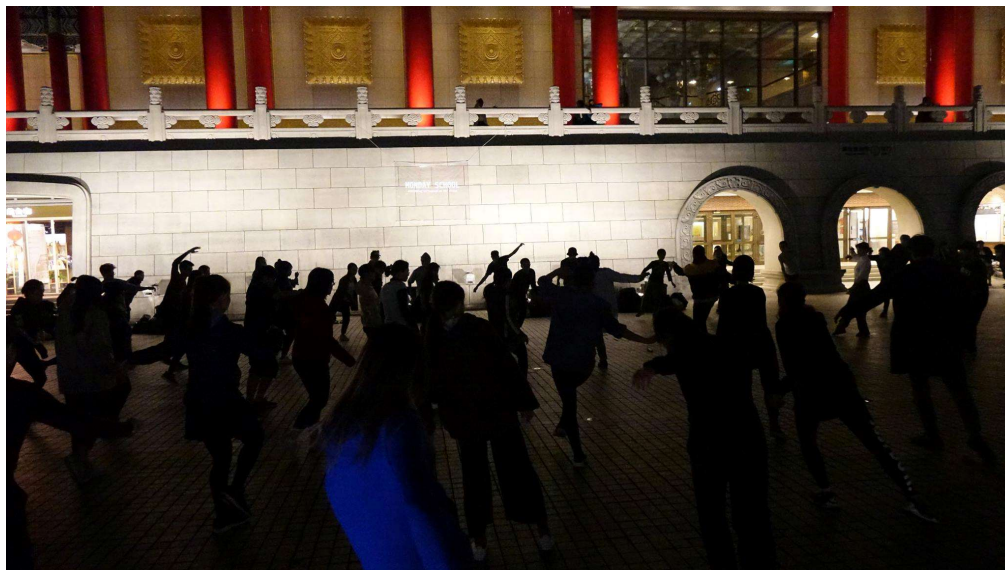


Figure 14 Spiraling Bodies in MS. Source: LPCP (2019).

### **5.3 Societal Choreographic Representations: The Rise of Civic Moving/ Movement and the Waning of Authority**

I argue that MS's spiral civic energy intervenes in notions of Taiwanese-ness. Jennifer Goodlander (2018:173) suggests that the arts reflect the meanings of an interactively constructed city as well as situated social activities. MS is operating in proximity to a social movement, whose attempt is often to locate and claim more autonomy for the people. Moreover,



the social movement possesses the ability to predict the future (moving) of society (Ho 2004). Those who initiate the movement sense certain needs that have not been extensively recognised but engendered in the evolving of a society, which reflects a potential state of engaged collectivity (Melucci 1996:1). My kinesthetic and collective experiences in MS in the plaza of CKSMH sensitively reveal an underlying ongoing democratic project of inviting the civic element into the space of authority. Numerous social movements have left their footprints in or around the geographical terrain of CKSMH and continuously create new corporeal and political materialities here. I am thus interested in using MS, its MiQing dynamics, and the performed spiral civic energy both as a metaphor and an approach to understanding a reflected and practised Taiwanese civic mundanity.

**Ten years after CKSMH** had opened to the public in 1980, a social movement, called Wild Lily Student Movement took place in 1990, requesting the dissolution of the National Assembly, the lifting of Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion, and the direct elections of Taiwan's president and vice president. It was a movement that bodies were engaged closely, contacting each other, squeezing with friction of the surfaces of their skins to form a viscous cluster, with the extended coverage by the body, inside and outside almost every tile and brick of CKSMH. Six thousand people occupied the political space, raising their awareness of civic energy. The cohesion manifested here, in the demarcation and the physical existence of CKSMH, witnessed and informed as well the inception of cohesion, the thickness of the civic , joined converged bodies.

On 23rd February 2017, the indigent community initiated a protest and occupied 凱達格蘭大道 (Ketagalan Boulevard), which is on the west side of CKSMH, to oppose the *Regulations for Demarcating Indigenous Traditional Territories*, that invaded their right to their homeland. It attempted to be an illegal movement with performances on

the avenue and the visual creation patched the ground, the walls, and the fences to manifest their diverse and vibrant living and existence on the island.



Figure 15 Protest Scene. Source: Xu, Bo Song (許柏崧), 2017.



Figure 16 Protest Scene. Source: Yan Lin Zhao (顏霖沼), 2017.

The moving pattern of a spiral, the sharing of motion and emotion in multi-centring and the chaotic decentring of MS' MiQing, resonates with these preceding social activisms in Taiwanese society in terms of the advent of democracy and its conjunction with the introduction

of vibrant civic activities in urban settings. Ho (2004: 81-82) argues that what set the Taiwanese anti-nuclear social movement apart from the Western paradigm is the intertwining of the resistance with a political authority and the transition to a democratic political entity. Unlike those analysed patterns in European contexts where stable and democratic political settings are assumed, the anti-nuclear social movements in Taiwan are dependent on the ongoing political democratic transformations unique to the localised historicity. Social and political power relationships are intricately operated without any specific linear temporality (Ho, 2004: 83-88).

My phenomenological body in the spiral civic energy, as illustrated previously, has led me to unpack the elusive composition of Taiwaneseeness in a way that is attentively engaging the organic, non-linear and multi-directional moving of the democratic trajectory of Taiwan. What I mean is MS is an echo from of certain previous political protests, that have come to embody the meaning of being Taiwanese. From what I perceived in MS and experienced as Taiwanese together encourages me to consider de-centering and multi-centering is democratic, and re-activates senses of agency associated with formation of Modern Taiwan where the civic democracy has increased. In the following section, I look at the transforming time-space of Taiwaneseeness, as embodied by MiQing, a whirling contacting assembled by the people's mundane lives and the built-up memories, which gradually attenuates the control and surveillance of the authority. Besides, in the light of the redefinition of dance by MS, I bridge the absence of excellence MS has enacted in the site to the blurring of the boundary between the elite arts and the civic activity on a social level.

### **Civic Mundane Memories and Undermined Surveillance**

The area where CKSMH sits is characterised by political and educational facilities since 中正區 (Zhongzheng District, Zhongzheng is the other first name of Chiang Kai-shek) hosts universities, colleges, schools, government offices and other institutions. From the name of the road, one can get a sense of political and patriotic ambitions of the Chinese Nationalist Party.

The road in front of the site where MS takes place is called Aiguo East Road, which can be literally translated into Patriotic Eastern Road (愛國東路). It is a region endorsed with and embodying the formation and foundation of the retreated government defeated by Communist China and the imagined space of a small island dreaming the retrieval of a cross-strait enormous continent. The towering statue of Chiang Kai-shek grounds and overlooks the avenue unfolding just in the middle of the whole campus. Guarded by the identical twin constructions, it flamboyantly announces his authenticity and authority of righteous China, the Republic of China, not the People's Republic of China. Accompanying this rigid solemnity was the dictatorship of more than thirty-eight years. CKSMH used to be the campus for the military both in the Japanese Occupation and the ROC's reign. When Chiang Kai-shek died, after reconstructing the space into a memorial hall, a formal ceremony on the fifth anniversary of his death was held and attended by thousands of people. The space CKSMH occupied has long been redeemed as a delimited space of historicity of Taiwan for an overarching political character in a play of decisive memory and the formation of Taiwan and Taiwanese identity. A trauma has often, if not always, been evoked by the existence of this space, the confirmed statue of the dictator and even the name of it. This is one of the reasons that the aforementioned '大中至正' was replaced with '自由廣場', announcing the entry point of the awareness of the civic, a decentring movement within the space.

CKSMH both accommodates the memories of persecution as well as the civic memory that implies and practises the pursuit of freedom. This is manifested by the leisure activities brought out by the citizens and residents. From 1990, CKSMH has become more similar to a park utilised by the locals. The introduction of civic mundane lives and memories to the space was an on-going, bifurcated process. In 1990, the first Lantern festival took place in CKSMH, and bodies captured in the festival seem to resemble 金枝演社's (Golden Bough Theatre) corporeal interpretation (detailed in Chapter Two); a joyful, relaxed and energetic physicality infused with

colourfulness and a significant sense of living in the moment. The memories of family gathering and a peaceful society enabled by the governorship led by the son of Chiang Kai-Shek were generated and stored. The folk attribute of the body was intertwined with the politically controlled body satisfied with proven joy and happiness.

The road adjacent to the Plaza of Freedom is nicknamed 'wedding-dress road'. Along Aiguao East Road, a row of wedding dress boutiques with French windows bolsters a sense of happiness and luxury through variously posed mannequins wearing classic white, romantic red or mysterious black wedding dresses. This contrasts with the solemn simplicity of the white walls of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall but diagonally responds to the colourfulness of the National Theatre. Through nostalgia and cultural character, CKSMH began to diffuse a romantic aroma and thus began transforming into cinematic settings for wedding photos around the arrival of freedom (Lin and Chang, 2002). The decorated body and performed body echoed with the decorative and performative function that CKSMH later continued, where the historical lessons were released and replaced with the exterior materialities that assist a certain style of living and positing the body for individuals. From decentring by the change of the name to the continuity of including different aspects of mundanity into the space, the authority has been undermined by the forming of a multi-centre of living civic bodies.

### **The Power of Freedom by the Pleasure Collective Participation**

The intrusion of the street dance, and later MS, of a civic joyful body, has further complicated this space of authority and increased the civic activities since these bodies of street dance were neither expected nor possibly allowed in CKSMH before. CKSMH is close to many universities and high schools and the glass doors brilliantly functions as mirrors (Lin and Chang 2002). In effect the area has become a free studio or a free social platform for people to gather together, a place for dance and leisure. The political agendas associated with the space seem to be forgotten by the objective of gathering for the personal intention of the individual as

performing their civic rights in the city. Years have passed, for the younger generation, the traumatised pieces of the flashing memory of history may not speak to their feeling, moving and identity. However, the memories of how they could insert their body in the space, abundant with the historical and traditional (Chinese, in a cultural sense) materialities and, of course, a free space to occupy for their own purpose, have been accumulated.

Many movement communities are spreading into the space of CKSMH. Some of them on the corridors, some of them on the plazas, both the one MS utilises and the others between the twin constructions and other vacant space woven in-between the lawn and the building. The diversity of leisure activities reflects the diverse civic bodies that introduce them into the political space, which in return, has diluted the power of government surveillance and control of the will of the civic. There are indeed security guards, however, the frequency of patrolling is quite low, according to my observation, and people could fulfil, in general, many physical forms of leisure.

Chuang, Shiang-Lan *et al.* (2005) find that the people who participate in the educational activities or courses held in CKSMH predominantly seek to relax and socialise. There is also an expectation of improved health. By involving their bodies in the serene atmosphere, nature, and the kinesthetic openness CKSMH affords, the body controlled by the governmental sector this space used to assert becomes a resistant body that aims to contact other senses of the civic and maintain its sustainability to practice the lifestyle unrestrained by older powers. MiQing, observed in my participation in MS, as a means of corporeal knowledge, is useful to contemplate other forms of gathering and body moving. There may be a shared intention of contact with other bodies, while a sense of the civic is emerging more clearly and confidently. Body in such space may hardly reckon the horror of those suffered and wounded bodies but, through MiQing's contact, may experience the imagined nostalgia of pan-Chinese/Taiwanese Chinese architecture and builds up the new civic memories of the freedom of the generation.

MS' intervention in the space, according to several discussions with the participants, also shares a similar vein of communal wanting and fulfilment. Some of them agreed that it is a pleasure to be here with everyone, to dance with everyone, and to be able to dance in the open space. They were cheered by the opportunity MS provided to dance in the public space without the fear of other's judgment, conducted in a collective way. The scene of a collection of bodies contacting complements the desire to be relaxed and to be socialised in their bodies, which is usually constrained and oftentimes overridden by verbal communication. Thus, the bodily gathering engenders a sense of freedom from normality and convention. As the function of CKSMH has changed, the political reinforcement of conforming authority the space used to pronounce has become submerged. What replaces it has been the social connection and the representation of everydayness by those who enjoy performances with friends, dancing hip-hop or cheerleading or social dance, jogging, strolling after dinner or practising Tai Chi, an individual moving body joined by a variety of collectivities, from a circular viscosity to the spiral civic energy in mundane democratic living.

The participatory pleasure of MiQing dynamics reflects the spatial and temporal transformation of CKSMH, its absorbing movement, and the blurring of boundaries by redefining the content and purpose of the space as well as of the moving body. Apart from the leisure activities initiated by the private individual, there are also leisure and educational events and courses provided by the governmental sector of CKSMH. These options are becoming essential or common in the life of the people leaning against the urban environment. These forms of information, knowledge or ideology may cast their influence, whether intentional or unintentional, and (re)mould the shape of citizens and residents that the city, or by extension, the nation has expected. The body engaged in the conduct of the courses and events is infused with the perception of how a body should be relaxed and should be cultivated in the urban setting, and a personal and public tacit agreement of how the body should behave in such a

situation has been produced. MS' intervention may be seen and felt as a surprising exception both occurring in the city and in the urban-situated body. It interrupted the stable harmony constructed both through the interaction of the individual with the geographic reality in CKSMH and that of each moving community, who has become familiar with each other's moving and occupying, by the daily practice of encountering each other and recognising each other's place in the space. This interruption problematises the fixed relationships and correlations, due to the temporal consistency each entity and materiality has consolidated.

The sharing and feeling of the others and the blurring boundaries of MS' MiQing dynamics may also resonate with the variety of the exhibitions that have been introduced in CKSMH. From the display of the personal objects of Chang Kai-shek to the themes of both traditional and contemporary arts, science and visual installations of human rights, to name a few, the space in CKSMH reflexively arrays the historical and ongoing pursuit of human rights and the complex competing forces between authoritarian and democracy in Taiwan. This demonstrates how CKSMH rethinks its symbolic journey and the intention to transform the steady meaning of the space into a more fluid and diverse platform for possibilities, despite the inevitable purposeful selection of information and knowledge. We might see in this locale that there are dynamics of entanglement and resistance, both from the governmental and the civic entities, that incessantly operate to reply to the organic historicity of Taiwan and its achieving of a collective community, even given socially fragmented understandings and experiences.

In responding to my rethinking of the subversive energy MS brings into the space, as well as the definition and presentation of 'dance', I would like to bring forth another intriguing example of how theatrical performance has been encouraged to step into the civic urban environment. I have noticed another blurring action that acts socially between the elite and the civic by introducing the so-called normative arts into the open space. Each year, from the year



1996, the prestigious and worldwide established dance company Cloud Gate Dance Theatre performs on a temporarily constructed stage under the sponsorship of a prestigious local international enterprise. Each year, people come early to occupy a small tile or three, sitting on it as occupying their personal seats in front of the stage. By my own observation and participation, the crowd formed in a vague shape, between what could be determined as circular or square. There is no participant limitation, the audience, in fact, did not only spread to its full extent on the plaza between the twin constructions. People covered from the stairs to the corridors, even on some of the stone lions decorating the campus. It was hard to determine the demography of the crowd since partially it was tremendous to recognise, partially, like MS, it did not arbitrarily secure its participants. This inviting environment opens up the space of a certain form and content of artistic knowledge that used to be confined within the twin constructions.

## **Conclusion**

CKSMH is an overlapping space, where the intertwining of the resisting and reinforcing of political influxes from various entities takes place, be it the civic autonomy of body or knowledge, the communal reciprocity, and the governmental apparatus of controlling and releasing. CKSMH originally pronounced an intention of social control, by its military usage, and this was later combined with the cohesion of a nation through the visual affirmation materialised by the statue of Chang, Kai-shek. The mission to unite the citizens by the conformity of the ruling authority was carried out by inviting the body of the people into the given frame of collective activities. This control standardizes the performance of the body firstly by imposition during the dictatorship, and later by suggestion via the practice of mundane urban life. The public power has invaded into the individual personal life and becomes the constituent of it. The process of standardisation was explicitly forced while nowadays it may be discretely carried out with or without individual alertness. However, while the body may be influenced and shaping itself into

an expected tunnel, there is also an on-going deconstruction and reflexivity provided by the body's contacts in the space and with people, in a way that surprises the stable system in the society. MS may embody such a subversion and reflect the hope that the civic energy has continuously assembled. It also reacts to the imposing convention and perhaps, pushes back by persisting its mobile movement and its independent cohesion from the planned pathway by the ruling entity.

From directorship to democracy, the absorbing power observed in MS seems not only to reflect but also predict the never-ending journey the space in CKSMH has continuously rendered problematic and complicated as the formation of Taiwanese-ness. Perhaps it is still achieving this, seeking to transcend the notion of a nation by deploying its civic energy to continue to contact with the identity of Taiwan. Wu believes that the current identification has been enacted to consider the composition of this nation, Taiwan, as the civic society instead of national confinement exclusively based on blood (血緣), the recognition of the great Chung-hua(中華). He observes that there is an overlapping between various social movements, where almost all of them are comprised of at least two different groups of society, which means a social movement could be a student-led, farmer-led, or even environmentalist-led movement at the same time. This overlapping may strike a resemblance with the people gathered in CKSMH. However, as mentioned, they all form a square within each movement community. With the whirling energy from MiQing dynamics, MS may more closely manifest the increasing phenomena of diverse engagement in Taiwan and anticipate a more mingled, chaotic, and free disturbance of the deeply constructed conventions in Taiwanese society.

## Chapter Six

### Diversity by the Vague and Varying Body of MiQing Dynamics

MiQing's filling momentum into the interstitial space and the body reflects, gathers, and continues to develop the spiral civic energy in the urban geography. The civic whirling dynamics in CKSMH resulted from MS' collective moving, the openness of both the space and the absorbing and absorbed bodies of MS. The bodies of the participants are attracted by the whirling and fill into MS, leading to expanding the influx of bodies. The spiral civic energy in the moving of the collective bodies creates a wider spectrum of corporeality and identification a body can perform and practice. MS decreases the difficulty of participating and increases the possibility of incorporating more diversity into the activities held on the campus. The conventions and the imperatives of the CKSMH space, in terms of meaning and usage, have been disturbed; various bodily movements introduce themselves into the space, allowing continuous transformation to take place, both of the space and society.

Benefiting from the discovery of the spiral civic energy, I continue to consider Taiwanese-ness as a certain way of moving. Feeling varying bodies on MS' MiQing at the site, I found the environmental materialities welcomed diversity. This diversity embodies the transforming content of being Taiwanese-ness; that is moving away from the authentic Chinese or Han and being enriched by other ethnic or identity groups. I observed that frequent users of CKSMH tend to occupy the site as part of their daily routine, such as dancers, joggers, strollers, or those who just idle and watch others doing these things. The civic culture is portrayed and carried out by these moving snapshots of mundanity in the space which was once used to praise the symbol of dictatorship. Opening up to the public, this space of authentic national identity in Chinese Taiwan has been relentlessly challenged and diversified by the civic bodies of the people. Bodies in CKSMH problematise the predominant and/or imperative identity,

ethnicity, and the relevant markers of the 'Chinese' Taiwan. The bodies and practices of the local Taiwan, previously silenced and neglected, are being illuminated by their mundane existence and display the civic social transformation of Taiwan. The spiral civic energy of MS nurtures diversity, which resonates with the phenomenon of valuing diversity in Taiwan's national space. MS on MiQing dynamics processes the urban setting by its diverse bodies; even without a direct political statement, it proposes a similar vision and action of the on-going project of valuing diversity in the city and Taiwan.

In this chapter, I postulate diversity as it is enabled by surrendering the centre, such as the centre of the instructor in MS and the centre of the authentic Chineseness (Han) embodied by CKSMH. This diversity thus supports the appreciation of equality. As an open field of forces, MiQing keeps absorbing. The centre in MS is fading, which encourages a sense of equality that each body is the centre of its' moving, not a standardised expectation from the normative physicality. During my participation, the equality in MS welcomed more experiential bodies and promoted the diverse constituents of the community of MS. While the equality was generated by the varying bodies, I also found the equality occurred due to the vague bodies. Bodies in MS became vague because of the blurring boundaries— the movement tendency of dissolving boundaries,<sup>52</sup> which allowed these bodies to overlap and became indiscernible from one and another. The hierarchy of bodies was undermined. This vagueness between the threshold of the body and the varying bodies of MiQing locates the paradox of diversity that could be seen as a certain constituent of Taiwaneseeness.

The value of diversity has been deemed by the literary and political scholarly communities as one of the Taiwanese values (Chen, F.M., 2017; Wu, 2016). Diversity in Taiwan may refer to ethnicity and the layers of culture built upon its colonial history and postcolonial acts. It does not mean that Taiwan has reached an ideal diverse capacity since the 'move and moving of

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<sup>52</sup> See Chapter Three, p107.

diversity' in Taiwan has been confronting obstacles put in place by the legacies of colonialism, imperialism and other ideologies. Due to the complicated histories of Taiwan, the diversity in the island not only speaks about the ideological incorporation of differences, but also about the consideration of individual experiences among different communities: the paradoxical dynamics of differentiating from others to locate diversity and blur the boundaries to enable a reality of diversity.

I propose to consider diversity through the lens of MiQing in MS to track and extract the quintessence of certain Taiwanese attributes. I argue that the varying and vague body is where the diversity that is the Taiwanese-ness, enacts upon. In the following narratives and analyses, I delineate how the moving pattern of diversity in Taiwan could be seen as the interactive relationships between vague bodies, varying bodies, and liminal space. Examining how the diversity of MiQing sprouted, I discovered this moving trajectory resembled the constellation and the rhizome. The idea of the indiscernible rhizome is complemented by the concept of 通 (tōng, floating in and out, exchanging) by Zhuangzi (369 BCE-286 BCE), the well-established ancient Chinese philosopher of Daoism. These concepts suggest that Taiwanese-ness is not only a moving of connections but also a moving of immediate and concurrent blurring and varying.

### **6.1 My Physical/Geographical Experiences: A Body Blurring in the Kinesthetic Rhizome**

There was an entrancing feeling when I was dancing with other participants at MS even though I barely knew the people around me. Based on my observations, the majority were all new to each other, but I saw people open themselves up through their bodies in front of strangers when it was time to move and to communicate through movement. Because the dance hierarchy had been broken down, I felt welcomed by the collectivity and the environment and I was also released from the self-consciousness often experienced in general mirrored dance classes. The absorbing energy continued to welcome numerous and various bodies and

moving to join, which diminished the sense of 'body/technique hierarchy' for me. I felt each body was equal. Bodies in MS were generic, mundane, and individual at the same time and at any time when they chose to shift between or harness all in their chaotic movements, the kinesthetic rhizome by feeling the urban materialities and individual corporeality. The equality MS creates encourages a sense of self-value and self-expression that dispels the anxiety of being judged and being hurt.

The above experience was a vulnerable thing to do since being different or not conforming to the expectations may induce unexpected judgements or negative actions. However, the participants trust MS as a safe place to reveal a very genuine part of self in front of people they have just met. In a 'sharing time', regularly held after a class with participants sitting in a circle, one participant expressed that he felt like he was dancing in his own room while attending MS. Seemingly unembarrassed, he recounted a personal story that in his home, supposedly a very private space, he was worried that his neighbours would see him dancing alone in his room and judge him. This self-consciousness often prevented him from feeling free to dance in his private room. However, surprisingly, he felt a sense of security at MS. Even though he was dancing in a public space, he was not afraid of any judgement, saying: 'I feel more genuine to myself when I am dancing alone in here than when I am in my room'.<sup>53</sup> This reassuring feeling of disclosing a private self in a public space is related to my experiences at MS. As I was dancing alone, but in the rhizome situated in the public space, I lost the boundary of my body into the blurring bodies and the chaos of variety. My body became discernible, blending into the constellation of the body that was conspicuous as a collectivity but vague as an individuality.

The encouraging ambience afforded the reassurance and willingness to enter the space. I noticed the pouring of individual commitments of the body and self that curiously explored their dynamic relationships with the entire environment. My body accumulated familiar and

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<sup>53</sup> 07/01/2019, my translation.

newly discovered movements in the space due to the keen and kind invitation from other bodies' sincere and diverse engagement. I saw a young male participant naturally bringing his voguing body, while another participant floated, releasing her torso and experimenting with gravity, accompanied by a body that was traceless and too vague to pin down anywhere on the spectrum of dance genres. There was also a body, for what I felt from the same space it occupied, fully committed to the resilient dialogue with the space in vertical vibration, many pieces of shaking dispersed with the swift resistance against the ground; the body's space overflowing with thousand moments of trembling; this ritualised-like body seemed to fly through my physical presence and the precise silhouette of CKSMH immediately melted into splendid colours of green, red, yellow...resembling the shades perceived on the decorations and columns of a local temple where bodies, both the worshipping ones and the performing ones, were immersed.

**通 (Tōng) by Zhuangzi** (369 BCE-286 BCE) assists me to pin down this chaotic variety of bodies in terms of the unstable way that connections are built by moving.<sup>54</sup> 通 depicts continuous exchanges of space, body, environmental materialities, and non-material existence. 通 seems to encompass all the possibility of the world while it does not dilute and deny each individual existence by containing the all. It is expansive dynamics where one and the other flows in and out of each other constantly (Lai, 2019: 166). It is through the exchange of passing through the space, these spatial, corporeal and environmental materials are endorsed with certain essence and features. However, it does not mean the emerging attributes are settled. Since the exchange continuously takes place, the connections are not made certain, they adjust like the rhizome suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Probably 通 is more aggressive than the

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<sup>54</sup>通 is mainly delineated in a remarkable work bearing his name *Zhuangzi*. The entire work is available online <https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/adjustment-of-controversies> (Accessed 8 June 2020 ).

rhizome. The rhizome may still suggest a discernible structure of the capricious connections, 通 is formless, whether a chaotic one or an ever-changing one. All the assumptions of the potential structure of contact could be drawn and discarded at the same time. This is how I felt and moved on MiQing dynamics. I was always making connections, filling certain spaces to be part of some structures. However, once I felt I might stay in certain moving, I was then immediately influenced by the next exchange of feeling and kinesthesia. I was then drifted away and absorbed into the next ephemeral 'structure' of the moving of that moment.

From my experiences, the immersion of bodies paradoxically smeared the visual categorisation of bodies and the perceived variety of physicality. That is to say, when the focus was on how a body moved and moved with others, the varying bodies seemingly faded out from my vision and I predominantly attended to what I moved, and moved with, as an individual body with its sediments, but not with visual labels and its accompanied presumption. In the second class of the MS I attended, we were sharing the tasks proposed by the idea of a combative and sportive body, which focused on the efficiency of a body moving in space. This session was inspired by a Greek movement/dance company called Fighting Monkey.<sup>55</sup> While disturbing the presumed limitation of my body, I also connected with people around with hands and feet in order to overcome the boldly extravagant visceral and corporeal imagination of space. The circular physical and sensory connection, particular in this class, elicited a scene in my memories of dancing in a circular pattern in a ceremony with the well-known dance steps of the indigenous communities in Taiwan. I later found out that one of the instructors in the second class comes from the indigenous background of Amis/Pangcah (阿美族)<sup>56</sup>, who shared with the participants his body practices infused with the Greek technique. When dancing

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<sup>55</sup> Fighting Monkey <https://fightingmonkey.net/> (Accessed 23 January 2019).

<sup>56</sup> Amis is one of the indigenous ethnic groups in Taiwan.



together on the same site, I did not intentionally recognise or notice the territory of the body. I was drawn more to contact with the bodies next to or around me and consequently seemed to be less aware of the different appearances of the body. Recalling my participatory experiences, admittedly, what drew my attention to the difference was the body that moved in a specific way, clearer and more honest in a manner that I did not often see in urban public spaces, such as the voguing body. When I started to move and contact in the space among the bodies, however, the alertness of differences was fading away. It came into focus how I interacted with my and other individual but indiscernible bodies. I felt a sense of the variety of body, but was not concentrated on how the body varied, I just saw a moving body that I was moving with.

Moving brought me into a flow in which I released the intuitive act of locating the difference beforehand and/or responsively. For my body and mind, there seemed to be one dominant relationship, the relationship of the corporeal interaction, between one individual (body) and the other individual (body). What I perceived through interactive communications was the engaged dynamics rather than the apparent references to ethnicity or other presumably visible differences. Individually, I was in an enchanted state that pushing one's limit had made possible. Collectively, I was supported by and mesmerised by the variety of ways in which the bodies were moving and how my body was joyfully flexible with the constant introduction of disparate corporealities and the 'movings' along with them. MS proposes a collective experiment through the medium of dance, which allowed us to use public space in a way we are not socially and politically educated to do together.

As discussed in Chapter Four, I went to the viaduct site by myself, moving, dancing alone, and imagining how it would have been to mobilise collectively. The space under the viaduct was mainly occupied by skateboarders and basketball players, mostly male, who appeared to be between 18 and 30 years old. When I was strolling and moving in the space, I had a clear sense of being the other, an unexpected presence in the demarcated geography of a certain

gender, certain age, and certain physicality. I noticed some families coming by, intrigued and pausing for seconds to crane their necks, wondering what the people on this site were doing/moving. They did not enter, neither did the middle-aged residents seemingly from this neighbourhood, who usually wore pyjama-like trousers with a pair of open-toed sandals, revealing toes that were slowly gliding over the elevated front of the skatepark, pushing away the ground to shift their body into an intention of leaving. This is a site for a certain type of diversity the city may wish to accommodate. However, due to the design and the well-pronounced use and user of the space, this diversity ironically delivers a message of exclusion.

In contrast, when I watched the recording of the MS classes, I saw MS demonstrating the scenes of various bodies concurrently owning and sharing urban spaces of the skateboard and basketball playground under the viaduct. While the younger communities were still the majority, the demography was diversified in terms of profession, age, gender, and education, among other apparent labels of classification<sup>57</sup>. The capacity of diversity that the MS classes enabled under the viaduct resembled what I experienced in the plaza and contrasted strongly with my solo experiment at the skate site.

Similar to the participants' accounts whether under the viaduct or in the plaza, as an individual, I was dancing alone, but as an individual body I was not limited to my materiality; I was the visceral component of the collectivity. Susan Leigh Foster (2008) explains how kinesthetic empathy allows an individual body to feel other moving bodies and evoke similar responsive actions. Through the constant visual, sensory, and corporeal interactions with others, I received a collective genuineness, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, profession, or physicality, among other factors. As theorised in Chapter Three, I felt an impulse to imitate the others, both the moving and the affect, not in the exact equivalent way but in the sense of

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<sup>57</sup> According to MS' internal surveys and the description on the fund-raising link <https://www.zeczec.com/projects/mondayschool> (Accessed 10 December 2018).

creating and continuing what had been perceived in the space. When 'I' and others were moving together, the pleasure of co-creating and co-filling was aroused by the contact from MiQing. The demonstration of diverse bodies simultaneously triggered and reinforced a desire for my body to act and react as genuinely as possible. MS' filling dynamic was kinetically contagious. From what I observed and felt, each body aspired to fill the space and to fill a disclosed self into space. This collective aspiration created a safe place to be diverse and even more devoted.

## **6.2 MS' Choreographic Interactions: A Paradoxical Embodiment of Concurrent Blurring and Varying**

MS blurs the private and the public with its intention of supporting a safe platform for expression in a public space. Various tasks in MS lead the participants to use their bodies, not to exert or perform certain techniques, but to bridge body and emotion and the perception of space. MS generates the spiral civic energy of MiQing that absorbs, and the collective bodies are filled and expanded by the contingently singular bodies in the urban settings. Then, diversity surfaces. The meaning of the phenomenon of diversity does not end with showcasing the differences. More profoundly and paradoxically, it conjures up the vague bodies with disappearing boundaries. When my body constantly intended to reach beyond its boundary on the courses, it extended into the space. The interface between body and space could not be discerned precisely. As Portuguese philosopher José Gil (2006: 26) succinctly indicates, when gestures or movements are made they project an extension of the space, they 'do not stop at the frontier of the body itself'.<sup>58</sup> Space and body mingled, so does one body with another body and the other bodies. Nigel Stewart (2010: 35) depicts a similar experience of the beautiful forming of a bodyscape: 'an intertwining of the elements of the world that surround the dancer and the dancer as he or she moves in those elements'. Body, city, situated materialities, and

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<sup>58</sup> I also deployed Gil's (2006) ideas of the externalised body and the internalised space to explain the whirling energy in Chapter Five.

emerging dynamics interfaced. In MS, they further breached the boundaries between each and other.

My participatory experiences in MS informed me a sense of **vagueness** with the indeterminate difference of other bodies that my body moved with and felt. The indeterminate difference means a contingent interfering interaction between the presence and absence of layered awareness, in which a moving body is clearly perceived into and is also perceiving within different kinesthetic levels in a certain temporal locality. The indeterminate difference of the vagueness resonates with **Richard Shusterman's** (2009) seminal understanding of the complexity of somatic intentionality. However, my experimental experiences in MS inform a more chaotic, indiscernible and elusive operation. I will lay out the discrepancy as analytically contemplating vagueness in the following.

From my experience, at least three phenomena of the vagueness are facilitated by the indeterminate difference. First, the vision is not predominant in the recognition of difference. The vagueness emerges when seeing is overridden by the feeling of moving. In MS, I did notice differences of appearance and visual categorising before the class had begun. Once into the field of moving, I barely paid attention to the visual categorisation of the body/the person. The vagueness surfaced when the seen difference started to recede, the focused consciousness dispersed and was diffusing all over the body, not relying exclusively on the vision or a particular sensory pathway.

Secondly, the boundaries between the implicit, the explicit and the reflective somatic awareness are blurring. Shusterman distinguishes somatic intentionality into four levels by the degree to which the somatic consciousness

or sensation is perceived and the presence of how one deploys the perceived perception to produce ongoing movements (Shusterman, 2012: 55). Shusterman also suggests that the explicit and the reflective somatic perception can blend or overlap into each other (Shusterman, 2009: 14). I experienced the level of somatic senses, however, when my body was mingled in a certain locality with other bodies, the explicit and the reflective consciousness did not blend, these afore-recognised levelled consciousness were also blurring as if they melted into a state of implicit unconsciousness. It is not to say that there was a specific moment the explicit and reflective somatic perceptions were disappearing to allow the next level to emerge. It was more in the proximity where I was conscious of the chaotic storm of the consciousness and I allowed or in fact was suspended from the somatic consciousness. I yielded to my body's own moving in the encountered materialities where/when I was no longer (or capable of being) aware of which level it was operating. The above moments and movements of feeling were jagged, emerging and submerging according to what the body had led to during its contact dynamic.

The experience encourages me to rethink the level proposed by Shusterman and believe that the vagueness of somatic awareness may result in the contingent quality of the collective moving in the urban setting that departs from what Shusterman has been experiencing via the systemised and sometimes individually conducted bodily practices such as yoga, Feldenkrais Method, and mostly (corpo)realised in the enclosed space (Shusterman, 2008). Moving with other bodies in MS, I perceived and acknowledged the kinesthesia levels and the differences in the various material and corporeal intersections. However, they were present in an instant and chaotic whirling way.

This capricious and immediate congregation subverts certain tangible, discernible and hierarchical ways of perceiving as Shusterman formulates. And this brings us to the third vagueness that arrives within the indeterminate difference: the undefined/ discernible bodies. When my body was engaged and thrown into the spiral, the awareness could not afford to continue realising the difference to interact with it, it only acts upon whenever it felt like to. The focus I perceived in my moving body (when I was able to be explicitly and reflectively aware) was on the interaction rather than discerning. This predominancy revokes a discursive definition of a body; a precise way of addressing the difference of the encountered body was futile.

The diversity in MiQing is beyond the dominant system of vision. Because of the focus on body experiencing body and space, the arriving moments of mindfulness and border blurring in MS transforms the vision-dominated urban space of mundane encounters and meetings into a corporeal one. Yang recalled that during a class under Xinsheng Viaduct led by a Taiwanese female dancer from Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, participants were invited to stand at the furthest end of each side of the space, close their eyes, then run to each other as fast as possible. Two male participants boldly tossed their bodies into space and fearlessly kept running to each other. Finally, they crashed together. One of the participants even lost a tooth due to the huge and sudden impact. Given the capacity of this place and the encouragement of a sense of experiment, these two bodies dared to clash and therefore created not only a foreseeable and embodied precarious moment but also a supreme manifestation of feeling the given space and the collective bodies. According to Yang, these two participants were immediately taken care of, as MS was committed to the engaged 'every-body' attentively and carefully. No one was frightened and never came back again. On the contrary, this class was

in huge demand. Participants asked for more opportunities to attend the class,<sup>59</sup> and perhaps, to fervently feel and blend their bodies. The decision to let your body lead innovates how each body perceives and reacts to other bodies. The courage to experiment further with one's body and to reveal more in urban space is cultivated by MS.

Initiated by the intention to experimentally and experientially reveal more of one's self and engage more of the body, diversity in MS is not defined by how many readable and recognisable differences there are, but by how many feelings and experiences the body is willing to manifest and practise. As diversity is visually increased to a degree where difference becomes exhausted and futile, the diverse bodies become vague. The vagueness of various bodies is felt, perceived and experienced. A paradox of diversity thus emerges. I do not claim that differences disappear, what I aim to suggest broadly is the conventional conflicts, socially constructed discomfort from encountering differences, become vague to the viewer. The body is influencing and being influenced by the bodies and the space surrounding it. The difference between bodies, felt by Shentigan's contact through MiQing, become an individual 'experience' not a representation/label of generalisation, which simultaneously again invites and generates diversity. Through the interactive contacting, body and space become vague while they are also varying from time to time.

It may seem counter-intuitive that this process manifests the operation of MiQing's diversity, which is constantly blending singularity and similarity, transforming the meaning of the body and that of the space historically. MiQing's solid concentration on the body and its contact point out a complicated way in which diversity involves the vagueness of body versus the varying body, both undergoing urban environmental experiences. By looking at the capricious and constant moving body in a particular temporal and spatial context, I aim to emphasise that diversity not only speaks to the volume of visual categorisations and the ideologies I referred

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<sup>59</sup> Yang's remarks on 06/01/2019.

to previously. More aggressively, it concerns a way of moving and redefining that creates the vague bodies and promotes the variation of bodies at the same time.

### **Vagueness in the Overlapping Bodies**

In Chapter Five, the body in MS is the unreadable text, with the illegible attribute that allows the body to write, to create, to contact, to absorb 'differences'. Borders between the genres of dance, compared to other neighbour movement communities, the squared dancing entities, become loose due to the introduction of MS' chaotic bodies, obscuring the fixed definition of dance. The designated convention of dance is released on the site, so is the definition of the space. The spiral civic energy formed by MS' urban choreography did not privilege a certain physicality, but the congregation of various bodies. The historical imperative of CKSMH has been shaken by the urban residents for their civic mundanity, which is radicalised more by MS since it brings into it the bodies that cannot be fit into the expected square movement groups of the site, such as the hip-hop young college students or the senior silver couples of the social dance community. MS broadens the spectrum of the body and the use of the space by redefining dance. The space is more profoundly shared and more unconventionally shared with a body beyond the scope of those existing bodies 'in the square' at CKSMH.

The diversity that MiQing circulates reflects the transforming of meaning of space. Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) succinctly points out personal perceptions and repeated experiences of a space produce emotional attachments by linking the space to certain activities and memories, which renders meaning and representational understanding of the space. CKSMH was built for the governorship of *Chiang Kai-Shek*. It purported authority and authenticity by the location and the delicate design of the architecture. Huang's (2004) research finds that initially CKSMH did not welcome and accommodate as many visitors as it does now, and activities and spaces for the public were limited and censored. After 1969, as wedding photography began to emerge, people started to seek its landscapes and architecture, which complemented their wedding



photos, and CKSMH gradually opened up to the public (Lu, 2013). The exhibitions held in CKSMH have been diversified by various themes including a humanitarian photo exhibition, a dinosaur display, the one hundred looks of contemporary women, the award gallery of indigenous child artists, among others.<sup>60</sup> The kaleidoscopic incorporation of disparate and different activities and bodies in the space of CKSMH blurs the historical and political definition in which the space used to be positioned. Bodies come to occupy the space for various purposes and manifest individual content and form that interface and, due to the layered uses of the site, these bodies overlap. A mother's body may be encountered in the award gallery, could be found in the one hundred looks of contemporary women, and perhaps, as I did meet a participant who is a mother, could also be dancing in MS.

### **Varying Bodies in the Interstitial Liminality**

Within the vagueness of body, the body is still varying and varied by its every contact with other bodies, space, time, materiality, and the combination of the altogether and in-between. The in-between supports the vagueness of body as it is a dynamic process, which means vague-ing requires varying and vice versa. The process of a varying body brings forth a sense and an enactment of liminality, where a body is indiscernible and is in a transition from the current contact and exploration to the uncertainty and the potentiality of being transformed and transforming by a subsequent contact. The liminal body carries a transformative capacity for the body itself, for the space it encounters and the society it engages with – the outcome and initiative of the diversity of MS' MiQing. It is hard to tell when the vagueness ends and where the varying body arises, the two exercises are intertwining ceaselessly.

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<sup>60</sup> Exhibitions held in CKSMH: [https://www.cksmh.gov.tw/activitysoonlist\\_369.html](https://www.cksmh.gov.tw/activitysoonlist_369.html) (Accessed 07 May 2020). Please also see Chapter Six on the relation between the variety of exhibitions and the redefinition of space.

Since **Arnold van Gennep** introduced liminality in 1909, the term has been associated beyond ritual or ceremonial practices of effective and affective social actions to speak to the qualities of ambiguity, the processes of transforming and the experience of uncertainty in the passage of transition (Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1995, Teodorescu and Calin, 2015). When dancing in MS, a sense of transition took place as the individual kinesthetic and the collective body was intertwining and the public and the private was interfacing in the vagueness. This feeling of moving within transition, however, was not linearised as a passage or a process assumed in the original application of liminality. The non-linear experience of transition in MS was chaotic, jagged and filled with fluid junctions generated by the materialities and lived corporealities.

I deploy the concept of liminality to emphasise the transitional sensation of time and the subversive power it has been well discussed, and what I shall add on is the physical and spatial configurations of how transforming takes place by and within my body. The viscosity of MS' MiQing analysed in the previous chapter differentiates this liminality as an interstitial one since the feeling of transformation originated from the friction of interactive body-environment. When the bodies in MS contact and squeeze into interstitial gaps, transformation in the transitional sense of time and space is not a passage-like shape due to a specific form of designated steps, but spontaneous loose curves. These loose whirls of bodily contact produce the transformation in pieces of various material and spatial scales and capacities. In other words, the transformative experiences of an individual/a body conjure out of the on-site dynamic uncertainty of the time-space-body, not exclusively in a temporal progression of experiencing.

The subtle and trivial individual bodily experiences, as vibrant as they can be, encourage new and open personal and socio-political relationships by the multiple points of contact, conflict, confusion, and disorientation and even uncomfortable feeling of the space needed for navigating oneself in the formation of identity (Stevens, 2006: 88-89). The indeterminate dynamics of interacting constantly inserts possibility, the openness of the physical, the temporal and the spatial, and draws connections between diverse and changing lived realities during the processes of spatial and corporeal production and becoming (Knopp, 2004; March 2021). Such production via the transformative indeterminacy may cast an 'indirect effect on the political' although without directly claiming or intending to do so. Being 'an experimental extension of our social, cultural and political milieu', the performing of liminality is capable of providing an innovative intervention that rebels akin to the political corporeal potentiality the varying bodies in MS may possess (Broadhurst, 1999: 2).

However, it is worth noting that apart from the visceral and spatial textures of the interstitial liminality, the transformative transition I felt and moved within in MS does not assume, or say predict a result of transformation. By this I mean, firstly, it is not a one-direction passage; secondly, a complete transformation cannot be expected in the interstitial liminality. During the transition, a body and an individual is not moving forward to a destination, an intention or expectation of being transformed. As it is not a linear passage, the time-space-body does not follow a procedural process to arrive at a certain goal but linger and contact in between. As the liminal scene in MS is chaotic, it does not guarantee a certain direction but open up to contingencies. Thus, an expectation of being transformed is not assumed in the transitional moving. The multiple

intersectional points of body, space and time is a way of contacting, without the intention to be transform, that allows constant and contingent identity forming related to locating the dynamically chaotic quality of Taiwaneseeseness.

The liminal embodiment by the bodies in MS intriguingly reflects the architectural renovation that is planned to start soon. A new underpass that will connect CKSMH with the essential public transportation in Taipei, the MRT, will be completed in 2026.<sup>61</sup> The construction manifests the opening and transforming process of CKSMH, across which CKSMH does not only bear the political history of Taiwan, it also functions as the liminal space where, moment by moment, each individual experiences the transitional nonlinear travel between the private and the public, the individual and the collective. Through the increasing incorporation of influxes of body, experience, and affect situated and situating in interstitial mundane life, as reflected and reinforced by the introduction of MS' MiQing, CKSMH awaits more and more interfacing with the body and the space.



**Figure 17** The design of the tunnel. Source: Taiwan News (2019).

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<sup>61</sup> See: <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/ch/news/3796866> (Accessed 10 May 2020).



**Figure 18** The design of the tunnel connected to the main building of CKSMH. Source: Taiwan News (2019).

MS decreases the difficulty of participating and increases the possibility of incorporating more diversity which, according to the observations of LPCP and an informal survey of participants, was reflected by the demographic ranging from 7 years old to 75 years old, from students to security guards, from Taiwanese to French, from those of Han ethnicity to the indigenous population. What intrigues me is that this diversity manifested by the bodies in MS also corresponds to the collective and organisational materialities in the region. The area in which CKSMH is located also accommodates a variety of urban locations, organisations, such as NGO Queer Rainbow Health and Culture Centre (彩虹酷兒健康文化中心) and Indigenous Languages Research and Development Centre (原住民族語言發展研究中心). There is also a famous traditional market, Nanmen market (南門市場), diagonally across from CKSMH, opposite which are several Western pubs frequented by Western visitors or residents. Moreover, the famous Ketagalan Boulevard (凱達格蘭大道), discussed in Chapter Six, is connected to the south side of CKSMH. By filling itself into urban space, MS creates an open and socially interdisciplinary territory for participants and thus yields a diverse space that affords individual emotions, communal affinity and both collective and individual expression.

From what I observed and experienced in the area of CKSMH, I posit that the operation of MiQing dynamic promotes the diversity of bodies, a way of moving that varies and blurs corporealities at the same time. The paradox of the body of MS in the urban environment has led me to think of Taiwanese-ness as a piece of choreography that has cultivated a tendency of moving, the diversifying of body and space. In Chapter Five, I felt and witnessed the intervention of the spiral civic energy, on which CKSMH has transformed from being a political representation of authentic governorship to a well-used place for various assemblies for mundane activities. In Chapter Seven, I will lay out how the civic energy evolves into a cultivated movement tendency of diversity that relates to the progression of appreciation of diversity in Taiwan.

### 6.3 Societal Choreographic Representations: Urban Contact and Conflict of Floating/Diversifying Body-Space

In considering diversity, Loden and Rosener's (1991) idea of the diversity wheel and the

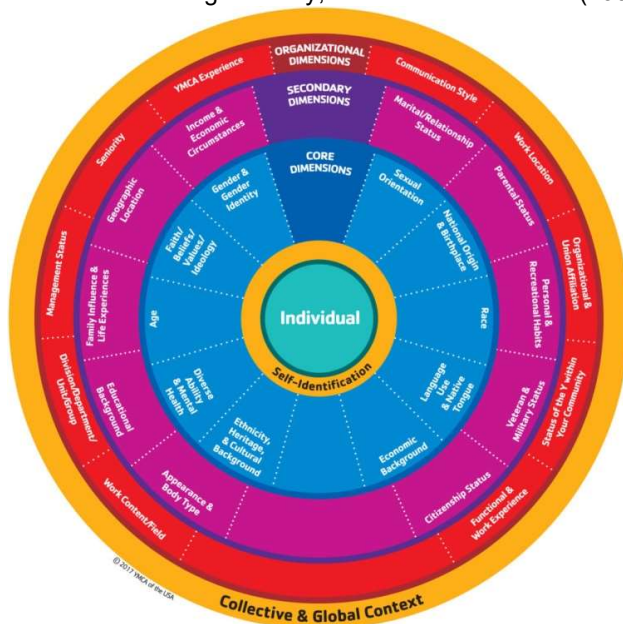


Figure 19 Dimensions of diversity. Source: Merrimack Valley YMCA (2017).

adapted chart by the YMCA of the USA provides a concise panorama of the dimensions of diversity<sup>62</sup>. While the wheel is intended to locate possible composing genres of diversity, the complex dynamic overlapping of each community is hard to reflect in the static chart. This wheel exhibits components that are readable and writable; they co-exist in a static manner within an

<sup>62</sup> Further details on the diversity of YMCA can be found at: <https://www.mvymca.org/about-us/diversity-inclusion-global-engagement/> (Accessed 13 May 2020).

umbrella-like circle. The diversity in MS by MiQing is more chaotic and vibrant. While there are clearly defined different bodies in MS, the gradual, constant, and active contact of body blurs these varying and varied bodies into a wider mixture. Thus, discerning readable/labelled bodies becomes less possible; one may see bodies that can hardly to be concluded as a certain genre. Emerging and submerging borders of MiQing present a diversity from and by vagueness, accompanied with multiple overlapping centres, rather than one inclusive circle as seen in the chart, from the viscous accumulation to the civic spiral energy. Blurring and whirling together enable a characterised organic choreography of diversity in MS and through which I locate its reflected social environment, an accommodating liminal process of diversifying body-space in Taiwan. The paradox of diversity observed from the varying and vague body may depict the restless movement of diversity, in terms of the mundane life and the social events, the process of body-space navigating and negotiating in the Taiwanese urban settings.

**MS** has invited a variety of dancing bodies. The two classes I have attended in the open space may each represent a somatic domain and the practice of movement efficiency. The latter is a way of moving inspired by two well-known Belgium dance artists, founders of Fighting Monkey. Across the three years of implementing MS, Taiwanese diasporic dancers have been introduced to the series of courses. Participants have been offered a chance to 'contact' the body techniques from various prestigious dance companies mainly based in European countries, such as Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal, Netherlands Dance Theatre, Peeping Tom dance company among others. By occupying the global dance scene, these dancers may have developed their own dynamics of diverse Taiwaneseness in various spaces. Their engagement in MS enabled participants to contact and flow into the language and space their fused techniques have created, although most of the predominant techniques the dancers operate are the corporeal epistemology of the West. In 2019,

Jecko Siampo, an Indonesian choreographer and dancer, visited MS and shared his technique, animal pop, derived from research on animal movements, the dwelled environment and the local religion. I anticipate to see more inclusion of other Asian and local bodily knowledge in the future.

I would like to acknowledge that while I am inspired by the diverse attribute of MiQing of MS and my corporeal phenomena of the understanding of the landscape of diversity in Taiwan, I realise that diversity in MS is not a completed project, which also reflects the diversifying body-space of Taiwan. For example, people with physical and mental disabilities were not present in those classes I attended. The Vietnamese, Philippine, Indonesian and Thai communities that make up the majority of labour immigrants, around 700,000 immigrants out of the total population of 23 million,<sup>63</sup> also appeared to be absent from what I observed in the classes. I also need to note that the phenomenon of diversity portrayed by and moving in MiQing has long taken place in Taiwan. It is not a recently emerging scene. It would be tempting to claim that the advent of MS and its MiQing marks the advent of diversity of Taiwan. Due to the colonial, postcolonial and developmental histories, and its transitional and political geographies, Taiwan has been the space opening up for diverse and disparate bodies and the embodied cultures. What I want to do with MiQing is to use the discovered dynamics to examine the recent and perhaps more active activities of diversifying body-space in Taiwan that resonates with the moving and movements in MS.

In Chapter Two, I discussed one of the formulas for the proposition of Taiwanese-ness by Chiu (2003a) is to map out the contingent context. She indicates that Taiwanese-ness is a relative 'concept'. The paradox of diversity as the attribute of the 'diverse' Taiwan is more than a concept of contingencies. It is the act, the doing of contingencies arising from the always

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<sup>63</sup> Statistics from the National Development Council

[https://www.ndc.gov.tw/Content\\_List.aspx?n=421CC0712EC314BD](https://www.ndc.gov.tw/Content_List.aspx?n=421CC0712EC314BD) (Accessed 22 May 2020).



varying and varied bodies on the island. I propose the diversity of Taiwanese-ness is processing the desire and force to contact and shift the focus on what the diverse bodies have experienced and realised from only discursively addressing those diverse bodies and experiences. This also relates to the traumas each composing community of diversity in Taiwan has experienced that lends the diversifying quality of Taiwanese-ness with more uniqueness. I will address this in more detail in Chapter Nine, analysing how the action of care connects to this attribute.

CKSMH has turned into a space that accommodates the diversity that has grown in Taiwan as indicated by the civic energy and also by the vibrant political activities on site. Since the first political movement in 1988, 'the 329 re-election of congress torch running' (329 國會改選聖火慢跑) event took place, CKSMH has become a popular site for all kinds of activism. Various forms of gathering in spaces such as the Democracy Square in CKSMH are meant to promote and protect the values, identity, and rights of various communities (Lu, 2013). This phenomenon displays identifications with different communities.

As already mentioned, CKSMH becomes a site of parade and demonstration. The voguing body I saw at MS struck me as a powerfully relevant example that demonstrated a transformative phenomenon in Taiwan in relation to sexuality and diversity. Throughout my experiences, while attending classes of different genres, gender is linked to the content of the class, which also assumes certain sexual resonances. To use the voguing example, this genre of dance is usually associated with the gay community and not often seen in a public space. Dance and the studio are predominantly gendered. There is seldom a boy in a ballet class in Taiwan. In a Vogue or LA-style class, female participants make up the majority. There are male participants as well; they usually wear cropped tops and some of them may wear wigs as well. MS is the first class that I have ever attended which encompasses diverse demographics in terms of age, gender, physicality, occupation and perhaps sexual orientation<sup>64</sup>. This emerging

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<sup>64</sup> The remark of diverse demographics was based on my observations, informal conversations with

care of diversity at MS echoes the emerging care and understanding of sexuality in Taiwan and, by extension, the enactment of Asia's first same-sex marriage law.

Although the petition of same-sex marriage was first introduced in Taiwan in the late 1980s, awareness had not been seriously raised until 2013, when the idea of 'diversified family structures' came to the scene. After five years, Taiwan had its first referendum on a same-sex marriage bill in 2018. Because of a strong history of activism triggered by colonialism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, et cetera, Taiwan is an Asian country bearing highly vibrant energy in terms of all types of resistance and thus has become the most LGBT-friendly country in Asia. It holds the most renowned same-sex parade among East and Southeast Asian countries, which attracts a tremendous number of participants from around the world.<sup>65</sup>

Taiwan also carries an important role in terms of influence on the development of LGBT rights among other Asian countries (Damm, 2018). The parade in 2018 was just right before the referendum of the draft bill. There were a campaign and a petition called 'I am straight, I am for a same-sex marriage law'. There was also a video circulating on the internet, telling the story of a mother whose biggest wish was that her daughter could marry her female partner legally and would not need to be worried about being discriminated against by society because of her sexuality. These activities that promote a sense of care, consideration, thoughtfulness, and empathy demonstrate an emerging appreciation of equality and diversity.

One hundred and thirty thousand people participated in the parade and this was the first event in Asian countries in terms of LGBT rights. All the efforts towards fulfilling Taiwanese

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participations (04/01/2019, 16/01/2019, 17/1/2019, 26/05/2019) and an internal survey conducted by MS' administration. Relevant public information could be found in the fundraising website <https://www.zeczec.com/projects/mondayschool> (Accessed 26 December 2018).

<sup>65</sup> See: <https://www.nst.com.my/world/2018/10/425771/over-130000-march-asias-largest-gay-pride-parade-taiwan> (Accessed 23 May2020).

values around inclusiveness has finally made Taiwan the first country in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage.

The negotiation for diversity has not been a smooth journey in Taiwan. In 2017, the indigenous community initiated a protest on Ketagalan Boulevard, the avenue named after the indigenous Ketagalan ethnic group. The demonstration was triggered by the proposal of *Regulations for Demarcating Indigenous Traditional Territories*, which was perceived as a violent policy that deprived the indigenous population of not only their homeland, but also their cultural values.



Figure 20 Protest Scene. Source: United Daily News (2017).

What occupied the boulevard were not only the bodies but also the materialities the bodies produced. A line-up of performances took place, from drama, music to dance and physical theatre. There were also visual arts on the streets used to pronounce feelings and affects. Installations were set on the ground or attached to boards that accommodated the protesters, who decided to live and occupy the space regardless of legal procedures to assemble the bodies. The intention was to occupy the space as much and as rebelliously as possible, manifesting both the singularity of living and the similarity of the right to live in a chosen and

valued way. By contacting and conflicting, the varying bodies were purposefully moving disparately, while the numerous differences and the shared mundanity and affects of the living body and the lived body started to blur the varying boundaries and evoked a sense of vagueness. The unexpected body and the usage of the space became the constituent narratives of the urban geography, where diversity is strongly felt by the individuality of experiences, not of appearances.



Figure 21 Protest Scene. Source: Mayaw Biho (2017).

This diffusion of diversity in the city is later embodied by the incident where the Taiwan Railways announced its consideration of formally prohibiting sitting in the hall of Taipei Main Station (TMS). The hall of Taipei Main Station used to be the gathering space for the labour immigrants. Before the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of immigrants would sit on the floor of the hall, socialising and relaxing in this public space. The pandemic intervened into this sitting activity on 29th February 2020, and despite the lifting of gathering restrictions, the prohibition continued, allegedly to maintain cleanliness in the hall.

The ruling was later challenged as discriminatory towards labour immigrants and also an act of inhibiting diversity, the value that the Taiwanese cherish the most.

Taipei Main Station 台北車站 is the busiest transportation meeting spot in Taipei and Taiwan, embracing influxes of people and communication from all over Taiwan. Due to its amalgamation of connections and open architectural layout, the labour immigrants started to assemble in the main hall of TMS and without any seating facilities, they sit on the ground. The seated demographic here is diverse including not only the labour immigrants mostly from the aforementioned nations, but also Taiwanese and foreigners from other ethnicities and countries. A Korean actor, Singu (신구 申久) hosting a well-known Korean reality show *Grandpas Over Flowers* (花樣爺爺) was impressed by the scene, saying 'we do not have the similar space in Korea, the waiting passengers with the absence of chairs can sit on the floor, they can read or sleep, every piece of space is open and free, it is cool' (my translation) (長工 T, 2020).<sup>66</sup> On 23rd May 2020, people were assembled in the hall to protest against the sitting prohibition by sitting in the hall of Taipei Main Station, believing the freedom to sit increases the diversity of



Figure 22 Seated crowds in Main Hall. Source: One-Forty organisation (2020).

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<sup>66</sup> Original texts: 在韓國我們沒有像這樣的空間吧？候車的人們沒有椅子席地而坐，可以睡覺可以看書，每一個空間都是開放的、自由的！很帥！！

the city through the created space and the incorporated body that facilitate contact with others in a mundane and accessible way.

However, mundanity and accessibility do not reassure a static and fixed development of diversifying body-space, as it is liminal not final on the island. MiQing's contact creates the constellation of the body and its histories that interacts in the three-dimensional space, where the depth of relationships are highlighted rather than the occupying and operating elements. That is to say, the on-going experiences are the focus of perception of diverse installation in the space. In Adorno's (1973: 162) constellation, the equal generation of connection between each star of historicity is not clearly stated. I also incorporate the rhizome by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to further elaborate how the multiple centres of the engaging/ed bodies in the diversity relate to each other. The converging creates another generation of outreaching roots that seeks another chance to meet and produce (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 8). In this route of creating, diversity is extended and driven by the desire to contact in the next coming window. The combination of constellation and rhizome is meant to capture how diversity in Taiwan appears, continuous, equal, dialectic in moving and both the releasing and retrieving of the acknowledgement of differences.

While both of the spatial considerations illuminate how MiQing lays out diversity in an unstable, chaotic, woven, broad, and stereoscopic way, how each meeting or component constructing the relations and connections is not fully determined. The 通 (tōng, floating in and out, exchanging) proposed by the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi is useful to think about the above embodiment of the on-going project of diversity in Taiwan (Lai, 2019: 165-166). 通 indicates the incessant movement of floating in and out between each existence. In such interactions, the recognition of the other is not only released but encouraged to disappear, both conceptually and physically. It emphasises exchanges and the exchanging becomes the purpose and act of 通. From what I have observed in MiQing, the paradox of diversity, the

shifting and exchanging between the vague and varying bodies reflects and reinforces diversity in Taiwan, and perhaps such diversity is where the quality of Taiwanese-ness resides.

## **Conclusion**

MS, without a recognisable appearance or a determinative dance content, encompasses varying bodies, manifested by the fact that a majority of these bodies also had similar moving experiences as those of the neighbouring dance communities spotted at CKSMH. You might find someone with a street dance background next to you, or someone also enjoying social dance, or citizens who may share the same interest with the groups of the square shape, and even individuals who have never approached any type of bodily practice next to you<sup>67</sup>. MS blurs the boundaries that those squares habitually create as well as dance genres and the gap between generations.

Apart from this opening up of definition, the spiral, circular shape is more welcoming than the square shape formed by other communities. As mentioned before, In CKSMH, MS was held adjacent to the boulevard Aiguo East Road, next to an intersection of three roads. Reinforced by an environment of space and wide-open views, MS, while moving and spinning, drew the attention of pedestrians. They could easily come closer and were infected by a sense of participation. There were indeed people asking to attend the next time, according to Yang<sup>68</sup>. The square in other groups delineates a clear boundary between who is inside the community and who is outside the community. While the territory of the square is clearly announced, MS, through its whirling power MiQing, absorbs diverse bodies persistently and the body in MS keeps its contact as well as conflict, in a more positive sense such as the crash of body described above, with the various introductions of corporeality in the urban setting. MS is intended to provide the care of diversity through MiQing dynamic. The phenomenon of

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<sup>67</sup> Informal conversations with participants on 07/01/2019 and 14/01/2019.

<sup>68</sup> Informal conversations with her after the class on 07/01/2019.

diversifying body and space pins down and, perhaps, indirectly enhances the progression of appreciating diversity in Taiwan, which has been reified by the paradoxical urban bodies.



## Chapter Seven

### Gender-Empowering Movements of MiQing Dynamics

The diversity welcomed by MS' contact with the space and the engaged and engaging individuals manifests the dynamic interactions, interfacing and intertwining of the energy of the private and that of the public. What MS' MiQing generates and what is embodied by the moving bodies resonates with the Taiwan's ongoing pursuit to become a more inclusive society. The diversity of a community can empower individuals to reconsider or subvert the imposed expectations of their and others' social roles due to communicating, understanding and internalising the encountered disparity. When MS on MiQing dynamics absorbs more bodies, the singularity among the community assists to foster a sensibility of contact that feels 'the' body or 'the' bodies coming towards oneself, surrendering the tendency to judge by the appearance of differences and its representations. Feeling by contact does not naively mean to avoid conflicts. In fact, conflicts do arise from the process of filling in, where an individual is constantly invited and encouraged to navigate through and negotiate with the unexpected feeling and moving with varying and vague bodies.

MS' less threatening and more welcoming practice prompts its participants to gradually explore and process their knowing of the people, the space and the feeling through the informing bodies, instead of the socially constructed assumptions or assumed conventions, especially in terms of gender. I have delineated previously the skatepark under the viaduct is predominantly used for skateboarding and basketball playing, conventionally considered masculine practices (Carr, 2017; Liao, 2004). Joe Sanders (1996: 14) points out the architectural materiality evokes a manly sense because of the texture and the environments where these materials are processed by male workers. A gendered space under the viaduct, and the seemingly incompatible gendered bodies are reinforced by the materialities in this

urban setting such as steel, metal, and concrete, conventionally attributed with masculinity due to the reminiscence of labour mainly done by male construction workers. A strong association between the existence of various male activities and their dominant contributions to the city stands out.

Besides resisting the velocity of economic development in the city, the viscous assemblage of MiQing of MS also disturbed the embedded gendered expectations of space and body. MiQing produces the movement pattern of empowerment for genders by reconfiguring the movement distribution and density of female bodies and male bodies. Movement distribution refers to how a body allocates its movements all over the body and into the engaged space. Movement density indicates how that body's volumes of movements vary in both the interior corporeal and exterior environmental spaces. The distribution and density of movement cultivation manifests a dynamically situated self in a situated environment. Through this process individuals obtain the thought and the act of power due to the knowing and thinking body as it contacts and perceives. The practice of MS is intended to provide a safe place to experiment and experience such contact in urban settings and the potentially arising conflicts.

The analyses of this chapter unfold first with my corporeal accounts of participating in MS. In the second layer, I delineate an incident of sexual harassment in MS, where I believe MiQing's diverse and highly sensory environments encourages the empowerment of women. It is worth noting that the aim of my analysis throughout is to reconsider the gendered space with the support of how bodies act and react on the spiral absorbing energy of MiQing. Further, perhaps there is an ambition to provoke critical discussion on the imperative of designed urban spaces that reinforces stereotypes of genders, which often becomes violent to both as well. Moral responsibilities, the aftermath of psychological factors, and other relevant and vital considerations are beyond what this research is able to accommodate. In the final layer, I bridge the movements of empowerment through MiQing of MS with the social phenomenon of

empowering both women and men in Taiwan to further locate the kinesthetic Taiwaneseess as the gender-empowering choreography.

### **7.1 My Physical/Geographical Experiences: A Public Female Body**

Recalling my experiences of dancing in various studios and outdoor environments in different cities, I feel that MS' bodily gathering engenders a sense of trust not easily seen in an urban context. This open-air, inclusive space MS has formed, sometimes filled with the circular viscosity of playful resistance, assembled to reconsider the advancing speed of the developmentalism in Taiwan and that of the technology required both for the localised modern life and the economic identity presented globally. At other times, it is infused with transformative civic power, the autonomous energy composed of the entanglement formed by the competing private and public sphere of social living, which enhances a sense of freedom and promotes the pursuit of it. The dynamics of expressing, negotiating, and challenging build up an environment that bears trust. We dance together in an unfamiliar environment, but it is 'okay' because we are together.

As described in the previous chapter, one male participant felt a sense of security and home that allowed him to dance for himself and dance out of himself freely, without worrying about being judged. This trust from togetherness also allows the participants to respond genuinely and understand more about her or his body and sensations. This understanding of body and sensation is particularly important for MS, as Yang indicated. Recollecting the constraints my body inevitably exhibited in the skatepark, I found it was also a result of being a female body in an urban place, a darker space in particular beneath the viaduct. When dancing with the congregating bodies at the plaza, I felt safe and I trusted what the environment supported me to express what I was thinking and corporealise what I intended to.

By comparing various indexes of freedom, mainly in different Eastern European countries, **Adam Okulicz-Kozaryn** indicates that the emphasis on the values of self-

expression significantly prioritises the tolerance of diversity, which is very likely to induce an atmosphere of trust (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2014). However, it is worth noting that the diversity of a community may not generate trust across different ethnic groups. For example, investigating the Chinese and the South Asian residents in a small town in Hong Kong, Tina Rochelle (2015) found that increasing ethnic diversity does not always enhance understanding of differences and result in increased trust as identified in previous studies in Western contexts.

I raise this relation of trust and ethnic diversity now for several reasons. First, I would like to emphasise that the sense of trust I felt and moved within MS, partially resulted from the diversity of varying and vague bodies in terms of the identifications of body, movement and dance as discussed previously. Second, I posit it was the empowering movement that allowed the feeling of security to emerge in the space. Third, I aim to suggest the elements of trust, diversity and empowerment in MS are induced in an interrelated manner rather than a linear order of initiation.

Additionally, ethnic diversity is neither conspicuously nor frequently perceived in MS. Indeed, as an immigrant country, Taiwan is recognised for its ethnic diversity; there are Austronesian, Han, Hakka, South East Asian and European communities in Taiwan (Damm, 2011; Hsieh, 2017). However, the ethnic differences are not always visually apparent partially due to the visual proximity of ethnicities predominating in Taiwan. In the case of MS, the focus of feeling each body released an immediate awareness of appearance. Therefore, the variety of ethnic groups was not covered in the analyses of either the diversifying bodies or empowering movements while I observed participants with European and South Asian backgrounds in MS.



**Figure 23** The skatepark and basketball playground (Shen, Chai Ju, 2019).

This isolation was also reinforced by an embedded sense that the space underneath the bridge is not considered safe for women to linger or wander in, let alone to dance in. When I visited, most of the users were male, and only a limited number of females were sitting, watching, or sliding their fingers along their phones. This gendered place made me feel uncomfortable when exposing myself to the space. Even though there was no direct eye contact, I became wary of potential gazes from others. Such self-consciousness did not occur during the classes at CKSMH. As detailed at the beginning of Chapter Three and analysed in Chapter Five, CKSMH supports the community in a whirling manner that is absorbing from its seemingly unlimited reach of the space. The inviting layout of the space accommodates both female and male bodies in a similar way, though the majority of gender in each movement group varied. Moreover, compared to the under space of the viaduct, CKSMH is a space for moving together, not racing alone with oneself. It is gentle and, perhaps, more neutral both in terms of speed and gender. In the open, wide space with each side clearly visible, and within the company of a diverse group, I felt safe and

not actively 'looked at' as an object.<sup>69</sup> I was free to be in the space with much less thought of being in a minority or being an unexpected user of the space.



Figure 24 The skatepark and the slopes. (Shen, Chai Ju, 2019).

## 7.2 MS' Choreographic Interactions: The Corporeal Power of Female Bodies in Urban Spaces

When looking at the pictures and videos from the classes in the skatepark under the viaduct, I realised this emotional unsettledness might come from being alone in a space that may socially and geographically anticipate male occupation rather than female. Being a woman and alone in the public space regarded/perceived as traditionally masculine gave me a perception of potential danger, a shared consciousness women have developed in navigating the city (Day, 2000). Skateboarding, by executing strenuous movements and requiring physical intensity, tends to be perceived as a masculine embodiment. Carr (2017) points out patriarchy is reproduced through a sense of exclusion directed at female skaters. Male counterparts 'maintained the privilege of masculinity by differentiating and elevating themselves from

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<sup>69</sup> I discussed my feelings as an intimidated Asian female body when I first arrived in Lyon; I found the experiences echoing each other by the power dynamics of looking and being looked at. It is interesting to detect a universal experience of being a female body situated in urban settings that are usually constructed from a male perspective of doing in a city and by a male designer.

females and femininity' (Beal, 1996: 209). Perhaps, the feeling of isolation in a city was intensified by the masculinity of the space and made the boundary of my body much more salient, the difference between myself and the others being intensively sensorially highlighted. My insecurity, as a result, prohibited the action of contacting as I exercised Geo-Choreo here.

**Carr** interviewed female skateboarders in various parks and indicates that participating in this particular sport of transgression and resistance to the convention encourages and empowers the female skateboarders by subverting the fixed images of physicality and presence of the female body and the role of woman in a social context (Carr, 2017; Pomerantz, Currie and Kelly , 2004). However, even with the focus on and the fulfilment by self-expression, most of the interviewed female respondents acknowledged that their male counterparts assert the perception of differences between men and women in terms of appearance, physicality and communication (Carr, 2017: 27). The studied female skateboarders emphasised the need for skate sites that are safe and inclusive for women. Such places should promote and cherish the welcoming openness by which the participants could fully connect with comfort and confidence without being the target of the patriarchal gaze and the accompanying ideological judgments (Carr, 2017: 30-31). With its transgressive character, the requirement for various physicalities and the creative intimacy of the presence and persona in the urban setting, skateboarding benefits the transformative challenge enacted by the female moving body. However, due to the demographic interactions that reinforce the gender bias among the participants, the patriarchal concept of gender role, power, and ability persists apparently despite the involvement of female participants. A skatepark is a competitive place, though the specific way of moving was not originated from the intention to compete but to create (Carr,

2017: 31). Another activity in the neighbourhood under the viaduct may embrace more of a sense of competition. The male body-dominated basketball court also exhibits the space of patriarchy that highlights the physicality and competitiveness expected from the male participants. Liao (2004) observed how Taiwanese female players struggled to find a court that caters for their physical and mental needs engaged in playing basketball. The female participants were significantly aware and reminded of the differences in gender physicality as well as the culture of conducting the game. The absence of female players on the court forced the minority to uncomfortably play with the male participants. Her research also indicated a need for a gender-segregated court. The activities under the viaduct demonstrate the masculinity of certain spaces and the physical activity relevant to them. Even though female participants in both activities may perceive a certain level of authority of self and self-expression, there are still physical, mental, and spatial barriers that keep them from being included in the community and the space it occupies. MS' intrusion into the urbanised and gendered space has shifted first the conventional use of the space and, secondly, the demographic dynamics of the designated space. The blending attribute of MS may be contagious that gradually dilutes the patriarchal culture inherent both in the activities and in the spatial organisation.

Compared to what I experienced in the space, I consider that MS' MiQing subverts the urban settings of the skatepark and CKSMH, both dominated by male citizens or male authority inviting female occupation. As diverse and connected communities were absorbed into MS, moving bodies in MS felt and paid attention to each body then produced a function of 'an ethic of care' (Day, 2000: 103), the empowerment of moving beyond one's comfort zones, whereby MS encouraged bodies to transgress the conventional use of space, both for the female and



male participants. Through the action of such care, MS mobilised an assemblage, and one that aimed to create mutual empowerment for the participating bodies, while forming relationships, even though they were strange to each other. MS introduced a collective attachment to the space by allowing bodies to interact and traverse both individual and communal spaces. Boundaries of gendered body and space were melted. I saw and felt the collectiveness ease the anxiety of being alone and being a minority in the space. By the advent of care, MS supported a communal safety, allowing participants to enjoy more, reveal more, and absorb more to sustain the spiral energy.

**Kristen Day** (2000), after synthesising current scholarship on women and public spaces along with relevant interviews, found that the operation of an ethic of care creates both constraints for women's use of public spaces and possibilities of wider and more active contact with others in public spaces as well. The possibilities lie in women's intention to maintain relationships and the care received from relevant activities, even those built up with strangers (Day, 2000:110-111). The maintenance of relationships and the adherence of caring for others as well as for the self, while constraining women's activity in public spaces in terms of fear and vulnerability, also encourage them to extend their care to encompass the community (Day, 2000:112). When the care is extended, to a degree that the boundaries between perceived individuals and communities blur, it empowers women to take action and change the current conditions (Day, 2000:116-118).

Apart from disrupting the male skateboarding occupation of urban space, MS rebels the image of dancing on the street as the street dance, a particular subversive form of the male dancing/activist body. Although the male body is considered the minority in the artistic form of dance, street dance is where the corporeality of masculinity shines and dominates (Clegg *et al.*,

2016; Holdsworth, 2013). Street dance as suggested by its name is a form or various forms of dance that is danced on the streets, and is often associated with a male body and practice. This is evidenced by the image of gangsters performing hip hop, or a variety of street dance, that marks the hyper-masculinity of coolness in the physicality and characters of their body, by which dancing is associated more with fighting and sport (Holdsworth, 2013: 173). By inviting female bodies into the space, MS diluted the predominant gendered composition of the spaces and the assumed capacity of certain gendered dance through its diversely dynamic and mobile occupation of the streets.

The spontaneous moving and dancing on the streets may conjure up the subversive practice of a flâneur, a man of the modern city, strolling in his city with the underlying intention of redefining the use of the city. By aimlessly wandering in the city, the flâneur may also be attempting to practise a persona of detachment from the crowd of the audience (Ånestad, 2016: 59-61). The male moving body is not for the gaze but for the indefinable take-over of the city where he puts his feet. By introducing a group of dancing bodies, both male and female, MS further disturbs the assumed gender of a body that can move in a public space on the street in the city— capable of subverting conventions and their material counterparts. The assemblage of the street dance communities in CKSMH was initiated by male dancers (Lin and Chang, 2002). Nowadays, more and more female street dancing bodies can be observed in the corridors of the twin buildings. Without apparent disproportion of gendered participants, MS transforms the space of the male-dominated 'street dance' moving scene into the space that accommodates both the flâneur and the flâneuse, or in fact, the space with an individual who aims to occupy the city, to leave traces in the urban terrain in an individual manner.



**Figure 25** The moving bodies in the MS session where the incident happened. In the skatepark. Source: LPCP (2018).

Thus, bodies in MS move the corporeal materialities in an individual way, not an expected loop of predetermined power relationships. The assemblage of MS is enabled to challenge certain privileges in urban space by MiQing's diverse absorbing energy. However, it does not guarantee a safe environment. That being said, confrontation in urban settings is what endorses MS' moving as empowerment that foregrounds a common<sup>70</sup>— a community where the members feel and move together to agree and co-exist. Negotiation conflicts, navigation and agreement are anticipated processes.

There was an MS class featuring touch and sensation. After that class, one female participant approached the instructor of that session and described her discomfort when a male participant took advantage of the given task by sexually harassing the female participant. This young female participant, confused and frightened, came to the instructor and bravely told of her experiences. After this, MS posted advice on respect and awareness of the body on Facebook.<sup>71</sup> When recalling this incident Yang told me that she felt sorry for the female

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<sup>70</sup> See the idea of common by Wu, Rei-Ren (2016) in Chapter Two, page 82.

<sup>71</sup> The texts were posted on 04/12/2018, <https://www.facebook.com/450386341725050/videos/266723650679249/> (Accessed 14 May 2019).

participant and frustrated by the most unwanted situation since this was the extreme opposite of what she has advocated in dancing and the knowledge that dance is able to provide.<sup>72</sup> Continuously reflecting on how to conceptualise this terrible experience in the context of dance and gender empowerment, Yang shared with me that she believed in MS and how MS was a necessary platform for individuals to understand what respecting other bodies means/does as one learns to be alert to their feelings and senses in relation to the urban violence and the empowerment a body, a dancing body, can support.

**The day after the incident**, there was a post on LPCP's Facebook page. There are three main aspects of the post, the unconventional route to dance, the capacity and facilitation provided, and the vision of Monday School. It encapsulated how the diversity that MS had been intended to offer, and the anticipated uncertainty this approach may evoke, as the participants may wonder, 'Is it dance?' (這是舞蹈嗎? zhè-shì-wǔ-dào-ma) Among the various courses, the class where the incident happened was meant to emphasise equality and equity across different genders by touching each other, such as the act of embracing. The trust from the participants was observed and appreciated and that collective agreement on the experiments resonates and reinforces the determination of MS to prioritise safety in the environment. MS was launched to provide a space where one is enabled and able to feel, communicate, and respect each other and oneself. Despite that, the post continued to stress the potentiality of discomfort arising from both the ways in which the 'dance' was delineated, shared and experienced,

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<sup>72</sup> LPCP could not locate the male participant since MS is an open class in an open space without any registration, and people can come and go freely. It was also due to that fact that LPCP was only informed of what had happened after the class. LPCP posted an implicit response/reminder on its Facebook page the next day to invite all participants to enjoy and create a respectful environment for each other in MS.

as well as how the body was feeling and moving in a public space. Through the ability of feeling, communicating, and respecting, it was fine and righteous to say, 'No', and refuse the things that are uncomfortable to the individual. While asking for further dialogue with the female participant involved in the incident, the thoughtful and empathetic post ended by elaborating MS' ardent vision of empowering each individual with the courage to act upon and change the encounter of uncertainty.

However, it is worth noting that encouraging victims, in this case a female participant, to speak out may sometimes load the responsibility onto the victims' shoulders in preventing sexual misconduct. Several studies and the relevant experiential accounts<sup>73</sup> address and emphasise more the importance and imperative of educating gender equality and consent over the assumed 'responsibility of 'saying no' by the victim (Smith, 2018; Berkowitz, 2002). From what I observed and my conversation with Yang, I noticed that she seemed to assume 'saying no' as a courageous enactment by a body. The act of speaking out was encouraged by the keen awareness of a body, which led to the courage and willingness to report. These two characteristics may oftentimes seem limited and even inhibited mostly among women in Taiwan due to social expectations and imperatives (Shen, 2011; Sinacore, Chao and Ho, 2019).

The selected texts from the post:<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> For example, please see the story of an American college student by WOMEN'S eNews <https://womensenews.org/2019/07/sexual-harassment-in-high-school-when-saying-no-is-not-enough/> (Accessed 30 May 2019).

<sup>74</sup> The original post on the Facebook page can be found in: <https://www.facebook.com/450386341725050/videos/266723650679249/> (Accessed 14 May 2019).

各種五味雜成的感受上來，在一兩百個學生中彷彿自己的聲音被湮沒，可能你會鼓起勇氣向前尋求幫助，可能你會默默退開拒絕接受，這些都沒有關係。

品文昨日巧妙地從身體練習討論關於兩性平等，在公共場域探索自己對觸覺的喜歡與否，我的觀察中，最重要的莫過於勇敢說不。**(From the body task to understand gender equality; during the discovery of whether you like 'the' sense of touch or not in a public space, from my (Yang) observation, the most important thing is to be brave to say 'no'.)**

週一學校要鼓勵的除了人人可以舞蹈之外，我們強調的是建立某種面對未知的素養，從肢體訓練裡面對彼此尊重（包括你與你的身體）的課題，**(From these body practices, we learn how to respect each other (including you and your body),** 從手機螢幕前決定到現場參與，對某些人來說是一條很長的過程。但我們知道，當年輕人想改變社會，真正要做的就是「行動」！**(We know that when young people want to change society, what you need to do is to act!)**

Most women in the city are expected (and we also expect ourselves) to stay away from certain places at certain times (Tonkiss, 2005). We oftentimes adjust our mind and body to better adhere to the current system, to protect ourselves. However, the sustainable way may lie in resisting and redefining the system, until one day the change comes. Recalling and relating to how my awareness has grown as an Asian woman in cities, I feel Yang and understand why she addressed the despicable incident with her belief that dance is for everyone, not to only enjoy oneself, but also to empower oneself with a sense of body, the Shentigan in my theoretical term, to protect and protest in a let's-be-real city. MS is a place to gain knowledge, not a class on how to excel at techniques. It is a way to develop tools for gaining knowledge of life.<sup>75</sup> My observation of and perhaps my vision of what Yang said to me has brought me to analytically interpret MS as an invaluable opportunity. In particular, the

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<sup>75</sup> Interview on 30/01/2019.

incident reinforced this belief from Yang and myself to awaken female subjectivity with an ethic of care. This means by encouraging more female bodies in urban settings, MS extensively introduces female, and as discussed earlier, diverse viewpoints, existences, experiences, feelings, the Shentigan to the city. By ongoing accumulation of conflicts and negotiations, with its whirling energy MS is changing the male-dominated space and persistently integrating corporeal experiences as resistant tools to facilitate that change.

The entry of MS may start to overthrow the predetermined power relationship and counter the taken-for-granted occupation and manipulation of space by focusing on how these senses are socially designated in terms of gender and public/private spaces. Yang is devoted to advocating the awareness of how touch, sensations, and movements could reveal and inform both joyful and unpleasant experiences of knowledge through moving and dancing in a city. Women are oftentimes the controlled and gazed-at objects in diverse forms of public space with various imperatives; from what they wear, how they walk and stand, to the proper functional spaces such as department stores, parks they should be allocated to, and the occupations they should be assigned to (Sewell, 2011; Tonkiss, 2005). Under the invitation of MS into a journey of sensing and touching, the prioritizing of vision is loosened in a public space. Moreover, through the focus on maintaining a relationship with each other's moving bodies, a commitment towards caring for each other takes place (Himberg *et al.*, 2018). This means when a body contacts and dances with other bodies, it has the tendency to focus on how each body moves in the proximity of tempo, which enhances an affective proximity, the kinesthetic and emotional empathy. Through and by this process, involved individuals nurture a more mutual attention to the bodily interactions and encourage positive dynamics between one another. This made the spaces of MS, whether under the viaduct or in the plaza, an empowering place for body thinking. Filling the space with close collectiveness, MS undermines the conventional gendered gaze, gendered movements, and gendered spaces.

The incident also exhibits how the male authority or the male body controls public space and how this manipulation embodies the assumed and socially-sustained inferiority of female bodies. Dynamic contact in MiQing confronts the rooted presumption of the proper temporal and spatial presence of the female body, of the boundary of private and public imperatives. Mixed bodies in the community showcase the contingency and unsettlement of how, where, and whose body moves in the city, Taipei. The circling momentum, besides breaking the square of the boundary of the readable and the conventional definition of dancing, deconstructs the square of masculinity by introducing the roundness of female attributes. In this site of a memorial hall dedicated to a male character, Chang, Kai-shek, seated on a square chair and situated in the square campus, MS fills the circle of both female and male bodies and cuts through the demarcation of the male dominance that has been long consolidated in this city of the island.

Similar intention was embodied in 女節 (nǚ-jié, English title: *Taiwan Women Theatre Festival – Oh My Go\_d ( ) ess!*), held in the exact plaza, the Terrace of Theatre in 2017. It was divided into four categories/chapters (章): 育 (foster), 意(mean), 鬧(disturb), 顛(subvert) (my translation).<sup>76</sup> The curator 朱倩儀 (Zhu, Qian-yi) intended to invite the female power into the male space and then to straightforwardly occupy the hidden space of the National Theatre. The critic 黃馨儀 (Huang, Xin-yi) indicates the performance also poses the question of the periphery of the space where women are oftentimes placed in the social context (Huang, 2017). That a female body and its gendered representation are still associated with the private, to the marginal space, and, as a rejected community, they struggle to make their way to the core, the core of power (Huang, 2017). The terrace outside the National Theatre, a symbol of the core, the convention, and the power, under the delivery of the performances becomes the space of

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<sup>76</sup> The programme link <https://edm.npac-ntch.org/2017/TWTF2017/mobile/index.html> (Accessed 26 May 2019).



female occupation and resistance. This complicates the aforementioned male dominance embodied in the space, as the public space and the space of the displayed male controlling body.



**Figure 26** The scene of performances of 女節. Source: 表演藝術評論台 (pareviews.ncafrog) (2017).

The site of the plaza may be perceived as the space of the female moving body of resistance that has been relentlessly negotiating her existence, voice, and performance/ act in the masculine setting. Apart from the shape of the plaza, the roundness of femininity theorised in the design of psychology (Beggs, 2012; Bowker, 2016), the colourful light also suggests a soft and gentle environment that may be more often considered feminine attributes (Marcus and Wang, 2019; Spreiregen and Paz, 2005). The plaza, in fact, was installed with fountains, that would be operated regularly. Gregory Brais Sioui (2019) points out that the incorporation of water in the design of the space could be perceived feminine or evoke a sense of motherland. When looking up '國家戲劇院' (National Theatre) and '噴水池' (play fountains) on Google, a video of children playing on the ground came up first by an author named 'wenwendemama'<sup>77</sup> (which is the pronunciation of 溫溫的媽媽, meaning Wenwen's mother). When I typed in the keywords '中正紀念堂' (CKSMH) and '噴水池' (play fountains), in the first results page, there

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMyuplMHOys> (Accessed 22 May 2020).

were five blog post links out of ten results related to mothering and photos of their children enjoying themselves in the square. Moreover, across the terrace is the wedding street, which is also linked more to the representation of a female body and a space for women rather than the male counterpart. Compared to the viaduct, the materialities in the space of the terrace, where MS has been held as well, seems to secure more the references and preferences for the women occupying and moving.

What is intriguing is that the intertwining masculinity and femininity of the site in CKSMH may not only empower the female community but also the male community. By empowering, I mean 'a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important.' (Page and Czuba, 1999: para. 11.) By blending the space, corporeal presence, ways of moving of genders, and fostering critical contact between individual bodies, MS encourages male participants to rethink the dichotomous expectations of each gender and their bodies. In Chapter Six, I described the private feeling and a sense of security experienced by a male participant. Taking part in MS allowed that male body to perform its intimacy in the public space that conventionally anticipates the performativity of rationality and the associated masculine physicality such as to stand straight and stride. Moreover, sharing his feeling with others in the public space also reflects and embodies the subversive effect that MS has brought to the public as well as to the collective individual bodies. The space of private and public and the conventionally matched corporeality and behaviours are complicated by the fluidity MiQing may initiate. Another male participant shared and explained, with surprise, that this was the first time he realised he could move with emotions in him rather than beats in melody. The inhibition of emotional expression observed in the social doctrine of men thus was stirred by the invasion of MS in the space of blended binary and fixed concepts and conceptions of the male and the female body and subjectivity.

Moving, and the subsequent feeling, empowers the male body by providing it with the opportunity to experience emotions and kinesthesia not conventionally anticipated by the conventional use of urban geography. MS provides spaces for experiments where a body fills with potentialities of subverting gendered social imperatives and obtains its empowerment of being what it feels like.

### **7.3 Societal Choreographic Representations: Gender Empowerment by Blurring Private/Public Spaces**

I see the subversion and empowerment of gender as certain attributes of Taiwanese-ness when the dynamics displays the choreography of in-between moving of private and public space. Disturbing clear boundaries of these two spaces and the expected moving/bodies within manifests certain collective movement towards collapsing socially fixed coordinates of men and women in Taiwan. While the duality is interrupted, the subversive choreography also creates non-exclusion space which offers opportunities to redefine the common world for each engaged body that aims to navigate and negotiate within this collectivity. I have explained the idea of common in Chapter Two.<sup>78</sup> It is a spontaneous close-up on the space and time where each and various inhabitants compose, agree and co-exist with the mindset of forming an agreed union (Wu, 2016: 28-34). As I have studied and witnessed how each body correlates and reacts to the corporeal and environmental materialities in MS' MiQing as an individual in a collectivity, I find the temporal-spatial common also includes the 'common' of senses. That is the ongoing process of Shentigan for the individual in the community, how the members feel and move together to agree and co-exist. The common here does not anticipate a peaceful process, in fact moving towards the common, conflicts are anticipated as negotiation, navigation and agreement. Examples and experiences in MS demonstrate how a common is formed by move

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<sup>78</sup> See Chapter Two, page 82.

and contact in terms of gender and resonate with what the common of gender of the Taiwanese collectivity has been cultivated.

The tension between safety and autonomy embodied by the assault incident in MS speaks to the socially determined constraints of where, when, and how women should situate themselves. In the MRT (underground system) in Taipei, there is a night-time waiting zone specifically designed for women. It is a gesture of goodwill. However, through this policy, women are again typically considered a powerless minority in public space and fragile in the city. While its intention is to protect women, regardless of its efficiency, it draws a distinct line between the female and the other gender, and places the female as the other, resulting in discrimination. This attempted space may give a sense of security. Yet, it does not change the roles of women, nor the prejudice towards women within certain spaces and at certain times of the day and night. It reinforces the conventional roles and perceptions of female residents. First, women are weak; second, women are not normally supposed to stay out late; third, women should be protected by the government; fourth, women could be protected by public and political regulations; and fifth, women should protect themselves by choosing to be in a proper space, prepared specifically for them.

All of the above reflects how women are still hidden from public space and how they still need to adapt behaviours to public space from their pre-designated private space, unlike men. These constraints are not only from the system but also from the self-consciousness installed by society (Day, 2000; Tonkiss, 2005). The fear of danger inhibits women's voices and bodies in certain public spaces in the city. The night-time waiting zone for women further constrains women by being described only in a linguistic space and not a lived body in space in a city <sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> The sign was written both in Chinese and English. It read 夜間婦女候車區 and Safe Waiting Zone. 夜間婦女候車區 means night-time waiting zone for women. On 26th May 2016, the description of 夜間婦女候車區 in all the signs in each MRT station was replaced with 夜間安心候車區, literally translated as night-time safe/reassuring waiting zone.

Women often find it difficult to have their own will and own their bodies; instead, they are imposed upon by others' perceptions and judgements (Quirk, 2016).

Fortunately, there has been ongoing discussion around the gendered use of public space and critical perceptions of segregation. Several projects have been actively carried out in Taiwan, looking at incorporating female architects to tackle the safety issues in urban settings, to promote more urban engagement for women as well as challenging designations of responsibility for women and men (The Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2007). Requests to facilitate more nursing rooms in both the female and male public lavatories, were also submitted and processed, which subverts the conventional and dual ideology of separate spheres and responsibilities among genders. This care for gender equality is extended to the identification of gender (Taipei City Government, 2018). The increasing amount of gender-neutral restrooms in public spaces, such as in MRT stations or theatres, embodies encouragement for transformative perception and practice of gender diversity and empowerment for those who are usually without the proper facilities and recognition.

From the growing need of space that does not presume the roles of gender but the experience and feeling of the individual body, the empowerment manifested by MS moving bodies does not only favour the female community but also the male community. By releasing the corporeal assumption of gender, MS focuses on contact and how the individual is experiencing and feeling the contacting. Empowerment comes from being informed by the knowing of the body. To achieve empowerment in the urban setting, it may no longer rely on the categories of the body to determine the space and relations or relationships designated by the space. Instead, it may be valuable to acknowledge the 'individuality' and 'singularity' of the experiential and experimental moving body, its filling-into the space that shapes the space and the interactive dynamics. Rather than examining the ideologies of dichotomous concepts,

exploring the phenomenological body could open up to the more unfixed, fluid, and flexible understanding of the location and route of imposing and empowering.

As mentioned above, men are also facing difficulties in public space. In the above, the increasing amount of nursery rooms is the result of demand both from the men and women. Several debates began after the MRT station claimed that men are not allowed in the nursery room. One online article depicted how the gender exclusion of nursery rooms in almost every department store in Taipei negatively affected his feeling and moving in the space as a single parent.<sup>80</sup> With the similar gendered usage of the facility, the public space of the event he attended, with the apparent sign reading, 'Welcoming single Mums and Dads', once more rendered him in an anxious and awkward place, both mentally and physically. So much so that he had to go back to his car in the dark and badly ventilated underground parking lot to feed his child.

The exclusion of men in certain public places, intervened and invented for the redeemed private experiences, such as feeding an infant, demonstrate the degree to which the bias and stereotypes of gender are still consolidated. Those men who do not fit the 'square' of the conventional role and function, are left neglected and thus with less power to deploy the space and the body (Lee, 2018; Wang, 2013). This lack of fluid consideration of gender roles embodied in the public space also reinforces the fixed role and position of the female body, that belongs to the family, the private, and the vulnerable community, who needs the invented space to fulfil the private, home duties without the intrusion of a male body. Though it may not directly target gender exclusion in the public space, MS' introduction of the filling of the individual body manifests, and perhaps, positively predicts the emerging and amalgamating awareness of gender equality by focusing on the individuality of bodily experiencing in the environment. The moving body, its experiences and feelings— Shentigan, becomes the premise of how the space

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<sup>80</sup> <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/35874> (Accessed 8 May 2020).

is shaped and shaping the individual, and following the interaction of body and the urban setting, empowerment takes place. This is when the individual and its body acknowledge the differences not by the appearance or the gender of the body, but by the contacting of each body and its own individual way of moving, the moving in the same space.

In another study that interviewed 82 male undergraduates in America, **Day, Stump and Carreon** (2003: 315-316) found that the often neglected fear of men in the public space is related to the unfamiliarity of the space. The feeling of 'out of control' occurred when the male respondents were situated in the public space that seemed out of order, marked by graffiti, drinking, etc. In experiencing the atmosphere of the space, which inhibits their operation of conventional elements of masculinity and dominance, a sense of fear is evoked by the lack or lesser degree of masculine capacity. The unfamiliarity, the sense of losing control may be also observed in the gender exclusion of the nursery room, which put the male user in a lost and insecure place because his subversive role was not supported by the public environment. The male user may have encountered the issue of double vulnerability as first feeding a child may indicate a lack of masculinity, and second, this lack of masculinity has been reminded and rejected again by the exclusive facility in the public space.

The call for neutralising the facility in the public space may help to create the space, as MS did in the two sites, that allow the awareness of individual experiences in the space, subvert gender prejudice, and deconstruct the fixed notions of the corporeal performance of the imperatives of gender. Along this vein, men are emancipated from the adherence of the normalised masculinity and empower themselves by acknowledging their need for safety. This does not mean the absence of masculinity, but the awareness of the civic right to build up the space that does not neglect and even discriminate a certain body in the space.

Filling into space with understanding, feeling each other's experiences, negotiations, and conflicts to reach a common, has also appeared in political scenarios in Taiwan. Perhaps an exhilarating example is the first female president, Tsai, Ing-Wen. Unlike the former president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye,<sup>81</sup> Tsai did not arrive from a political family or a marital relationship with a political figure, in Asia in 2012. President Tsai brought forth the policy of gender equity in her first term of service, meant to encourage, incorporate and increase female participation both in local elections and in the cabinet.<sup>82</sup> From what she announced, there was a sense of filling into the space of female absence. In the description of the policy, she targeted the unbalanced demography of political engagement and participation from the local level to the governmental executive sectors. The empowerment of women in the political sphere may be perceived by her winning re-election with an unprecedented number of votes and the female community makes up 41.59% per cent of the national legislators in Taiwan (A Joint Statement by the Awakening Foundation, 2020).<sup>83</sup> These two achievements have demonstrated the filling of the effort and care of gender equality that has been transforming. Subverting the assumed female social roles, the statement and the relevant policies challenged the conservative heterosexual male-dominated political system, represented by the Legislative Yuan, and empowered women in Taiwan. It blurred the border and boundary of the roles and the attached binary bias, such as the private and the public, of each gender, in the space that locates both geographically and politically at the core of the city.<sup>84</sup> However, as President Tsai indicated in her speech, her re-election does not mean Taiwan has now succeeded in reaching gender equality. Honestly speaking, women on this island still encounter different forms of the glass

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<sup>81</sup> Elected in 2012, Park Geun-hye is the daughter of Park, Chung-hee, who was president of South Korea from 1963 to 1979, serving five consecutive terms.

<sup>82</sup> <https://gec.ey.gov.tw/Page/FD420B6572C922EA> (Accessed 2 March 2020).

<sup>83</sup> She gained 8.17 million and 231 votes in the election in 2019.

<sup>84</sup> The Legislative Yuan is in the neighbourhood and the same administrative district of CKSMH.



ceiling in the urban and social space. On 22nd January, eleven days after Tsai's election win was announced, on 13th May, and on 19th May, one day before the presidential inauguration, the Awakening Foundation in Taiwan proposed three statements on the reflection and request of reinforcing the gender policy president Tsai promised in the former and current term in office.<sup>85</sup> There are four main suggestions the foundation, along with other relevant organisations, ardently raise: 1) The engagement of a more diverse and inclusive female community of the Gender Equality Committee, 2) The reestablishment of the advisory group of gender mainstreaming in the Office of the President, 3) The proportion of the designated engagement of each gender, both in the cabinet members and the local election should not be less than one-third of the entire composition, and 4) The Women National Conference should be held decennially.

These political requests echo what has been observed and analysed in the moving trajectory and attributes of MS. Although MS did not directly intervene in the political arena, the diversity and the absorbing civic energy continues to practice and reflect values and a certain quality of the city and the nation, which has formed and become more and more solid by the introduction of the body's contacting and conflicting in a certain space. Filling in space and the other bodies concurrently, MiQing of MS has undertaken the mission of empowering similar to the growing care and act for women striving in the political battle. The creation of the advisory group and the intention of inclusiveness delineate the process of empowerment, which intriguingly and coincidentally is also manifested by the moving of MS and its bodies. With the viscous gathering in the conventional (male/modern/speed) dominated space as well as the whirling ambition to consist of diversity, MS by MiQing subverts the meaning of the space and the taken-for-granted moving and categorising of the body in it.

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<sup>85</sup> 1/22 <https://www.awakening.org.tw/news/5358>; 5/13 <https://www.civilmedia.tw/archives/94387>; 5/19 <https://www.awakening.org.tw/news/5449> (Accessed 28 May 2020).

## Conclusion

Research has shown that in America men are more likely than women to be victims of crime in public spaces (Day, Stump and Carreon, 2003; Harris and Miller, 2000). This may be partially due to the inadequate awareness of the environment compared to their female counterparts. The sensibility of the kinesthesia in the urban setting that MS has aimed to facilitate, is likely to be a tool of empowerment for men by releasing the associated lack of masculinity in terms of feeling, and feeling vulnerable in the public space. The subversion of the private/public space and the femininity/masculinity is practised through the filling dynamics, MiQing, focusing and not denying to acknowledge the affective aspect of each one's moving and her or his moving body. The refusal to express emotion and the inferior position is oftentimes a means to secure masculinity, which causes the silence of male victims of various crimes, including sexual harassment (Chen, 2015). In 29th November 2018, the Taiwan Men Organisation (臺灣男性協會)<sup>86</sup> was founded by the Garden of Hope Foundation (勵馨基金會), who is dedicated to eliminating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence. In the previous year, 25th July 2017, Taipei City Government partnered with Teacher Chang Foundation (張老師基金會) to establish Men's Talk community (城男舊事心驛站)<sup>87</sup> to provide psychiatrist assistance for men. The emerging wave of male empowerment is echoed in the male version of the MeToo movement and illuminates the rising attribute of gender equality and equity that defines the meaning of being a Taiwanese and the content of Taiwaneseeness, the resistant development of gaining power, not by competing but by the sharing, the sharing of contacting in the space the body is situated.

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/twmen.org.tw/> (Accessed 11 May 2020).

<sup>87</sup> <http://taipeimencenter.1980.org.tw/> (Accessed 11 May 2020).



**Figure 27** The blurring and moving bodies of MS. Courtesy of LPCP (2019).

MS provides a space where women, alongside different communities, are actively willing to experiment with a new, immediate, and alert perception of their bodies in the city. It is through bodily practice, when they dance, when they feel, when they make contact, when they touch others or react to acts from others, those female participants such as the aforementioned young woman who encountered an unexpected intrusion, are empowered by the space and movements with all kinds of intentions emerging simultaneously. What MS achieves is the active transformation of public space into a potentially equal space as a self-emergent organism, as opposed to a designated space for a minority, delineated through political power. MS reflects and embodies fierce discourses lamenting upon or provoking more profound understandings of the unequal power structure of gender. It attempts to fill feminist care into this city and also responds to the pursuit of female empowerment in Taiwan.

## Chapter Eight

### A Manifesto: Act of Care to Initiate MiQing

一個平等的空間，在其中不分性別、年齡、等等區別，在這個場域中可以從任何途徑中獲得養分去讓自我更充實。<sup>88</sup> (*An equal space where everyone, despite any differences in gender, age and other labels/ boundaries, can obtain nutrition in every possible approach and pathway in this field to fulfil oneself.*)

In MS, I moved, felt, and saw the potential Taiwanese-ness in a powerful circle pattern that I designate as MiQing. The intention and vision of this research lies in the experimental conduct and analysis of feeling and practising Taiwanese-ness that are less covered in relevant scholarly contributions across Taiwanese identity studies and dance-geography trans-disciplines. The discovered MiQing is an expansive amalgamation of movement and affect. While being temporally and spatially localised, MiQing does not maintain a single state, as similar localised existence may be conventionally assumed to do: it diffuses, on an intention of contact between bodies and spaces. As a researcher and participant engaged in the kinesthetic and sensory affordances of MS, I sensed and observed the pause of viscosity and the whirling energy distribution of MiQing. These textures and shapes of the movements allow MiQing to continuously absorb, where diverse bodies are drawn to and gradually become vague; boundaries can blur, and gender empowering movements will occur.

I was also fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attend MS courses while I was contemplating my diasporic experiences and the (trans)forming 'bodies' informed by various urban settings in relation to Taiwanese-ness. I have seen MS redefining the perceptions and

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<sup>88</sup> Text from the fund-raising website of Monday School by LPCP: <https://www.zeczec.com/projects/mondayschool>. My translation attempts to locate mainly the literal counterpart of the Chinese terms and phrases. (Accessed 10 December 2018).

conventions of dance in Taiwan, if not almost universally. Its redefinition enables me to multitask thinking, doing, and writing in the research process by experimentally paralleling what has been subverted in dance and in the urban space, the body, and the identity. From my experiences and analyses, I consider the effort of redefining dance comes from the underlying effect of an act of care for 'something', as Yang often mentioned in our conversations, her mission/vision on how dance could intervene in our daily lives and support self-reflections, communal connections, and societal negotiations.

Towards the end of my dynamic route of Taiwanese-ness— pieces of urban choreographies— I wonder what initiates the choreography in cities. Across personal experiential materials, collective interpretations and social analyses, I demonstrate the contingent and localised, yet restless, forming of Taiwanese-ness by the movement cultivation. The attentive fluidity may derive from the propensity of negotiation dynamics of local/grassroot communities in Taiwan as they often arduously navigate between, and mobilise to act upon, the interests of authority and the survival of individual and collective members (Chiu, 2003b). What lies latent in these interactions is a series of moving bodies in a certain direction, heading towards a certain provocative attentiveness of making something happen by doing. I call this an act of care, which aims to maintain a certain way of moving in the localised space, resistant to the imposing paradigms of the authority.

Curious about what initiates the move of MiQing, I use this chapter to serve my need, a purposeful move of 'meta-sensing the sensed'. This chapter's form reverberates with Chapter Two's by introduction of the Shentigan of care. I dissect the kinesthetic and affective attributes of the Chinese characters of 關懷(care) as I did with 瀟情 MiQing. By doing this, I invite my readers to re-sense, re-see and perhaps 're-move' the spaces and the materialities marked by previous chapters, and discover the resonances in their mundane realities that are not limited to what I have provided. Chapter Four to Chapter Seven form a liminal field where the

experiential elements of the researching and reading bodies of Taiwanese-ness move to fill in and move beyond the presented interpretations to own one's Taiwanese-ness other than mine on this journey.

I then move further to consolidate the Taiwanese-ness of the discovered care through two cultural and social activities in Taiwan: Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage and the Sunflower social movement. Delineating the shared cultural and physical elements of the act of care in these movings in cities of Taiwan with MS, I briefly map out and call for four acts of care to evoke inspirations for future research/doing. I aim to demonstrate, and once more emphasise, the chaotic entwining of the individual, the collective, and the social in the urban choreographies of Taiwanese-ness that MS with MiQing – if taken as a dynamic social movement of identifying – is able to care (not to neglect), and to illuminate. Finally, I propose a manifesto to kinesthetically respond to the enthusiastic care MS is filled with and is filling the island it dances on.

### **I Care, Therefore I Move**

If taking the meaning of 'care' in the most intuitive way, I find that care could be defined by the attentiveness towards the encountered materiality in MS. When feeling and moving on MiQing in MS, the mirroring effect of affect and the interactive moving among the collective encourage me to contact more spaces; spaces between myself and my body, between bodies, and between corporealities and environmental materialities– and reveal myself more. The discovery of self is accompanied by an intentional body that delicately detects and (inter)acts with another body, facing my body in various temporalised and localised relationships. Holistic attention is activated and put upon contingent, concurrent, and diverse contacts in MS on the dynamics of MiQing. *'I move as I care, I care therefore I move'* my body silently declared at the moment, in the space. My experiential and experimental body illuminates the existence of MiQing by the contact it affords. The collective moving produces MiQing, and I sense a train of care marked by the responsive corporeal instinct with every contact by each body in MS. Such

a train is dynamic, not static; the collective train of care accumulates into the act of care. It equals the continuously embodied intention of feeling each other. When I move, when others move, the affective resources arrive and the act of care accompanies them. The act of care, I would say, is the attentive moving of the attentiveness. Not only a caring in terms of senses and affects, but also is the act of care— an accumulative doing of attentiveness— millions of it in the current existing time-space that constructs and sustains the pervasiveness of MiQing.

### **Care, and It Shall Change**

The act of care in MiQing, from my experiences, is what infuses MS with the power to debunk and disrupt current taken-for-granted situations, such as the gendered allocation of space in the MRT, or the space of authority interrupted by civic bodies of participatory pleasure. In *Caring Democracy*, Joan C. Tronto (2013) invites her readers to reassess the responsibilities of care and the conventional association with femininity in the private sphere in the context of American democracy. By welcoming care into the public and political regimes, she calls for a democratisation movement of the institutions that should be accommodating plural perspectives to shake the fixed power relationships, the consolidation of which oftentimes fails to adequately address the problems these relationships have been originally designed and implemented for. Her 'care' for the institutional insertion of care manifests her definition of care, the activity to 'maintain, continue and repair our "world" so that we can live in as well as possible' (Fisher and Tronto, 1990: 40). Care in Tronto's words concerns paradigm change. Her interpretation and proposed application shed light on care's political subversive power. She uses the lens of care and breaks the assumed comprehensive democracy in the politics and the affiliated institutions, mainly based in the U.S, and operated in a democratic governorship. Care allows her to identify underlying inequality – perhaps an intentional negligence to favour the privileged – within the system that supposedly aims to endorse social equality. This attentiveness resonates with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) understanding of care as the

speculative commitment to neglected things, especially in the field of science and technology. She brings forth care as the reflection and reflexive reminder, further beyond its conventional function as the operational imperative. Moreover, the application of care should incorporate affective contexts to recognise the individual needs buried under the presumed and imperative universal independence and autonomy of people (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017: 93-94)

What I propose here is that MiQing is carried by such care. Tronto and Puig de la Bellacasa problematise and destabilise perpetuated political environments by inserting the importance of and calling for the practice of care into the excluding space, which renders care the political agent. Their enlightenments reveal and retrieve the potential political enactment of care in the spheres that conventionally, even intentionally, ignore the inherent implications of care. While MS does not claim to be a political and social movement, its viscosity, the absorbing spiral, the varying vagueness of body and the empowering movements, the realisations of care and its political capacities present me certain shared embedded attributes of the changing dynamic of care – the attentive moving of attentiveness in various transformations. It potentiates political subversion. In fact, I observe MS on MiQing advances the idea of care into the act of care as MiQing demonstrates constant contact, an act/moving. The accumulative contact shifts paradigms and aspires attendance to the engaged materialities and corporealities as much as possible.

### **Care, 關懷 for the Motions and Emotions between You and Me**

MS' care through on MiQing departs from what Tronto expects and delineates in the political sphere through its emphasis on localised and more holistic provision and reception of feelings, senses, emotions, and motions. There is a sense of responsibility in Tronto's and Puig de la Bellacasa's ideas of care. The act of care in MS is attentive and participatory, moving without an intended obligation. It is not to deny the association care has with responsibility; and indeed such relational and interactive generations of responsibility are observed in previous



discussions of the social level of MiQing. From what I experience, the act of care in MiQing of MS is more spontaneous and contingent, it is filled with, and fills into ambiguous motions and emotions in spaces. It may not always relate to the morality accompanied by the implication of responsibility, although there were moments and movements when a sense of responsibility was intertwined with the act of care. Informed by my phenomenal body in MS, however, the act of care I discovered and analysed is oftentimes a felt spontaneity immediately arising from the interactions during the moving by the dynamic body. The intention is to contact. Due to such intention, the act of care is too ambiguous to locate a moral sense of responsibility or a political subversion. It may bear both or more as discussed, perhaps not from the very beginning. Effects are developmental and organic, we see one and we determine one along with the initiation of the act of care to sustain MiQing.

Tronto recognises and considers care is mutually beneficial as the giver and the receiver are concurrently involved in the action to fulfil a communal and societal goal. It is therefore relational in obtaining 'some thing'. The act of care in MS is also mutual and relational but in an affective sense; it is empathising. It does not aim to support obtainment but contact. To further explore the act of care in the affective and empathetic sense, and to resonate with the Chinese characters of 瀟情, I resort to the linguistic resources and the associated Shentigan of the word care. There is a myriad of words and meanings connected to care that can be translated into the English word 'care'. Minato, Chihiro (港千尋), a Japanese photo-anthropologist, has pinpointed 'care' as the attribute of a significant social movement in Taiwan and considers the care the Taiwanese-ness of this movement (Minato, 2015: 85). He bases his interpretation of care on Japanese and Chinese definitions, which provide a further understanding of the word care by including 設想 (she xiang), which means being considerate and thoughtful (Minato, 2015: 85). Care, before its social and political ramification, may start with how to feel and move, more viscerally invoked in a certain context.

As I experienced in MS, care comes from feeling and moving around the body and the space in contacting. The word care could be translated into 關懷 (guan huai) and 關心 (guan xin). 懷 (huai) is to embrace. It draws on the image of an adult carrying a crying baby or child, or it can also refer to having something in one's arms. For some, interpretation of the original image of the character 懷, depicts heartbroken parents as they embrace the crying infant or child in their arms. The right side of the character 裹 is meant to illustrate the tears rolling down from the parents' faces on to the cloth covering the place where their hearts reside, manifesting the intertwining feelings and movement of empathy, movement, affect and act. 卜 symbolises heart, which may be perceived as an emphasis on the influence and the engagement of feeling, thinking, and a dynamic urge towards something or someone.

The character 關 speaks to relations or relationships that care accommodates. 關(guan) is derived from the image of two doors that are linked, and often in such relation, the two doors are conjoined by knotted ropes to close them. The linkage depicts the scene and the embodied idea of connection, from which the connection leads to various processes and outcomes. The first is to protect by closing the doors. With the change of relationship between the two doors, the act of care is enacted and the result of care may be achieved. Looking at 關, there is the character of 卯 inside and under the character 門(door). 卯 delineates the image of an object/thing split in two by a knife. It also carries the meaning of emergence. With the element of wood, it implies the philosophy of Daoism, the Dao (道) way in cultivation,<sup>89</sup> which relates to how one situates oneself in the world by surrendering the idea of a perpetuated existence of self and realising being is fluid and contingent. Combining the closed doors and the way out, 關 reveals its second connotation: the obstacles an individual encounters. Moreover, it speaks to the embedded relational dynamics between an individual and the encountered materiality. Between the closed doors and the body, the Shentigan of 關 manifests through how the

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<sup>89</sup> The interpretation of 關 <http://big5.zhengjian.org/node/153430> (Accessed 16 June 2020).

individual is relentlessly confronting these challenges interactively to situate themselves. In the sense of the act of care for MiQing, challenges could be linked back to what I have observed and felt about space; between myself and my body, between bodies and between corporealities and environmental materialities, I contact, I discover, I care, and I move to contact again.

Care, 關懷 (guan huai) by the Shentigan of these two Chinese characters, relates to two interactive subjects in space and how each is influenced by the inception of an act. The intention is to contact, so it decreases the boundaries of each body, each motion, and each emotion. The ambiguity emerges from the vague and fading presence of the assumed responsibility, which blurs the boundary between the giving and receiving of care. Care arises: it is not a given. The act of care accumulates and attracts but does not assimilate others' participation, rather it maintains an intertwined balance between the collectivity and the diversity of individuality. Assembling with less intentional assimilation suggests a more comprehensive and profound empathy. Since the aim is not to assimilate, conflicts may not be inhibited and arise exuberantly, which requires endurance to be engaged in to sustain the process, filled with challenges, to negotiate and co-exist. The act of care for MiQing may transcend the spur of a moment of responsibility in mind and simply appear as an instinct to act that arrives in spaces/challenges, constructed then by the self and others concurrently and contingently.

### **The Enduring Cultivation of Care and its Taiwaneseess**

From the movement viscosity, the spiral distribution of entering, the varying and vague pattern of moving, and the empowering density of movements in the city, I have seen how these movement phenomena in MS ride on the attentiveness of attentive moving, an autonomic sense of feeling the environmental materialities, feelings of each other, our bodies and others'. MiQing's contact by the act of care depicts an emerging updated process where Taiwan and the people on this island have transformed from a state of emptiness into a state of giving and creating through reaching into space and body, creating through the constant and contingent

generation of challenges/spaces. The Shentigan of 關懷 assists me to propose that what makes the act of care Taiwanese is the relational balancing flow of affect and kinesthesia between spaces/challenges. I also felt and observed that a sense of endurance silhouettes certain attribute of Taiwanese-ness with the act of care. To better understand my proposal here, I draw on investigations and experiential accounts by participants in the Mazu pilgrimage in Taiwan to further dissect the attentive and emotive endurance of the act of care.



**Figure 28** Pilgrims scramble under the palanquin of Dajia Mazu. Source: IG@tension\_wang (2020).

The Mazu pilgrimage is the largest and most important religious festival in Taiwan, attracting a significant number and diversity of people, even communities from other religions<sup>90</sup>. There are two Mazu pilgrimages in Taiwan, held by the 大甲鎮瀾宮 Dajia Mazu temple and the 通霄白沙屯拱天宮 Baishatun temple. The journey for the former is nine days and eight nights;

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<sup>90</sup> 微笑台灣(Smile Taiwan)

[https://smiletaiwan.cw.com.tw/article/90?utm\\_source=Webandutm\\_medium=Articleandutm\\_campaign=smile\\_reading](https://smiletaiwan.cw.com.tw/article/90?utm_source=Webandutm_medium=Articleandutm_campaign=smile_reading) (Accessed 20 June 2020).

the latter is not fixed and spontaneously determined by Mazu along the process of the pilgrimage, but it can range from six days to twelve days.

Mazu 媽祖 is a well-known and widely revered sea goddess who blesses and protects the fishermen from harm with a safe and sound journey whilst they sail. With her merciful and maternal image, Mazu has become the most popular religious character in Taiwan. The Mazu pilgrimage is such a significant social, cultural, and religious phenomenon in Taiwan that the event even evokes "mania" (瘋媽祖). The pilgrims or 香燈腳 (xiang deng jiao)/進香客 (jin xiang ke) follow Mazu's palanquin from her own temple to another Mazu temple. There are two major Mazu pilgrimages in Taiwan, usually taking place between lunar January and April, depending on Mazu's will. The Baishatun (白沙屯) Mazu Pilgrimage can be traced back to 1863, from Baishatun (Miaoli County) to Beigang (Yunlin County) and back. The most unique feature of the Baishatun Pilgrimage is the route. It is unpredictable and changes each time of the year, no matter where it departs from or returns to. The route is determined by Mazu's will through a certain ritual called 擲筊 (to cast divination blocks) along the whole journey. Mazu will indicate the next direction or where to stop while the pilgrims are walking. The other pilgrimage is the Dajia (大甲) Mazu Pilgrimage. It departs from Dajia (Taichung City) and arrives at Xingang (Chiayi County) and then returns by a certain pre-announced path, which is also determined by Mazu's will through the mentioned ritual 擲筊. The duration of Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage along the fixed route is nine days and eight nights. This pilgrimage was named as one of the top three religious festivals in the world by the Discovery Channel. The Baishatun Pilgrimage is listed by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage.

No matter how long the whole pilgrimage takes, there are always free supplies: food, water, medical equipment, free accommodation, free meals, and various other needs provided by the local households. Those providers are not necessarily practitioners or self-claimed members of the relevant religious community.<sup>91</sup> Their voluntary acts embody their empathy to care for those from other places with a similar heading/ moving towards a shared direction<sup>92</sup>. While this care partially stems from the collective faith in religion, it is also generated by the intention to contact people entering into and passing through the local geographical space, responding to the relational reality that occurs in a certain time-space. The act of care also reflects, and again manifests, what the Japanese journalist Minato observed and depicted, the thinking for others. This thinking for others is accompanied by feeling others' emotions and experiences, the vivid dynamics operating across the contacting and moving bodies both for the pilgrims and for the people attending to them. 懷 character implies an emphatic mind/heart and the act of bearing a heart for each contact is manifested by the opening of the doors in 關. 關懷, care exhibits a relational dynamics between an individual and the encountered others and materialities.

The sense of endurance in terms of time is apparent for the pilgrims or 香燈腳 (xiang deng jiao)/ 進香客 (jin xiang ke). Whoever decides to complete the whole pilgrimage undertakes on average a week of walking. Walking in time also implies the tremendous corporeal and visceral commitment a body has to endure. A sense of endurance throughout the pilgrimage brings forth the negotiation of the challenges – the spaces between bodies as mentioned earlier. The art director of the U Theatre (優人神鼓),<sup>93</sup> *Liu Rou-yu* (劉若瑀, also

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<sup>91</sup> 天下雜誌 video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5nMmxZ\\_LtI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5nMmxZ_LtI); LoganDBeck channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpeRbMk98rA> (Both accessed 8 July 2020).

<sup>92</sup> 台灣大代誌 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1fQzXXTsewandlist=PL6wgT3uwBZVxonctppqHIQpSywM3cjsnWandindex=4andt=4s> (Accessed 8 July 2020).

<sup>93</sup> The U Theatre (優人神鼓), the prestigious physical theatre, applies the training of Jerzy Grotowski, martial art and the Eastern body, the localised Taiwanese body-mind aesthetics and physicality.

known by her previous name Liu Jing-min 劉靜敏), described her experiences when participating in the Baishatun Mazu pilgrimage that she felt everyone was in the same rhythm of moving, in a flow and a tension of body was revealing (Liu, 1991). She was amazed by how a lame young man, women and men in their 60s, and others she had just met all pulled together towards a collective direction (Liu, 1991). Interviewed by a TV reporter (from the television show *Taiwan Big Issue* 台灣大代誌),<sup>94</sup> the participants also indicated that, despite the hot weather and injuries, they still do not give up, 'Everyone may have their own injuries, but everyone still keeps walking.'

Huang, Chun-chieh (2007: 224) indicates that the persistence of visceral practising aims to transcend physical and mental challenges. Chung, Mingder (2017) investigates the transformational function of walking in Mazu, which allows participants to enter into a state that not only occurs whilst walking, but also maintain its influence of achieving body-mind balance. Durational bodily practice transforms being and doing. Transformation then supports a balance that may be sought after within contact with challenges – some movement begins and some change emerges. The paradigm shift may initiate the function of care that Tronto expects.



**Figure 29** The ceremony of Dajia Mazu pilgrimage. Source: UDN (2018).

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<sup>94</sup> Interviews can be seen on on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1fQzXXTsewandlist=WLandindex=38> (Accessed 8 July 2020).

Applying these understandings of the act of care, I recall the dynamic navigation in Taiwan, where grassroot communities mobilise and act out their care on negotiations between the individual, the collective, and society with the authority. I look at the act of care in Taiwan as kinesthetic and affective spontaneity, characterised with a certain form of endurance. I use the embodiment of care discovered in walking to construct a certain theory of care, as an act. I consider it integral to both the formation of MiQing and the location of potential Taiwanese-ness. The knowledge informed by the body – the durational interactions between bodies, materialities, spaces, and time – allows me to formulate the observed Taiwanese-ness as a constant chaotic, energetic, and experiential contact that is initiated by the spontaneous attentiveness of contingent moving-towards-something.



Figure 30 COVID-19 Precautions in Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage. Courtesy of Huang Yan Sheng (黃彥昇) (2020).

### **Monday School as a Social Movement: Manifesting the 'Care for Taiwan'**

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri succinctly point out the power of assembly: 'An enriched freedom of assembly generates the subjective assemblages that can animate a new world of



cooperative networks and social production' (Hardt and Negri, 2017: 293, 295). From what I experienced in MS and in Mazu, I found that when bodies gather the dynamic of corporeality becomes large enough to call for more mobile movements to serve a communal goal. When I say goal, this does not mean a specific or universal obtainment. The goal could be localised and temporalised by the assemblage of body; it could be just the contact for MS, a religious and communal blessing for Mazu and a resistance to authority for the Sunflower movement, that I discuss below. When the gathering is open participation to all, it crafts social connections because each individual joins to head/move towards something with other bodies. Consequently, with accumulative freedom, the connection of doing shifts paradigms.

Although starting from an intention that does not explicitly address socio-political issues, MS encourages the realisation of civic power in a public space and in a city by MiQing dynamics. Through introducing its spiral/circular existence into linear space and the squared occupation of the space, I consider MS a social practice as it calls for a variety of care: the care for communities; the care for equality; the care for diversity; and the care for the empowerment of gender in the lived situation, as explained in previous chapters. The assembled awareness and practice of MS awakens the perception of change and affords the potential transformative production that a social movement intends to achieve. The feeling, exploring, and investigating of MiQing and the act of care enables me to provide a more feasible coordinate to locate the potentiality of Taiwaneseeness.

The collective goal of MS and its focus on care immediately struck me as one of the most seminal historical movements and moments that speaks out loud the understanding and affirmations of the younger generation of being Taiwanese. That is the Sunflower Movement, which occurred on the 18th of March 2014. This movement was triggered by a suspicion of the signing of a 'Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services' with China. Without any proper review, the Legislative Yuan decided to accept this controversial pact on 17th March. A feed

spread on social media regarding the potential harmful impact on Taiwan, which immediately provoked an occupation, started first by a group of college students and professionals, and later participants from various backgrounds joined in. It eventually reached the scale of 130,000 participants and gained international attention. The goal of this movement was to reclaim the right of citizens to request legitimate procedure for this agreement and to resist covert processes. It asked for transparency for the people on this island. Students occupied the Legislative Yuan and insisted on the non-violent nature of their actions by performing a viscous assemblage in the hall of Legislative Yuan.



**Figure 31** The scene of the Sun Flower movement. Source: AFP / Mandy Cheng (2014).

A song named 島嶼天光 written in Taiwanese, not Chinese, was created by Fire EX, a Taiwanese punk band that produces songs in Taiwanese, not Chinese, for this movement (Dao Yu Tian Quang: Dao Yu means island and Tian Quang means the light from the sky, its English title is *Island's Sunrise*). At the beginning of the song the protagonist apologises to his or her mother for not being able to come home and to his or her lover for not being able to go to the movies together since they are now occupying the parliament for values they have to enact. This care for others, to take action in order to respond to others' needs, is also embedded in

this movement and embodied in the organisation and operation of the Sunflower Movement (Minato, 2015). By attending to every possible contingency at the site, a medical section, news section, food stalls, performing arts space, teaching and learning space, among others, were established from the indoor area and on to the outdoor avenues and plazas. Minato (2015) indicates that care is the essence of this movement and thanks to this solid sense of care, the Sunflower Movement was able to resist violence and, throughout the process, fulfil its layers of ambitions in an unprecedented way.

Parliament was occupied for 24 days and this extended and continued on the roads outside the building of the Legislative Yuan along the Ketagalan Boulevard (凱達格蘭大道). To endure the provocative encounter brought by the police and the governmental negligence and persist in the aim for a non-violent gathering, people of diverse ages, from various professions, communities and other social demographics joined and gathered in the crowd to contact the body and the space and sustain the act of care in the urbanised political site. It demonstrates the act of care in terms of accumulative attentiveness.

Social movements arise from a collective goal and enhance or create a collective identity (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). MS assembles a crowd with the intention of engaging dance with daily lives and redefining dance. While on the way to achieving the subversion of dance conventions, it provides circular cooperation and engaged bodies that increase the production of connectedness. This connectedness allows more acts in a public space prompted by caring for oneself and caring for others. In turn, this cooperation provokes emotions and relationships, opening up opportunities for freedom and change (Hardt and Negri, 2017).



**Figure 32** The scene of the Sun Flower movement. Source: KeroroTW(中岑范姜) (2014).

Along this vein, the mobile intent of MS may not directly share a clear political agenda embraced by the Sunflower Movement. However, the quality of this movement and the values these protesters believe in, and aim to protect through their actions, indeed share a major resemblance with MS. That is a sense and action of care, a practice of embodying Taiwaneseeness. MS' crowd is assembled by, and concurrently initiates the act of care in each individual's attentiveness first towards dance, and, across the temporal and spatial span of moving, the body then continues the attentiveness with its contacting intention towards the faced body, the space and the materialities between. Piece by piece the act of care supports a certain quality of diffusion, filling in the space and the body, MiQing dynamics initiated by the act of care persist and reveal its movement cultivation by its distribution, density, pattern, and tendency. This observed texture, shape, and capacity have illuminated the understanding of the content of Taiwaneseeness for my research and my researching body. These enactments of care correlate to the movement cultivation of MiQing in terms of the circular viscosity, the spiral civic energy, the diversifying body, and the empowering movement. These perceptions of caring also announce my vision of the continued reinforcement of the act of care, eventually, to induce a manifesto of MiQing.

## **1. Care Whoever: For Responding to the Need**

Care, both in MS and in the social movement, is generated and enacted out to fulfil a certain gap in the current situation. For MS, it is the redefining of dance and the dancing body; for the Sunflower movement it is requesting the governmental transparency and the associated dangers that may deprive the subjectivity and rights both of Taiwan, as a sovereign nation, and Taiwanese people as citizens. Responding to the need in care does not only apply to things and people in proximity, but also those in a distant location, whether a physical one or a conceptual one. In the process of caring for the participants, MS holds the vision to continuously absorb those who may not currently be close to dance in terms of corporeality and mentality by its spiral civic energy. The lyrics in the Sunflower movement also demonstrate how an experiencing body can expand and radiate its caring and moving towards someone outside or far away from the experienced space and time. The body contained in the parliament through different digital approaches was resilient and able to transmit their messages on a global level outside the confinement of protest and the nation Taiwan. The act of care responds to the need and disrupts the presumed proximity of distance where an act of responding can begin. Whether the act of care's moving pattern is able to respond is not inhibited by distance. It moves along the spectrum of distance. It continues contacting the potential materiality.

## **2. Care Whenever: For the Urban Mobilised Resistant Diffusion**

Apart from the question of how to face China's economic hegemony and how to protect the integrity of democracy, the Sunflower Movement fiercely raised awareness of problematic neo-liberalism as well. Tronto (2005) believes that care is the foundation of democracy. A sense of care emerges in the heart of citizens; the citizens then request that the government cares for their democracy. Tronto (2013) explains that being critical of politics and economics is a concrete way to resist neo-liberalism. The Sunflower Movement started from this sense of care

(Minato, 2015), which drew a variety of communities into this action<sup>95</sup>. By the floating in and out of participants and the continuously extended crowd from the indoor space of the parliament house to the outdoor occupying clusters of the gathered bodies, resistance was sustained. The act of care here manifested the continued spreading of affect, emotion, and feeling; a sense of determination to fill the urban geography, the care to sustain and mobilise care in a city. This diffusion, as mentioned in MS' moving, aspires to collapse the centre, by encouraging multiple occupation and the scattering of this occupation. MiQing of MS also gathers bodies and produce an organism of viscosity pushing through the velocity of the city and the capital materialities. The decentring enacted by the resistant diffusion may echo a technological application designed for combating the pandemic COVID-19.<sup>96</sup> This app facilitates social distancing and tracking without the reliance on an authority to store personal information. Instead, it requires the user to organise and manage the data without submitting individual information of the confirmed cases on the island. Without any need of register, log-in or upload, it is the user who decides to make the geographic relation public between her or his own body and other moving bodies by turning on Bluetooth. The app aims to release a sense of obligatory responsibilities and it promotes the affect and kinesthesia in the situated geography for the individual to engage with certain care for what is needed and construct the corresponding physical and material relationships.

### **3. Care Wherever: For the Experiential Relationships**

The Sunflower Movement, while striving for its political purpose, also inspires a tremendous amount of experiences that connects different communities and accommodates

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<sup>95</sup> Streetcorner Sociology <https://twstreetcorner.org/2014/06/30/chenwanchi-2/> (Accessed 28 July 2020).

<sup>96</sup> TechOrange [https://buzzorange.com/techorange/2020/04/30/taiwan-social-distancing-app/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed:+techorange+\(TechOrange\)](https://buzzorange.com/techorange/2020/04/30/taiwan-social-distancing-app/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+techorange+(TechOrange)) (Accessed 17 July 2020).

various influxes of corporeal exchanges. Similar to the voluntary behaviour in the Mazu Pilgrimage, there were stalls and booths with diverse provisions. Food, medical care, an educational site, live performances, visual decoration, literary creation, among others. The chaotic and energetic blend of materiality and body was intended to compensate for the sacrificed daily routines, tasks or activities, and to construct an environment that promotes more profound engagement. Similar to the varying and vague scene in MS, borders of different functions are perceived. However, when each border is filled with various bodies and their disparate experiences, the boundary was blurred. It became hard to tell where the definite line was between each function and each body, since the body and the function are capriciously cast upon each other and multiple experiences are accumulated and intertwined. From the song sung by occupants inside and outside the parliament, speeches given by anyone who wished to share, to the visual objects and symbolic handicrafts collectively made, it was all reduced to the act of care, the attentiveness of feeling each other, to establish a sense of cohesion. In the Mazu Pilgrimage, the Sunflower social movement and MS, these bodies assemble not only through political ideology, but through attending to the trivial experiences generated from the interactions among the body and the space in the situated environment.

#### **4. Care Forever: For the Collective and Individual Trauma**

The process of/and the action of care in the Sunflower Movement, echoing that of the pilgrimage closely embodies values that underpin the recognition of the Taiwanese cultural identity of the younger generation, if not of all ages. When I participated in the courses, all the aforementioned unconventional aspects, welcoming diversity, paying attention to other bodies, and providing a reassuring sense of self-revealing, delivered the care of MS for the participants. In English and Chinese, care implies things we value. For the Sunflower Movement, it is the care for democracy, the care for freedom and the care for resisting the jeopardisation of these two things by China. Moreover, if investigated deeper, these values may not arise solely from

political ideologies or imported concepts from Western resources. It may derive from the reality that each community on this island is striving for along with its traumatised experiences. These pursuits of and moving towards the values are shaped and informed by how the lived and hurt body mobilises and propels itself through the muddled historical sediment. The introduction of values has not only been enacted by the governmental authority but also by disparate and diverse traumas experienced and transformed by the bodies in various communities in Taiwan. I thus see the act of care, instead of aimed for values, as a moving orchestration around certain pain in the body and mind, through which the transformation may occur. From how we situate ourselves in the place we live to how we situate Taiwan in the world, to what we cherish and what we have to protect as Taiwanese on this island, all are derived from this collective urge to act out the attentiveness to the individual and collective traumas.

The act of care for me explains the content of being Taiwanese. It means a flow carried out at a self-adjusted pace with the reflexivity which contemplates relationships. These begin with the self and diffuse into numerous considerations through interaction and movement with the situated self, the situated people, the situated society and the situated environments. The acknowledgement of being situated and situating is integral when engaging in Taiwanese-ness due to layered, complicated political and historical sediments (Chiu, 2003a). MS activates the resistance and the empowerment of citizens based on the care of filling dance into everyone's life and every'body'. MiQing, the filling dynamic of MS, is an amalgamation of practised care. Through its circular viscosity and spiral energy, it absorbs diversity. This diversity also assists in forging a more welcoming condition for the filling dynamic to surface in, and the resistance to be continued.

Through my participation in MS, I experienced the filling dynamic in the light of its implied texture, shape, moving pathways and social, economic, and political motion. The viscosity of assembling provided an endurance of capitalism; care is capable because it opens different



accessibilities and focuses on life from different angles (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). This care is not exclusive to certain groups or conventionally designated to certain social roles. It is distributed to everyone through the collective physical engagement involved in the moving tasks and the keen intention to move with others. Tronto (2013) asserts that by prevailing upon the focus of care among each of the participants, it is possible to create more trust, freedom, and equality. This positive spiralling of 'common care' allows MS to expand its diversity and, in return, brings out more visible diversity in the city by promoting a respectful environment. The ability to attend to neglected things reinforces the application of care and maintains relationships that feed the increase of care (Gabrys, 2017; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). This processing of care enables alertness to the environment and the self and wariness of generated encounters to (re)gain power, wrestle with, and improve given situations (Gabrys, 2017). These different forms of sense, emotion, and motion may not be exclusive to being Taiwanese, but manifest the ongoing projects of depicting what Taiwanese-ness may appear to be in proximity, rather than an exact conclusion.

### **Manifesto of MiQing: Fill-ing that Care However We Care**

During a forum in London held for Taiwanese writer Wu, Ming-Yi, long-listed for the Man Booker International Prize in 2018, Wu said that what differentiates Taiwanese literature from other literature in Chinese is the quality of resistance against the current situation, "Probably because Taiwan is a colonised country, we always resist." (Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018). From what MS demonstrates, this resistance can come from a sense of care. This care, unlike any which comes from a long history of philosophical and ethical considerations, derives from a long history of colonisation and post-colonisation in Taiwan. The localised care has been fostered through the idea of survival and the desire for contact. From colonial repression to the suppression from China in the present day, Taiwan has developed its journey along the forming of care by filling itself into numerous corners of society, where practice comes before discourse.

When I am seeing and feeling MS, I am thinking about the 'No Manifesto' by Yvonne Rainer.<sup>97</sup> While Rainer attempted and managed to rebel against the constitution of dance through a conceptual framework followed by a series of movements, MS, with an impulse to care, redefines dance through practice and the bodies practising it. MS leaves the content of a manifesto to be demonstrated in each body's care for resistance. Feeling so, I made mine as my body told:

*Filling in the care through our dance of the Island. Tonight, Monday is the code of action.*

*Filling the sky with body's laughter, filling the ground with sweat's tenderness; we move dances; We do not dance movements.*

*If someone put a head on your feet, you put a smile on someone's tear for play.*

*No body is not a part of the place and no space is not a part of the body. Filling. Filling in,*

*In I, in She, yes, also in He, in We, in They, in You and You; and in A, E, I, O, U.*

*'A'ction, 'E'mpowerment, d'I'versity, 'O'f care, in val'U'es.*

*Watch for the things we hold onto, whirling and circling leave us nothing fake, but,*

*As naked as in a public space.*

*Let resistance run like Taiwanese, and never run alone.*

*Lie down each civic flesh, spiral antenna prepared,*

*Tonight,*

*We are going to tickle the square everywhere.*

*And tomorrow, we still move dances for things,*

*We full-bodiedly care.*

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<sup>97</sup> Yvonne Rainer is a prominent dance artist who together with Steve Paxton, co-founded the Judson Dance Workshop in New York in 1962. She critically considers the meaning of dance by subverting its conventional corporeal requirements with the introduction of mundane movements such as walking, running, jumping, etc. In 1965, when writing about a recent dance — *Parts of Some Sextets* — for the Tulane Drama Review, she ended the essay with 'No Manifesto'. See

[www.ktufsd.org/cms/lib/NY19000262/Centricity/Domain/116/No%20Manifesto.pdf](http://www.ktufsd.org/cms/lib/NY19000262/Centricity/Domain/116/No%20Manifesto.pdf) (Accessed 29 July 2020).

## Epilogue

### The Dances I Dance, Feeling the Filling

On the first of October 2018, I began an annual video project (1-5 minutes per video) where I filmed myself dancing in random places as I went through my daily routines or events. This corporeal journal, derived from my Taiwanese diasporic experiences of living in different cities, aimed to examine how dance and city interact with each other and how these generated relationships may inform, disclose, or even subvert an imagined Taiwanese body.

With my own dance practice, and by observing others' movements, I have witnessed my bodily habits and contemplated the idea of habitus Bourdieu introduced. Habitus is useful for me to approach Taiwaneseeness I assumed and later located in the collective moving in MS since it is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant, 2006: 318). I believe there are attributes of Taiwan and posit that Taiwaneseeness could be felt and moved with as it is an amalgamation of movements by bodies within a certain time and within a certain space. However, these habits do not follow a presumed ethnic pattern. In other words, bodies from different cultures may share similar tendencies while bodies with an identical geographic background delineate different landscapes. I found that individuality reoccurred during the investigation, which initiated a collapse among my layered understandings of the cultural body. Is the body bound to predetermined confinement? Or is it, in fact, able to shift and already go through changes subtly, even if such potential is neglected due to the unchallenged fixity of location and of conception. My filming project evidenced my bodily habits were concurrently individual and collective. I sensed when I danced, the dances were subversive. My dances demonstrated cultural traces whether imagined by myself, or by the pedestrians passing by, such as circling

of the arms or the pelvis associated with Tai Chi. At the next second, they immediately were composed of undetermined gestures, associated with emotions more than ethnic nations.

Feeling and seeing my body continuously transformed from the contact with various urban spaces in several parts of the world, I am mesmerised by the intertwining of my individual body and my collective body and how they together to construct or allow me to imagine 'the' Taiwanese-ness in me and my experiences of different cities. Two main questions have intrigued me. First, how does a body converse with its surroundings over time? Secondly, how does one perceive and sense the often unseen details of the identity that a body manages to speak with along with intentional practice and observation? These two questions lead to my ongoing experiments, which were materially transmuted into this research. The traditional Chinese characters 城 (city) depicts an image of a city surrounded by walls, accommodating numerous and diverse people, protected by the use of force. The idea of the body localised within the materiality of a city provides me with two main approaches to study the relationship between city and dance and identity. One is to locate similarities in terms of the movement cultivation in the body and an urban setting. The cultivation entails movement distribution, density, viscosity, pattern, and tendency, which allows me to contemplate how Taiwanese-ness is choreographed by shapes, qualities, energy, and structures. I then was able to rediscover the movement cultivation of my body that has been influenced by spaces filled with memories and values. The other approach is to put myself in dialogue with international cities constantly to see how cities (Taipei and other cities) deposited in me, and how a body and a city negotiate with each other.

Starting with my dancing body, I later expanded the focus to engage senses, movements, and feelings, all coming down to Shentigan into the exploration of how the interactive city and body form and transform my perceptions of being a Taiwanese in a certain time and a certain space with a certain bodily assemblage. Also, I experimented and continued to develop the practice where I deployed my sensory, feeling, and moving body as a research tool to examine

what the potentiality of Taiwanese-ness is. While experiencing alone on the streets, I was fortunate to find Monday School, an open dance course in the public space in the capital city, Taipei. Incorporating the experiences of being part of the collective bodies in the urban setting, I observed, participated in, and used my mundane and moving body in an urban setting to look at Taiwanese-ness as different pieces of urban choreography. I intend to locate the kinesthetic and sensory components of Taiwanese-ness that are widely discussed in Taiwan studies and Taiwanese dance scholarship.

I found that using my body allows me to unveil the contents of Taiwanese-ness apart from the discourses of Taiwanese-ness on political situations with China, the origin of ethnicity, and the cultural representations used as symbols of Taiwan, such as the yam-like geographical silhouette of Taiwan island, the localised snacks such as bubble tea (pearl tea), oyster omelette and salted fried chicken. My moving body had been accompanied by my senses and feelings situated in the environment, where all the materialities were woven into a holistic operation of kinesthetics and emotions that allowed me to feel the collectivity and the presence of my individuality into a corporeal streaming of the personal formation of being Taiwanese. The embodiment of 'someone belonging to and being in a certain locality' is perceiving and producing Taiwanese-ness that is not limited to nationality, ethnicity, or cultures and becomes open to the potentiality of each definition. Taiwanese-ness in this regard is contingent not only on various intentions of discursive accounts; it is contingent because it is pieces of urban choreographies by the individual in her or his individual situations as well as in her or his experiences with other materialities. It is not only determined and realised by various discourses, but it is also practised, both collectively and individually, by a moving body, and a moving body is beyond the confinement of nationality, ethnicity, or concrete and concise labels to categorise and to pinpoint the difference and make sense of it.

As addressed in Chapter One, I felt Taiwanese-ness in Lyon, and towards the end of my stay, I had a sense of Frenchness in me when speaking French with a particular shape of the mouth, a compressed tension along the line of my jaw, and of course, the 'pu' sound with accompanied the curled muscles of the lips. These experiences of feeling the identities: who I am as an individual, and who I am in any form of collectivity, a woman, a foreigner, a local, Taiwanese, or Japanese, French, British, are displaced; and the displacement makes me rethink the habitus, and re-experience my dis-habitual moving bodies of my various identifications.

What I mean is that while I believe the social and cultural or political productions are stored in our bodies, it does not mean that our bodies are only determined by pre-existing materialities. These depositories are not affected in a linear order, they probably operate in ways that I cannot imagine or am not capable of delineating. Things are mingled, beyond thinking, and the body creates new combinations of the old and new realities beyond thinking as well. Moreover, while society deposits, my body is depositing the urban environment as well. My body may also influence the city; the materiality brought by my body might not be detected easily because it was small and trivial, not because it was not influential. When currently finishing this doctoral project, I am still conducting the filming now and then. I found my body is still evolving, I saw the residues of the past, the traces of the new, and imprints I feel out of blue. I also perceived how my body was acting on the city, when the passer-by came up to me to talk about my dances, not my ethnicity, or when the pedestrians appreciate my 'performances' on the street by their gestures or utterances. I believed my body deposited 'something' in the urban setting and the social environment.

To complement these necessarily inexact words, I provide a collection of videos from the annual project and the ongoing filming routine. The resolution is low to disturb the identification

of labels while maintaining the readability of the movement cultivation. Also, the QR codes are arrayed randomly for my readers to intuitively scan and feel the movements.



If the ethnic or other visual identifications were removed or interrupted, it became less easy to draw a general interpretation of the attribute of a certain group. However, there was still a sense of dynamic that was shared with a certain community, within a certain time and a certain space. A point here is to recall again how elusive the idea of Taiwanese-ness is when one intends to depart from the conspicuous cultural representations and the political claim of the independence of Taiwan. I believe there are indeed attributes of Taiwan, but I find it would be less convincing if I only take the essentialist way to define the Taiwanese-ness I have experienced and envisioned as a diasporic body that derived from Taiwan but was not confined to these images or definition of what Taiwan should be.

I am eager to problematise the notions of Taiwanese-ness by offering my experiences as a dancing and moving body. I am aware that this is my experience and do not pretend that what I have discovered is universal and can be applied to 'the' Taiwanese community(ies). Although complemented by other participants from various backgrounds, the ideas may remain more personal than universal. It would be the next step to include the perspectives of indigenous communities, inclusive groups with various physically and mentally challenging realities. Visiting more cities and introducing more bodily movements and practices would fulfil a plan of this studies to depict various routes of the forming and imaging of Taiwanese-ness to delineate the contingent Taiwanese-ness in a different individuality and collectivity.

In order to locate Taiwanese-ness as choreography in the city, I brought a new analytical method to look at the 'dynamic identity' of a collectivity. This is a concentric pathway, developed by my bodily experiences of researching to link personal movements and Shentigan to the collectivity and to the social environment and facilitate analyses in a wider scope. I juxtaposed three layers of experiencing and observing to present the bodily phenomena that may entail the attributes of Taiwan. It helps to dissect the observed configurations of movements. The predominant analytical tool of dancing oftentimes refers to movements of the dancing bodies with historical reference and puts less attention to the feelings of the movements. It highlights the representations and the forms of the movements and the choreographies as the researcher is watching and detecting the movements as a beholder, not a mover.

The concentric pathway is designed for researchers who aim to provide their practical and phenomenal experiences as the foundation or parts of their research. The analysis of the concentric pathway arises from personal experiential narratives. This premise will unfold the following interpretations and dissection of the wider geographical, social, cultural resources to come in. This method bears an intention to reconsider what dance studies could ever be if the researching body and the moving body are intertwined. This incorporation of the practice of a researcher has been seen in limited Taiwanese dance studies and could be extended to diversify the scope and the method in the field. Further, this research uses dances that are not generated from and by theatrical disciplines and purposes. It offers different materials and by doing so, the definition of dance and dance studies may be reconsidered in Taiwanese dance studies. Also, given the transcultural methodologies and epistemology, I wish to add on different localities, experiential narratives and movements, thinking processes, and the blend of concurrent 'doings': reading, writing, dancing, feeling to the current performance and dance studies. This research blurred the sometimes seemingly incompatible duality of mainstream academic research and the artistic practice as research. This research for me benefits



enormously from the conceptual tradition, the practice-led, the practice-based and other possible ways of producing and formulating knowledge by existing and potentially extended means. It travels and blurs between what I have investigated and how I investigated. I hope it may open up opportunities for researchers like me who do not grow up in the Western systematic academic training to be willing to invite the ways of producing knowledge they have been taught.

I posit the kinesthesia and feelings from the phenomena resonate with the social, cultural, and individual transformations in Taiwan. They assist in depicting the dynamic essence of Taiwanese-ness, which means Taiwanese-ness is neither a fixed, hegemonic idea nor an exclusive way of doing. Arguing Taiwanese-ness is sensed and felt, I distilled four qualities by examining the movement cultivation of the personal and collective bodies. I found that Taiwanese-ness has been embodied by circular viscosity, spiral civic energy, diversifying bodies, and empowering movements. I propose that Taiwanese-ness is a contingent amalgamation of various and ambiguous moving bodies of MiQing dynamics that is durational and driven by the act of care, the attentiveness to feeling others, and feeling within others.

By looking at the potentiality of Taiwanese-ness as it is the choreography in the urban setting, the whole research argues that Taiwanese-ness is a series of physical sentiments of the situated context-specific to Taiwan rather than the assumed ethnicity or the claimed national ideologies. Through my bodies, I sense the dynamics of MiQing within the collectivity and I found this filling dynamics responding to the transformation of Taiwan in terms of the emerging values embodied by the varying and vague bodies absorbed in the whirling power of MS. Apart from analysing the movements of moving bodies in MS and broader social situations, I aim to call for the kinesthetic and sensory approaches and understandings of being Taiwanese-ness, the attributes of Taiwan. From this intention, I locate the contribution of this research in thinking identity/Taiwanese-ness dynamically and viscerally. This research also introduces the tool of

movement and body to the studies of Taiwanese identity and enriches the scholarship of Taiwanese dance studies by providing a method that focuses on the researcher's body instead of the predominant representational analyses of dance. This project brings a cosmopolitan vision and practice to the understanding of Taiwaneseeness. In its most possible potentiality, the research is intended to enrich the diversity of Taiwaneseeness both in the discourse and in the practice, which promotes a less exclusive and more inclusive way to dissect and construct Taiwaneseeness. When incorporating the physical experiment and experiences in this research, I wish to respond to the 'Asian as Method', mentioned in Chapter Two, by putting the idea of knowing each other into practice and extending the knowing to contacting each other. This contacting means the contacting in MiQing in MS and refers to the contacting between the practical and the academic. The idea and practice of Taiwan are not limited and constrained within certain ethnic, national, or political communities; they contain various living aspects heightened by the dancing bodies by myself and by the bodies in MS on the dynamics of MiQing. The attributes of Taiwaneseeness manifested by MiQing are continuously filling spaces and filling the bodies in the spaces, practising.

While closing this research temporarily, I would like to invite my readers to move away from what I have discussed and release their thoughts. Please allow your body to take up the thinking mind. Introduce your body into space by simply initiating only one part of your body and responding to the first stimulant you perceive in the environment. You can close your eyes if it helps you to concentrate. Your body is unfolding and the materialities are folding into your body as it moves, touches, and interacts. Thoughts may come in but let the body decide to keep or shrug it away. Focus on the moving part and allow that part to transmit into another part that is calling for attention. Be mindful of your moving and the arrival of senses when the moving occurs. Movements may accumulate or collapse as they are, they fill the space and they withdraw from the space. Leave the body to decide and perceive the impulse to move or not to

move. Gradually, the body is more active and responsive. When the mind is dissolving into the ripples of movements, into the releasing of labels, it is practising the moment of being you and you as an amalgamation of contingent identifications.

## Appendix

### Transcription of Recording 2 in Chapter Five

Breathing becomes layer upon layer then is rippling outwards. Every-body is related to every one while being individual. Memories are given space to run, to shout, to smell or to stroll in mind at this moment. Mother's face, my hands grabbing a spoon, the cheerful emotion... While scenes keep surfacing, my body can't help but sensing a circular, enveloping energy around, and I feel secured... I know the wind breezing not only upon me but those dancing partners around as well. We are all for one purpose, the need to dance, connecting our bodies to space, time and people right now right here, things we value the most, yes, we share while these varying bodies are filling the place.

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