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A Strafed, Tactical, Pugnacious Island:
Political Performances in Taiwan from 2000 to 2013

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Theater and Performance Studies

by

Fan-Ting Cheng

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Strafed, Tactical, Pugnacious Island:
Political Performances in Taiwan from 2000 to 2013

By

Fan-Ting Cheng

Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Sue-Ellen Case, Chair

This dissertation examines contemporary political performances inside and outside of Taiwan as a political gesture capable of reacting and responding to the changing milieu. I investigate the process through which performers and activists reinforced or troubled the political dominance between the years 2000 and 2013, an unusual period in which colossal demonstrations against governments ensued. I consider the cultural and economic scenarios in which performance practitioners participate in the discussion of identification and examine the diverse performing methods mediated through transnational and regional discourses. I argue that live performance has become a tactical and playful form of political critique that fights within and against the official norms of identity from which it is constructed.

The main focus of this dissertation is the process through which Taiwanese performances negotiate and oscillate in-between various identificatory (de)constructions resulting from its

layered colonization and sensitive relationship to the international. The various artistic approaches signify what I model as the dialectic between the national melancholia and the campy island disidentification of Taiwan. The practices not only contribute to the enactment of a more just and egalitarian Taiwan but also mobilize necessary dialogues across states and borders that partake in performative and political issues abroad.

I ground this argument in the combination of psychoanalysis, transnational discourses, body politics, and the analysis of specific performance examples. The examples include *Dreamers* (2011), *Mazu's Bodyguards* (2009), *Pirates and Formosa* (2011), *A Soldiers' Pay* (2004), *Antigone* (2013), *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (2009), *Occupy Wall Street* (2011-), and *White Shirt Movement* (2013-). I treat "performance" not as an end product but as an ongoing political project probing into the interrelation between political/economic apparatus and media/technology spectacle. I suggest not only that the historical particularities dominate the local cultural productions but also that practitioners transform and reimagine the sense of nation and of island by fashioning divergent theatrical aesthetics in response to the political dynamisms. This dissertation ends by querying how performative articulations of Taiwanese identification function as a means of survival that triggers further discussion regarding the interplay between postcolonial politics and multicultural aesthetics on this island.

The dissertation of Fan-Ting Cheng is approved.

Sean Aaron Metzger

Robert Yee-Sin Chi

Sue-Ellen Case, Committee Chair

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2014

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Act up, Island!

Contemporary performances are themselves political gestures, acts of performative and productive thinking. It is the complex intersection of and interplay between politics and performances that I argue is the critical discourse from which a more just and egalitarian world can be continually imagined, fashioned, and reformed. As Peggy Phelan defines live performance art as “a means of resisting the reproductive ideology of visible representation,” I observe that this form of cultural production works as omnipresent and activist tactics capable of reacting and responding to the changing milieu.¹ Indeed, the uniqueness and ephemeral nature of live performance make performance itself a precise, sometimes even cruel, mirror that reflects the entanglement between the on stage and the off stage. Yet, the ubiquitous interrelation of social media, technology, and political/economic apparatuses has at the present moment brought the immediacy of performance art to a liminal state, somewhere between life and death. Not necessarily visible however, performance art becomes a more powerful and playful form of critical argument that fights within and against the norms from which it is constructed. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou have pointed out that an “unambivalent political ideal” can be difficult; yet an indomitable political uprising shall be approachable.² A precariousness lies at the point at which performance degenerates into political/economic tool in the guise of pure entertainment that fawns on the oppressing majority while excluding the oppressed minorities. That said, this precariousness still serves as good place where complex cooperations/collusions between politics and performances may be teased out. In light of this, in my dissertation I not

¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performances* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 31.

² Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in The Political* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), ix.

only focus on performances that I see as political production directed from and for a specific ideological formation, but I also investigate performances that serve to rebel against the official norms and laws through disidentificatory tactics. Beyond this, I emphasize performances that endlessly struggle, negotiate, and oscillate in between various identity (de)constructions. It is these incorporations, resistances, and compromises that reveal the way in which politics and performances intersect in the contemporary era.

While this dissertation was prospected, my home country of Taiwan was entering an unusual time in which the conflict and distrust between the people and the government came to a new climax. The common disappointment emerged when the expected economic recovery did not occur as promised by Ma Ying-Jeou³ while campaigning for presidency. This negative ambience was further exacerbated due to a series of Kuomintang's controversial policies and judgments such as the signing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement and the ambivalent attitude toward the untimely death of corporal Hung Chung Chiu, all of the events were commonly criticized as favoring pro-Beijing Chinese ideologies and sacrificing local identification and beliefs. Ensuing events such as the Referendum of Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant, Parliament Tap Scandal, and Dapu Incident all underscored the shared dissatisfaction toward the government, resulting in serious tension between official and unofficial groups. Lai Sheng-Chuan's controversial musical *Dreamer*, which was produced specifically for the centennial celebration of the ROC, first triggered the local artists' discontent, which was censored in part by local regulations requiring to their need of government sponsor. This timely musical embodies a national melancholy that not only reflects its political scenario at the time

³ In this dissertation project, I use Taiwanese name order. Thus the first name listed is the family name, and the second name is the personal name. In Taiwan, people are usually known by their full names. I adopt Wade-Giles when translating Taiwanese names, if no preferred or known translated name available, because Wade-Giles is still the most common Romanization system used in current Taiwan.

but also teases out the tremendous historical burden that has been borne over half of a century— since 1949 when ROC officially lost the mainland and retreated to Taiwan.

The relationship between a state-induced nostalgia for a lost China and the establishment of an imagined Taiwan can provide an excellent intersection at which to study the performative codes of national identification that are embedded in the Taiwanese contemporary performances insofar as they produce a jolting reminder of what has been consciously (or subconsciously) hidden behind the politically-correct waves of establishing an independent, democratic and unique Taiwan. However, the complexity of the national melancholia far exceeds this frame of the China-Taiwan love/hate complex and points to the layered colonial histories that the island's inhabitants have experienced.

In the course of the past four hundred years, Taiwan has been colonized by multiple countries including Japan, China, Netherlands and Spain. At the present moment, Taiwan is yet not officially recognized as an independent country and furthermore Taiwan's next step is still uncertain. It is unclear whether Taiwan will be unified with the People's Republic of China in the near future. Contemporary performances in Taiwan, focusing on the national identity/identification of this island, highlight these historical traumas and the persistent resultant collective anxiety. This dissertation highlights how Taiwanese-identified national performances work in the service of a tiny island without a nation-state status which has experienced multiple traumatic histories of colonization and which still exists under the intimidating shadow of PRC and other international powers. A "marginalization-phobic," as Lin Cho-Shui points out when analyzing Taiwan's political status quo, signifies what I emphasize as the character of Taiwanese contemporary performances in this dissertation.⁴

⁴ Lin Cho-Shui, *Kungtungti: shihchieh tuhsiang hsia te Taiwan* (Taipei: Ink, 2009), 92.

Recognizing the urgency and significant of a discourse probing the intersection of politics and arts within the historical contexts, my doctoral dissertation focuses on local performances between the years 2000 and 2012, including Lai Sheng-Chuan's controversial musical *Dreamers* (夢想家, 2011), Jade Y. Chen's cross-cultural opera *Mazu's Bodyguards* (海神家族, 2009), Golden Bough Theater's *Pirates and Formosa* (黃金海賊王, 2011), Wang Mo-Lin's performances *A Soldier's Pay* (軍史館殺人事件, 2004) and *Antigone* (安蒂岡妮, 2013). Beyond this, performances outside of Taiwan are also included in the discussion insofar as they either bring strong influences or provide substantial resources to the artists/activists on the island. In light of this, I examine on British director Walter Meierjohann's adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (2009) as an example of how political parody can be achieved and created through theatrical combination of visual elements and black comedy on stage. Other than traditional theater performances, Occupy Wall Street (2011-) and White Shirt Movement (白衫軍運動, 2013-) are also incorporated into this discussion. I see both of these two demonstrations as performative gestures that well combine the practices of theatrical techniques such as parody, choreography, masquerade, and talk show with the use of social media to fashion a model of contemporary political protest that highlights the decentralized, horizontally-distributed, and ever-changing powers.

Instead of either reinflating the Pan-China myth or instrumentalizing local traumas, I contend that frank exposure to the grim and brutal details of Taiwan's (post)postcolonial past and the national melancholia toward China should be made useful.⁵ It is important to ask what critical perspectives might nurture the ability and desire to live with melancholic relations that

⁵ See Chen Fang-Ming, *Postcolonial Taiwan: Essays on Taiwanese Literary History and Beyond* (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing, 2002).

have been embodied in contemporary performances in Taiwan. I will suggest that Taiwan-China politics could be premised upon the humanism capable of recognizing and comprehending the inter-vulnerability between Taiwan and China. Contemporary performances in Taiwan function as not only critical discourses but also physical practices that effectively address this inter-vulnerability.

The idea of nation is powerful precisely because it supplies a foundational understanding of identity and human relations on which a host of national conflicts and hostilities will come to rely. Thus, the national conflicts and hostilities can be read historically and symptomatically through a critical (re)working of the contemporary performances in Taiwan. Understanding the way contemporary performances interact with political anxieties and national events is therefore a worthwhile academic concern. A historical ontology of nation could be especially useful in illuminating all the manifest contradictions of the Taiwanization movement that was forced to stifle and conceal national melancholia in order to project a strong and normative image. The reappearance of the sentiment under the sign of either Taiwanization or unification is an urgent matter, and yet the disinclination to address the sentiment has now become a significant problem.

Very few of regional studies discuss the interrelation between government sponsorship of performance and the ideological underpinnings of the performances that result. Nor do the studies employ the psychoanalytic approach in their explorations of Taiwan's imagined relationship to China. In this regard, I adopt Freud's notion of melancholia to better understand how the sense of loss and displacement with regard to China works within the complex identity formation of Taiwan.⁶ I want to show how this melancholic formation can provide a robust

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955).

epistemological lens through which to understand the tangle of staging national identity, the strategies of performing bodies, and representations of national history. To approach Taiwan's melancholia, I suggest an exploration of the historicity of the sentiment and an examination of where it has corrupted the workings of government, justice, commerce, and performance.

It is possible that, due to whatever reasons and factors that might relate to the sensitive political background at the time, the Taiwanese governmental censorship concerns did not specifically target theatrical and performance production. The cooperation/collusion between political ideology and theatrical production therefore may have become largely invisible. It is also possible that the scholars mostly focused on applying Western theories to the analyses of the Western texts, ignoring local performing texts as well as the subtle issues of national and racial awareness therein. The intersection of the scholars' dramaturgical research and the government's complex censorship is thus the starting point of my dissertation project. These performances highlight how performing/performative bodies, through working with myth, language, traditions, mediation, and technologies, produce and are produced by, activate and are activated by, represent and are represented by a possible Taiwanese identification in a specific period of time.

These performances articulate the idea of national identity/identification through various approaches and different perspectives. Using Kuomintang ideology as a basis, *Dreamers* staged the traditionally recognized connection between the constitution and establishment of the ROC in 1911 and Taiwan's National Day. *Mazu's Bodyguards* (re)presents the island's postcolonial trauma and current chaotic identity by reinterpreting historical events through a rebellious feminist lens. *Pirates and Formosa* allegorizes a campy island disidentification by replacing the officially-promoted slogan, "descendant of dragon," with the newly-constructed one "descendant

of queer pirate.”⁷ *A Soldier’s Pay* uncovers the political violence results from the compulsory national myth by theatricizing an uncanny stage that signifies the repressed traumas of governmental oppression. *Antigone* enacts a discourse of Asian performative body by subtly transnationalizing the political disempowered across the borders in East Asia. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* argues for the necessity and urgency of problematizing the injustice of the dominance by simultaneously amusing and shocking the audiences with bloody and absurd violence on stage. *Occupy Wall Street*, through the performative acts of encampment, marching, and stripping, highlights a nomadic practice of demonstration that does not point to a specific, fixed destination of utopian ideal but ceaselessly reacts and responds to the changing milieu. *White Shirt Movement* demonstrates how political oppressed of a third-world unrecognizable country applies and appropriates recourses of the other to fashion a local model of uprising that effectively plays within and against the present government hegemony. The last three performances, while not directly referring to the formation of national identity/identification, significantly underscore the way in which the idea of nation is further complicated and volatized by the rhizomic power apparatus of the contemporary era, as Arjun Appadurai highlights in *The Modernity at Large*. In this sense, they propose possible alternatives for the political disempowered and dispossessed agencies to fight within and against the dominant norms from which they are constructed.

These performances do not precisely follow a chronological order in this discussion. While they each refer to timely survival tactics and demonstrate reaction and response to specific historical contexts, they provide no linear narration but rather highlight how present performative

⁷ *Descendants of the Dragon* is the name of a song by Taiwanese composer Hou Dejian. The song, basically expressing nostalgia for the mainland, was composed at the time when the U.S. government terminated the diplomatic relationship with the ROC due to the recognition of the PRC. The ROC government’s promotion of the song made it extremely famous, and it has become the synonym of an imagined Chinese spirit.

actions simultaneously signify their constructive past and imagined future. The notion of national melancholia that I begin developing in the first chapter precisely embodies a form/structure of performative actions that teases out its (post)colonial traumas and (dis)identificatory imagination. Examining the way in which a national melancholia as well as utopic dreams of an independent, democratic Taiwan are inscribed in the performing manifesto and methodologies of local performances, I examine how these theatrical events simultaneously expose, produce, and transform the notion of Taiwanese identity/identification.

With consideration of Janet O’Shea’s idea that artistic “decision-making” refers to the transformations of the performance within the political debate over national identity, regionalism, and globalism, I investigate the new local aesthetic fashioned by many modern-day Taiwanese artists.⁸ It is worth noting that contemporary Taiwanese performances share a similar nostalgia toward a lost China and a common desire of an imagined Taiwan. To be qualified for national rights and recognition has always been an issue at stake for Taiwanese artists at home and abroad. These practitioners attempt to stage a Taiwanese body that reflects the heterogeneity and plurality of the Taiwanese culture that results from its colonial history and its complex relationship with the People’s Republic of China. Performers largely adopt different European-American training methods, such as the Graham technique, acrobatic gymnastics, and Method acting in order to establish a theater that, ironically, is meant to signify a Taiwanese identity. While artists endeavor to highlight the troubled historical and political/economic connections between China and Taiwan by marking Taiwaneseness through specifically Western methods and training, this cultural inheritance still borrows from the bodily practices of Chinese culture. The Taiwanese theater practitioners, on one hand, use theatrical elements such as *Jingju*, *Kunqu*,

⁸ Janet O’Shea, *At Home in The World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stag* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 2007), 12.

Gezaixi, and *Budaixi* to create a form of theater that they proclaim as distinctive. On the other hand, they ironically conceive these elements are inherently Taiwanese. In other words, xenophobia and xenophilia at the same time coexist and dominate the way people recognize the relationships between Taiwan and other nations.

In the global arena, Taiwanese artists are pressured to perform an “internationally recognized ‘Chinese’” aesthetic; thus, the adoption of Chinese materials is both internal to the Taiwanese subject’s position and also external as a response to global capitalism. For example, Golden Bough Theatre’s 2010 Taiwanese vernacular musical production *Sayonara 1945* aims to provide its own parodying, playful interpretation of Taiwan’s colonial history, differentiated from the official documentation of record. In addition, the production attempts to establish a grassroots Taiwanese theater that can attract audiences of both elder and younger generations. To achieve this goal, the actors wove together local performance traditions such as *Nakasi* and *Gezaixi* with Western black comedy and musical dance to produce an amalgamated Taiwanese theater. The actors’ bodies thus intermix and perform diverse body techniques. The bodies on the stage do not maintain a single rhythm, but rather celebrate and revel in the hybridity of diverse performance methods. This pleasure in hybridity not only demonstrates the playfulness and humor of the Taiwanese bodies but also highlights the way in which Taiwanese bodies yearn to be strafed by diverse cultural codes/patterns. The word “strafed” I employ here denotes the simultaneous penetration of bodies eager for national identity by several different cultures. *Sayonara 1945* thus reflects the strafed, nomadic Taiwanese bodies that are drawn to penetration by Chinese cultures such as Taoist *Taichi* and Confucian philosophy, and by Western-imported fashions.

Along with gestural systems, I also want to emphasize the tension and tempo inherent in the Taiwanese performances. These practitioners attempt to corporealize the idea of the Taiwanese body, yet at the same time claim to be “the true successors of the Chinese culture” from which they anxiously distinguish themselves. Either by describing Taiwan as a treasure island rife with beautiful landscapes and rich cultural legacies inherited from Chinese ancestors, or by appropriating elements of Chinese performing arts as a way to delineate a Taiwanese body and to create a Taiwanese theater, these practitioners expose an unmarked Han fetish that has been politically and culturally ignored in recent scholarship of performance criticism, Sinophone studies, and identity issues in Taiwan. The term “Han” I employ here refers to not the ethnicity of Han, but rather the panoramic ideology of Han that shares similar temporal and geographical frames with Shu-Mei Shih’s and Der-Wei Wang’ concepts of Sinophone.⁹ As distinguished from the concepts of Sinophone that focus on various cultural productions abroad and/or within China, the idea of Han implies a long-existing psychic fetishism toward Han, a collective belief that Han, in both physical embodiment such as Han costumes and characters and virtual forms such as Han philosophies and manners, embodies inherent power and values of authority, normativity, orthodoxy, and transcendence. In other words, Han-fetishism refers to the attachment to objects, which feature Han.

Thus far, the intersection of the political/national issues and the contemporary theatrical productions in Taiwan has not been adequately addressed in critical studies. The embracing of Taiwanese-ness has been part of the politically-correct ideology of state propaganda, whether of Kuomintang or of the Minjintang government. In an attempt to claim a Taiwanese identity differentiated from a PRC one, many Taiwanese theater practitioners stage the concept of a self-

⁹ See Shih, “The Concept of the Sinophone” *PMLA* (2011) and Jing Tsu and Wang, edit. *Global Chinese Literature* (New York: Duke University Press, 2005).

sufficient Taiwanese-ness through the use of dialects and local rituals in their works. The forceful attempt to identify a Taiwan that is separate from China, however, produces an anxiety that attempts to mute and shadow Chinese-ish representations and discussions in contemporary performances in Taiwan. Hardly any critiques of the contemporary Taiwanese theaters have focused on this relationship between politics and performance, nor have theaters dared to stage political incorrectness, the identificatory relationship between China and Taiwan. Ironically but interestingly, this collective paralysis of political alienation, together with the tight connection between China and Taiwan, signifies the etiology of the performative complex, the affect of melancholia.

The main theory for the first chapter thus would be the critical model of melancholia that has been elaborated and modified from various aspects. The connection/disconnection of Taiwan with Chinese history performs a melancholic relationship between the two nation states. In other words, Taiwan's complex refusal to grieve for a lost China⁶ and its ambivalent relationship with that dream of China constitutes, I argue, something that Sigmund Freud and later, Judith Butler, would describe as melancholia.¹⁰ In the first chapter, I examine the setting, the (re)presentation, and the promotion of *Dreamers* to articulate how this production teases out national melancholia through the inarticulable anxieties and tensions infused in the performance. *Dreamers* is a musical written by Lai Sheng-Chuan and directed by Nai-Cheng Ding and Lu Poshen to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the Republic of China on October 10, 1911. With the considerable government funding (7 million US dollars), the musical effectively delivered the government's message of how wealthy and robust Taiwan's economy has become. However, *Dreamers* drew criticisms from Taiwanese intellectuals for its staging. By providing an arguable

¹⁰ See Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) and Butler, "Critically queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (1993), 17-32.

interpretation of the origin of Taiwan, *Dreamers* not only erases the historical context of past but also fails to address imperative social issues in Taiwan.

Approaching a temporal and spatial notion of Taiwanese-ness, the production juxtaposes two stories of “dreaming” across different generations: one is the youth’s dream of contributing to the ROC centennial celebration through artistic creation in 2011 and another the martyrs’ dream of establishing the ROC in 1912. The protagonist Hsiao-Fei, a young male choreographer, decides to adopt the story of the Chinese Yellow Flower Mound Revolt as the inspiration for his dance work performed for the centennial celebration. After a series of struggles and with the support of his girlfriend Chun-Chun, he ultimately achieves the goal of honoring the national birthday through his ROC-inspired work. However, this happy denouement not only points to the tension between the two dreams but also the sexual violence and sexist norms projects onto gender minorities of the island.

In addition, the glamorous, Disneyesque staging and quasi-cross-cultural performance styles seems to precariously hide the racial and gender discriminations latent in the story setting. The promotion/advertisement of the musical also underscores its unspeakable melancholia. The inclusion of Chinese and English titles for the performance given to Taiwanese and international audiences, shown on both the program book and the official website of centennial celebration, demonstrates the idea that nation is simultaneously reinforced and ironically erased at this supposedly historical and political moment, the centennial national celebration. With the Chinese title, by replacing the phrase of “nation-establishment” with the vague one “*Wonderful 100*,” the government manages to surreptitiously avoid any political oppression and objection from the PRC government while at the same time refusing to give up defining the nation as the Republic of China.

In the context of this, I suggest that, rather than decrying the controversial budget of seven million US dollars and the arguable quality of the production, one can take *Dreamers* as a performance that fairly underscores Taiwanese melancholic ambivalence toward the lost China. Employing Anne Anlin Cheng's model of melancholia, I examine the way in which this musical demonstrates that Taiwan, on the one hand, desires an independent national subjectivity and yet on the other hand refuses to grieve the loss of China.¹¹ I discern how political texts and their embodiment, the musical *Dreamers*, tease out the complex social etiology behind the phenomenon of national grief and injury. By perceiving the imagined sense of Han, the racialized cultural sign of China, as both Taiwan's symbolic father and abject mother, I argue that Taiwan enters into a melancholic state, introjecting and incorporating the loss of the mainland by claiming to *be* the Republic of China, using "traditional Chinese characters," embodying Chinese customs, and practicing Chinese body techniques, among others, while at the same time denying the loss of the mainland.¹² During the performative process of introjecting loss, the Taiwanese national identity paradoxically transgresses and reaffirms the Chinese other. It is this (un) consciously ignored, inexpressible affect of melancholia that is the site from which I will further launch critical discussions and practical performances regarding the relationship between politics, body, and identity formations.

This first chapter offers an unorthodox defense of the absolute concept that sees national unification and independence are mutually exclusive. Toward that end, I argue that the national melancholia which characterizes the uncertain national status of Taiwan can take on a very

¹¹ Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (New York: Oxford U Press, 2001), pp. 3-63.

¹² See Ma Ying-Jeou's article "Talu shihchengshuchian te wenhua yihan" published on the official website of Office of Republic of China (Taiwan) on June 23rd, 2009 at the following link:

<http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=1105&itemid=20513&rmid=2781>.

different character if it is understood to exist firmly in a context supplied by the (post)colonial history of the island. The (post)colonial history, which saturates and is saturated by the contemporary performance, represents a store of complex interpretive resources. My argument revises both theories of unification and independence, which both, as I will address in detail later, fail to recognize and appreciate an independent Taiwanese subjectivity that is not separated from the thick connection between China and Taiwan. This (un)conscious reluctance to confront Taiwan's national melancholia toward China is misleading and dangerous because it either feeds the illusion that a brand new independent Taiwan can be established through desinicization or advocates a pan-China ideology that inevitably omits the enduring consequences of historical memories and experiences of Taiwan that are implicated in creating and amplifying many current problems, including race/gender/class group conflicts.

My analysis of *Dreamers*, however, does not attempt to advocate a fixed, dead-end model of national melancholia that merely points out the impasse of contemporary performances in Taiwan. Rather, it functions as a trigger of further discussion on possible alternatives to challenge the national hegemony advanced by the political dominance. The following second chapter thus highlights two works that both manifest local postcolonial approaches that contests the official narration. Jade Y. Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards* and Golden Bough Theatre's *Pirates and Formosa*, both cross-cultural theaters that represent and reproduce *Gezaixi* through either Western-imported fashions or local popular cultures. These two performances not only create novel aesthetics of multiculturalism but also point to a potential discourse of island disidentification that can be useful to apprehend the historical and cultural particularities of Taiwan.

Adapted from her semi-autobiographical novel of the same name, Jade Y. Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards* is an intercultural musical that combines the practices of Taiwanese folk opera *Gezaixi* and Taoist ritual with various western elements, including Martha Graham technique, operatic arias, cross-dressing, digital images, and Stanislavski's acting technique. Popularly touted as "the most important contemporary national allegory of Taiwan," *Mazu's Bodyguards* performs an incestuous love triangle among the author's grandparents and great uncle intertwined with Taiwan's traumatic histories of Japanese colonization and Kuomintang-led political repression. In this paper, I articulate the way in which *Mazu's Bodyguards*, through intercultural and feminist approaches, reinterprets Taiwan's identity/identification of ethnicity, gender, and nationality. Employing Carol Sorgenfrei's model of interculturalism and Siu Leung Li's theory of cross-dressing in Chinese opera, I focus on the innovative *Gezaixi*-aria technique and the queer elements of *Mazu's Bodyguards*, including the cross-dressing of the famous actress Sun Tsui-Feng (who plays the great uncle) and the homosexual intimacy between Sun Tsui-Feng and her actress daughter Chen Chao-Ting (who plays the grandmother).¹³ I argue that the musical performs a transgressive and tactical reinterpretation of nation/nationality that troubles the official interpretation advanced by the governments of Japan and the Kuomintang.

Resonating with *Mazu's Bodyguards*, Golden Bough Theatre's *Pirates and Formosa* however raises a different approach of resistance. Premiered at Metropolitan Hall in Taipei City on 28 October 2011, Golden Bough Theatre's musical *Pirates and Formosa* works as a queer, de-hegemonic, and postcolonial performance that not only represents colonial traumas but also, more importantly, challenges the official, Kuomintang-advanced, historical grand narrative that

¹³ See Carol Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005) and Li Siu-Leung, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

has relied deeply upon Confucian gender norms and the exclusion of women as subjects of nation-building processes. I focus on the carnivalesque staging, the feminist characterization, and the kitsch performance of the play, investigating the way the play performs a transgressive and tactical reinterpretation of nation/nationality. The play presents images of pirates of different races and genders surviving on the island, and theatricizes an island landscape that differs pointedly from the ROC official image of the island. It is my goal to highlight how local imagination catalyzed by the performance plays fundamental role in the decolonial and disidentificatory processes. Intertwining local queer notions theorized by Fran Martin, Huang Tao-Ming, Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei with the island discourses argued by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, I argue that queer island disidentification that undoes the truth claims of nationalist identitarianism and upends the Chinese-centrist identity of ‘descendants of dragon’ that the Kuomintang has promoted in the past sixty years.¹⁴

Despite the fact that the idea of reframing Mainland China has become an anachronistic cliché and a hybrid Taiwanese identification has gradually replaced Chinese identity, the Kuomintang ideological violence lingers like historical debris that continues to haunt the island. These shared political traumas and ethnic antagonisms emphasize the need for a reconsideration of the vulnerable historical relation between the island and the mainland. Among many others who have attempted to choreograph and orchestrate tactical forms of resistance while working within and against the national/governmental violence, Wang Mo-Lin has stood out as a radical

¹⁴ See Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei, “Reticent poetics, queer politics,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, volume 6, number 1 (2005) and Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2003) and Huang Tao-Ming, *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2011) and Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith edit, *Island in History and Representation* (New York: Routledge Press, 2003).

activist and artist contributing to the disidentificatory uprising. In the third chapter, I transition from the celebratory, joyful tone of the previous chapter into a more solemn, reserved tone, examining Wang Mo-Lin's two experimental productions: *A Soldier's Pay* and *Antigone*. Both plays deal with the issue of national identification and political violence through different approaches: the former disillusions the alliance of national myth and bourgeois norms by presenting uncanny noises and bodies that recall the shared repressed traumas while the latter enacts a minor-transnational dialogue that networks political oppressed of different cultural contexts in East Asia.

Premiered in 2004, *A Soldier's Pay* represents the 1999 Taipei Armed Force Museum murder. Employing Freud's theory of the uncanny and Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary body, I examine the way in which *A Soldier's Pay* represents a forgotten and erased murder through sound design, stage installation, and the performance of grotesque bodies on stage.¹⁵ The transparent acrylic cubes, paired with the gloomy lights projecting weak pale beams onto the stage, render the stage a space of nightmares that reminds of the display room of the Armed Force Museum and/or ROC military confinements. Paired with eerie staging elements, the noises designed by Lin Chi-Wei effectively destroy the comfortable ambience the audience might expect.¹⁶ Since the noises are transformed from live room sounds from the theater, they are unpredictable, improvisational, and unintentional. Overlapping with the performers' monologues and dialogues, the noises signify a kind of autocratic violence that hinders and mutes the performers. Under these uncomfortable viewing conditions, audiences therefore are forced to become active players who must contend with the awkwardness and make an effort to

¹⁵ See Freud, *Uncanny* (New York: Penguin, 2003) and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

¹⁶ Also see Lin Chi-Wei's discussion on sound art in *Chaoyueh shengyin yishu* (Taipei: Artist Publishing Co, 2012).

understand what the performers are saying onstage. This active participation signifies the activist element of the performance, triggering more possible off-stage actions targeting the social injustice and political violence. Further, by provoking discomfort in the audience as they experience the performance, the performance connotes to the audience the aesthetic illusion of harmony constructed by the collusion of political identity and pleasurable artistic taste/entertainment. Integrated with Butoh aesthetics, the eerie performing bodies on stage also challenge the normative, ideal body image promoted by classical Chinese aesthetics.¹⁷ Besides, the performance connects the discussions of national identification with sexual violence, making rape a crucial issue. By weaving the discussions of rape issues launched by Patricia L. N. Donat, John D'Emilio and Maria Mevacqua, I explore the way in which performance elicits complex relationships between politics and sexuality, revealing how rape had been legitimized to serve the imagined nationality.¹⁸ By analyzing painful noises, eerie cubes and sexual violence presented on stage, I aim to argue that the performance enacts a model of national uncanny that compels the audience to rethink the repressed national trauma.

Nine years after the premier of *A Soldier's Pay*, *Antigone* suggests an alternative measure of politics implicit in minor-transnational performance that approaches political traumas of different contexts. A collaboration between Hong Seung-Yi and Baek Dae-Hyun from Korea, Cheng Yin-Jen from Taiwan, and Ho Yu-Fan from China, *Antigone* reinterprets Sophocles' original play *Antigone* through the lens of the 228 Incident in 1947 in Taiwan, the Gwangju massacre in 1980 in Republic of Korea, and the Tiananmen Square protest of 1989 in People's Republic of China.

¹⁷ See Lin Yu-Bin's article "Wuta te fachan yu chin Kanoko tsai Taiwan" in Chen Chihyu's translation of *Ankoku Butoh: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness* (Taipei: Zoar Book, 2007).

¹⁸ See Patricia L. N. Donat and John D'Emilio, "A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change." *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 48, No.1, (1992), pp. 9-22 and Maria Mevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).

Focusing on the similar structures of these political traumas, *Antigone* proposes a novel tactic of correlating various “political minorities” among different countries in East Asia. Grounding my argument in Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet’s notion of minor transnationalism, Susan Leigh Foster’s model of choreographing empathy, and Randy Martin’s idea of performance as political act, I point out that a potential citizen rebellion achieved by the tactical cooperation among repressed national traumas happens in different East Asian countries.¹⁹ In light of this, the performance highlights a possible transnational dialogue that calls for a re-grieving of the unmourned victims from the past, a reconsideration of the political status quo, and a vision of the future relationship among countries in Asia.

Further, I highlight how both performances, by sexualizing the female characters/performers on stage, produce a theatrical spectacle that signifies a sexualized political scenario. This sexualized political scenario not only displays the interplay of gender/sexuality and power/politics but also reflects how female body is often used and consumed by political theaters. In this chapter, I aim to highlight possible methodologies to apprehend the complex connections between performance and politics, proposing that theater can be a powerful and effective medium in transmitting and inspiring ideas and thoughts about citizen rebellion. Performances on and off stage are capable of protesting against institutional violence and mourn for the victims who are left officially unmourned. Performance functions as weapon and transgressive agency in order to challenge the heteronormative principle of ideal militant bodies as related to the Kuomintang political identity.

¹⁹ See Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet, *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) and Susan Foster, “Choreographies of Protest.” *Theatre Journal* Vol. 55, No. 3, Dance (Oct., 2003), pp. 395-412 and Randy Martin, *Performance as Political Act* (New York: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1990).

While Wang Mo-Lin's two experimental performances propose fair alternatives to recognizing and challenging the precarious alliance of bourgeois norms and national identificatory construction, they do not further elaborate on how these dominant powers actually and virtually work within the digitalized apparatus. Indeed, they precisely locate the oppression, attacking specifically the Kuomintang identity embodied by the disastrous events such as Chang Fu-Jen's murder case and 228 Incident. However, they do not note the complex interplay between the national identity and contemporary "mediascapes"—the way in which various mass/social medias participate the formation and construction of identity/identification.²⁰ It is therefore my intention to highlight how contemporary mediascapes ceaselessly decentralize and deterritorialize the political/economic/cultural powers. The powers thus become much more invisible and unlocatable, rendering the society a "simulacrum," as Jean Baudrillard coins.²¹ I aim to argue that, while a subject that entirely breaks away from social norms and power apparatus does not exist, it is always possible for one to tactically play within and against the media dominance and appropriate it as weapon for resistance. Jose Esteban Muñoz defines disidentification as "descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship."²² According to Muñoz, by working against and within normative representations, parodic bodies can perform certain degrees of agency via their tactical playfulness. This playfulness has been well embodied by the political parodies and protests that I discuss in the fourth chapter.

²⁰ See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 35.

²¹ See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Sheila Faria Glaser trans. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

²² See José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers Of Color And The Performance Of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 5.

In this ending chapter, I choose to examine British director Walter Meierjohann's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, Occupy Wall Street, and White Shirt Movement, examining how they perform what I note is the performative practice of protesting, which manifests an ongoing political project that ceaselessly reacts and responds to the complex interrelation between political/economic apparatus and media/technology spectacle. I begin my argument with Sue-Ellen Case's notion of "horizontal practice of politics and the performative," which she defines as a particular anarchist act of bringing diverse issues and materials together through the lens that "emphasizes inclusion over aim and is co-produced alongside a certain sense of an impasse."²³ I aim to point out that the horizontal practices of contemporary protest and performative events underscore a ceaseless and tactical mobility that highlights the complexity of the political/economic milieu. The horizontal practices recognize and demonstrate themselves as long-term, or even never-ending, projects that flexibly and subtly work within and against the changing societies. Indeed, they signify an impasse in the sense that they do not point to an imagined future of idealized progression. However, they highlight the capabilities of accommodating to the changing scenarios and launching corresponding tactics. These elements of flexibility, continuity, and horizontality are what promise or hint at a potential novel way for the political disempowered and dispossessed subjects to fight for social justice.

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Nottingham Playhouse's 2009 adaptation of a play originally written by Bertolt Brecht in 1941, illustrates the violence of excessive surveillance that often cooperates with decentralized totalitarianism through the use of political parodies and various visual installations, including marquee and projection. The performance connotes the economic and psychological apparatus of fascism and society's submission to it by allegorizing

²³ See Sue-Ellen Case, "Bedding the Horizontal: Entertaining Pleasure in the Permanent Present" (forthcoming article).

the rise of Arturo Ui, a demagogue gangster based in the US. Since political parody rarely appears in Taiwan's local theaters and performance practices, I aim to see what and how the British production *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* can offer generative ways to mobilize political parody on the theater stage in a way that works for Taiwanese politics. I focus on the characterization of the role Ui and the visual design of the stage, investigating the way in which the performance demonstrates the precariousness of merely witnessing without interrupting the social injustice, which might be invisible and ambivalent in a digital context, in which medias and politics intimately and convolutedly work together. Intertwining Gilles Deleuze's emphasis on the model of control societies and Guy Debord's notion of social spectacle, I point out that the performance argues for the necessity of political resistance against injustice by layering three kinds of looking—the seeing, the witnessing, and the being supervised—on stage.²⁴ As suggested by the title that the rise of Arturo Ui is resistible, the performance illustrates the need and the urgency of a demonstration that recognizes and challenges the alliances between governmental institutions and capitalist dominances. While highlighting the significance of political uprising, the theater production does not fashion a physical one that directly refers to the present social injustice. It is therefore my intention to investigate the Occupy Wall Street and White Shirt Movement as two effective and efficient performative protests echoing what has been desired on the stage of political theaters.

Begun on September 17th 2011 in Zuccotti Park located in New York City's Wall Street financial district, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is a series of ongoing protests against American financial institutions and various social injustices. Activists and anarchists, including Adbusters, Anonymous, New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYAB), and various individuals, used social

²⁴ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) and Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*. (Detroit: Black and Red, 2000).

media outlets, including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, podcasts, Google+ and many others, to not only promote their political manifestos but also to continue (re)organizing new forms/groups of protesting forces. The protest events they held are performative in that the events simultaneously search for and produce alternatives yet (re)present their limitation as being mediated through the economic and political structures they aim to attack. The ensuing events not only occupied physical spaces on streets but also virtual spaces in digital media, ultimately leading to Occupy demonstrations and movements around the world. I choose to investigate four performances related to the protest: *Oclarpation*, *Zombie March*, Tom Morello's guitar concert, and the encampment at Zuccotti Park, focusing on the various tactics used by these performance to resist against and cooperate with the dominant apparatus. Employing Appadurai's theory of mediascapes, Jean Baudrillard's model of simulacrum, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of rhizome, and Butler and Athanasiou's concept of dispossession, I argue that these performances signify a nomadic deterritorialization that ceaselessly tears down the control, order, and norms from territories established by rhizomic structures of politics and economy.²⁵ The nomadic deterritorialization never ends, as the protesting events always continue in different forms and presentations. These endless interplays between territorialization and deterritorialization are what map out the contemporary spectacle of capitalist societies.

Deeply inspired and influenced by *Occupy Wall Street* and other protests abroad, the White Shirt Movement began on July 20th 2013. The movement is commonly deemed the first and largest political movement launched by unofficial anonymous citizens through the tactical use of social media and parodic techniques. The movement consists of three demonstrations: the Citizen Act Up, The Farewell to Chung-Chiu/ August Snow Movement, and The World is For

²⁵ See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (1996) and Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995) and Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession* (2013).

All. The participators and the organizers of the three demonstrations are commonly called “the White Shirt Army” as most of them follow the dress code of the movement: wearing a white shirt. The color white not only avoids bedding the political standpoints of either the Kuomintang or the Minjintang and maintains its focus on petition for political reformations, but also signifies a grieving for the officially-ungrievable victims who have suffered from past unjust political violence. Successfully appealing to more than a quarter of a million “White Shirt Soldiers” in barely two weeks, the White Shirt Movement is organized and led by Citizen 1985, an unofficial organization founded by thirty-nine Internet surfers who did not know each other before Chung-Chiu’s death. Inspired by the British novelist George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, anonymous organizers designed the slogan of the movement, which is an image of a bleeding eye with a slogan accompanying it—“The Big Citizen is Watching You.” Orwell’s novel presents an imagined superstate of totalitarianism in a world of omnipresent government surveillance and public mind control. Orwellian dominance here becomes the trope of the oppressing Kuomintang regime against which Citizen 1985 demonstrates. The White Shirt Movement also contains a theme song *Lí Kám Ū Thiann-tioh Lán Ê Kua* (你敢有聽著咱的歌), which is a Taiwanese-dialect song adapted from the famous song *Do You Hear the People Sing?* from the Western musical *Les Misérables*. I focus on the performative elements contained in the three events, including a series of outdoor performances that parody the ROC military system and the Kuomintang, the props (eye masks and mobile devices) used throughout the protest, and the way the protestors organize the movement. I argue that the *White Shirt Movement*, although also an act of occupation, is not an impasse but rather a flexible movement that continuously responds to changing circumstances. The protest does not point in a specific, single direction, but

rather runs through any accessible ways, trying out and searching for possible alternatives to achieve its destination.

The performances abroad that I analyze in the last chapter not only serve as references or examples to provide resources for political performances in Taiwan but also to break away from the focus on regionality in this dissertation. Although this research focuses on the Taiwanese performances and local contexts, it ultimately aims to connect and relate performance studies of Taiwan with those abroad, drawing forth a new, flexible discourse that can contribute positively to societal discourse. In particular, I see this research work as a form of activism that continuously and fearlessly challenges the hegemonic constructions of national and gender norms. That said, by adopting these international performances, I do not aim to propose a universal panacea that can be applied to conceptualize case studies around the world. Rather I propose to offer Taiwan as a relevant example embodying complex national melancholia, postcolonial disidentification, activist rebellion, and the tactical transformation of Western influences. It is Taiwan's unique cultural and historical particularities that precisely promise the critical significance of the island. Indeed, as Shu-Mei Shih asks in her article "Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan," "what do these theories (globalization) have to offer for the study of a marginal non-Western society such as Taiwan with no significant international cultural, economic and political capital to speak of?"²⁶ As Shih further explains, "Taiwan is always already written out of mainstream Western discourse due to its *insignificance*."²⁷ Ironically, it is precisely Taiwan's role of exclusion and dismissal that proves its significance.

²⁶ Shu-Mei Shih, "Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan," *Postcolonial Studies* (Vol.6, No.2, 2003), 143.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 144.

The performances discussed in this work pinpoint and underscore this significance by revealing the way politics and aesthetics relate to and interact with each other.

By positioning this examination of the contemporary Taiwanese theater at the intersection of politics, economy, history/historiography, identity studies, and corporeal analysis, I hope to problematize the prevailing assumption that the Taiwanese identity should be conceived only through the process of de-Sinicization. As suggested by Kobena Mercer in “Black Hair/Style Politics,” aesthetic style is deeply political.²⁸ Although I aim not to posit a deterministic relationship between politics and corporeal aesthetics, I consider the (un)conscious cooperation/collusion of the two as the crucial key to approach the performative representations of Taiwanese identity. In other words, a renewed and much more direct confrontation with the issue of nation, politics, and body is now necessary.

The intersection and interaction of the critical fields of identity and identification, Taiwanese history and politics, and corporeality therefore provide strong academic approaches on the relationship between the (g) local texts and the national issue that have shared relatively small attention. In my dissertation, I will focus on the nexus of three critical fields: (1) theories of postcolonialism, (trans)nationalism and imagination, (2) theories of body and corporeality, and (3) theories of identity and (dis)identification. These academic fields provide robust critical approaches and significantly intertwine with each other, regenerating provocative dynamics that articulate Taiwan’s postcolonial particularities. By targeting at the manifestos, the (re)presentations, the scripts, the staging, the artistic designing, the direction, the performance, and the advertisement of certain performances wholly sponsored by the Taiwanese government, I

²⁸ Kobena Mercer, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992). 247-264.

intend to launch a deeper analysis and discussion regarding the ways in which politics and bodies mutually construct, regulate, destabilize, and transgress one another.

I question whether and how performativity becomes, instead of a nonautonomous action of reiterating the previous codes, a means of survival for people living on this island, a way of proving, securing, and imagining belongingness. Also, I examine how people apply tactics, exile, and guerrilla performances as means to physically and virtually work within and against the social norms. Most importantly, I explore and question the ways in which the national melancholia and the resistant disidentification shape and are shaped by the way the people perceive and use their bodies, both on and off stage. By interweaving psychoanalysis, identity theories, historical context, and performances, this project brings new sources and fresh approaches to the fields of both Asian and performance research. With this project, I expect to offer a new epistemological method to examine how Taiwanese performative events reflect the island's tense, violent, and sensitive relationship with the power of others. It is never the essence of Taiwanese identity that arbitrarily determines the performance; rather, the reciprocal relationship between the Taiwanese identification and the contemporary performances highlights the interactive, fluid, and flexible situation of both sides. By underscoring the interactive, fluid, and flexible situation of politics and performance, I aim to discover new possibilities in Taiwan's ability to live with its national traumas without becoming anxious, fearful, or violent.

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Dreamers' Nightmare: The Taiwanese Centennial Celebration Musical

CHUN-CHUN

I suddenly feel so lost. I do not know what I am supposed to celebrate.

Lai Sheng-Chuan, *Dreamers*

A (con)Fused Dream Dreamed Across Generations

Six thousand people, including the Republic of China (ROC) president Ma Ying-Jeou and other governmental officers holding glow sticks and national flags in their hands, gathered together in an outdoor theater on October 10, 2011, at a newly constructed large green park in Taichung, to watch the resplendent Broadway-style musical, *Dreamers*, which began with the Taiwanese national anthem. After the national-event style opening, a rock band launched into the theme song of this written-for-the-occasion Taiwanese rock-musical. The performance ended with a song by indigenous Taiwanese singer Hu Te-Fu.¹ By presenting cultures and elements that reflect the Chinese inheritance as well as the colonial history of the island, *Dreamers* not only combines Taiwan with the ROC but also implies that Taiwan *is* the ROC, conceived as “the legitimate China” before the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950).

Dreamers is a grand-scale work written by the internationally recognized theater director Lai Sheng-Chuan² to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the Republic of China on October 10, 1911.³ Many renowned Taiwanese artists collaborated on this production, including

¹ Hu Te-Fu (or, Parangalan in Pai-Wan language) is a well-known indigenous musician, and leader of the indigenous movement in Taiwan.

² Lai Sheng-Chuan, or Stan Lai (1954-), is a highly influential Taiwanese theater playwright and director. His most famous work is *Secret Love For the Peach Blossom Spring*. His works are highly valued as combining popular culture with high art and represent a milestone for recent theatre from Taiwan.

³ October 10 is both the date of the performance and national day celebration in Taiwan.

directors Ding Nai-Cheng and Lu Poshen as well as the composer Chen Chih-Yuan.⁴ The production, with a cast of 120 performers and a twelve-piece band, took place in Taichung Fulfillment Amphitheatre, successfully using the broad space of the theater to explore the theme of the centennial celebration. One thing is to be noted, however: it is questionable to claim that *Dreamers* celebrates the centenary of the Republic of China in Taiwan, since the founding of ROC was in China in 1911 when Taiwan was a Japanese colony. Yet this inconsistency in the celebration, although a significant issue, was ignored in the production—the play does not elaborate on this obvious contradiction at all. The overall joyful atmosphere and the (overly-)sentimental plot of the production have covered and erased the important issues of a national melancholic identity. The reviews of *Dreamers*, whether positive opinions on the spectacular staging of the production or negative comments focusing on the debatable quality of the presentation and the unsettled question of the budget of the production, strangely set aside the discussions of identity and nationality. The whole event of the centennial celebration thus reveals the unspeakable anxiety in the culture toward the national identity of Taiwan.

Nonetheless, as part of a series of celebratory events commissioned by the Taiwanese government, this musical successfully conveyed government-sanctioned structures of national identification. Therefore, it is not surprising that *Dreamers* staged the traditional connection between the constitution and establishment of ROC in 1911 and Taiwan's national day, using the Kuomintang political party as a basis.⁵ Yet it is precisely this connection/disconnection of Taiwan with Chinese history that performs a melancholic relationship between the two nation

⁴ Ding Nai-Cheng is one of the core member in Performance Workshop founded by Lai Sheng-Chuang in 1984. She is also Lai Sheng-Chuan's sister-in-law. Lu Poshen is the artistic director of Tainanren Theater Company. Chen Chih-Yuan (1950-2011) is a renowned Taiwanese popular composer.

⁵ Kuomintang was one of the dominant parties of the early Republic of China, from 1912 onwards, and remains one of the main political parties in modern Taiwan.

states. In other words, Taiwan's complex refusal to grieve for (and therefore release) a lost China and its ambivalent relationship to that dream of China constitutes, I argue, something that Sigmund Freud and later, Judith Butler, have described as melancholia.⁶

In the evening of October 10th, *Dreamers* began on a glamorous, Disneyesque stage, where a pool of water harbored a shining golden sculpture engraved with the number one hundred at the center. The lights illuminated the pool of water, making its surface reminiscent of the water shows seen in Disneyland or Las Vegas.⁷ Above the stage was a huge canopy with images of the national flag and trees projected on it, images which would recur in the text and visual symbolism of the play. Moving images of trees, clouds, colorful balloons, and blue sky were projected on four huge backdrops on the stage. On the left and right sides of the stage were two large figurine-lanterns of Chinese Taoist gods. The thousands of lights accompanied by the large orchestra in the theater produced a dazzling opening scene that demonstrated the national scale of the production. The string music in a C-major scale played in the opening also implied the “high-art-ness” of the production. This ostentatious opening scene presented a national staging, designed to compete with commercial musicals in the U. S. and Britain. The well-designed set was full of objects and styles imported from the west—balloons, electric guitars, rock band, contemporary fashions—to produce a Broadway style *mise en scene*. These western imports suggest that *Dreamers* desired to be conceived as a cosmopolitan production that could represent Taiwan in the global arena. In addition, the national flags projected onto the canopy

⁶ In this dissertation project, China does not signify the People's Republic of China but refers both to the symbolic (political) meaning borne by the name of China and to the lands traditionally denoted by the term.

⁷ The Disney show: *World of Color*. See the videos on Disney's official website: <http://disneyland.disney.go.com/disneys-california-adventure/world-of-color>;

The Vegas show: *Fountains of Bellagio*. See the videos on Bellagio's official website: <http://www.bellagio.com/attractions/fountains-of-bellagio.aspx>.

and held by viewers and the use of traditional Chinese costumes suggested that *Dreamers* desired to simultaneously perform a transnational identity as well as one of the normative, official China, something that Taiwan has claimed since 1949.⁸



Siew Wan-Chang standing in the audience of *Dreamers*⁹

⁸ 1949 is the year when Kuomintang Government failed the war with communist party and retreated to Taiwan.

⁹ I deeply thank Chou Yen-Ju (周彦汝), the Section Chief of the Department of Arts Development of the Ministry of Culture, ROC for providing these eight images of *Dreamers* for the academic purpose in this dissertation.



The ROC flags holding in the audiences' hands.



The Stage of *Dreamers*



The go-go dancers in *Dreamers*



A scene from *Dreamers*



The second story unfold in *Dreamers*



The modern dancer in *Dreamers*



A modern dance scene in *Dreamers*

Approaching a temporal and spatial notion of Taiwanese-ness, Lai Sheng-Chuan's *Dreamers* juxtaposes two stories of "dreaming" across different generations—one is the youth's dream of contributing to the ROC centennial celebration through artistic creation in 2011 and another the martyrs' dream of establishing the ROC in 1912. In doing so, *Dreamers* equates the contemporary dream with the past dream, simultaneously glorifying these two different kinds of dream and legitimizing the ROC. Lai Sheng-Chuan's strategy of juxtaposing the two dreams seems clever as it attempts to attract both the young audiences (especially those in the contemporary art industry) and the older audiences who are still obsessed with the glory of the Xinhai Revolution and the Kuomintang's ruling period. In addition to the setting of the story, the casting of the production also caters to most audiences in Taiwan—the four actors/actresses, Chou Ting-Wei, Lin Hsing-Yi, Chang Ching-Chih, and Lee Chieh-Yu, are all famous singers/performers in the contemporary entertainment industry in Taiwan. Chou Ting-Wei, Lin

Hsing-Yi, and Lee Chieh-Yu, in particular, are superstars who began performing in the most popular television singing competition, *One Million Star*, broadcast in Taiwan. Furthermore, the director, stage designers, and playwright of the production are all internationally celebrated theater practitioners. The sound/music designer of the production, Chen Chih-Yuan, who is known as “the father of pop music in Taiwan,” is especially well known for the quality of his composing. With these seemingly savvy production strategies and the seven million US dollars in funding from the Kuomintang government, *Dreamers* was designed to succeed by combining the powers and resources of the government, the entertainment industry, and the theater art industry in Taiwan in order to display itself as an outstanding musical production that represents the national strength of Taiwan. Certainly, the famous production successfully garnered great attention from the audience at home and abroad because it was the first time that a musical was produced to participate in the centennial celebration of ROC. The infamous production, however, aroused fierce debates because its (re)presentation was generally considered to be of a disproportionately poor quality compared to the incredible resources that the production received from the government. In the following, I will discuss the setting, the (re)presentation, and the promotion of *Dreamers* to articulate how this production teases out national melancholia through the inarticulable anxiety and tension infused in the performance.

The Dream of The Youth

At the end of the opening scene, a young man, costumed in black punk style and playing an electric guitar entered through the fog of dry ice. After the brief set performed by the young man (around thirty seconds), the rock band, composed of at least ten players and set on the upper stage, started to play the theme song of *Dreamers*. The lyrics of the theme song claim “everyone

can be a dreamer through thinking big.”¹⁰ While the theme song played, a young couple entered, wearing peasant style traditional Chinese costumes (representing the Chinese past) and holding hands with a little boy in contemporary clothes with balloons in his hand (representing the Taiwanese future). Then another young man entered the upper stage, followed by a group of Broadway-style jazz dancers, all in contemporary fashions. People on the stage either hugged each other or looked at the trees and forests projected onto the huge screen set at center stage. With the theme song, they then started to dance in a cheerful manner. The dance was a combination of jazz, cheerleading, acrobatics, and contemporary dance. The atmosphere of this moment was made to appear harmonious and full of delight. All of a sudden, four male motorcyclists on Harleys, each with a girl passenger on the back, arrived on the stage, as if this were some kind of Heineken advertisement. The girls were dressed like sexy go-go dancers and wore hats decorated with representative Taiwanese fruits.

The first story begins with a group of these young contemporary dancers arguing about whether they should sacrifice the “ideal form of art”—a vague idea never explained throughout the performance—due to a financial crisis in the company. Hsiao-Fei is a young talented male dancer who plays the leader of the company, called Dreamers. Stating that, “The funding that we now have is from some Taiwanese fruit companies, whose needs totally do not fit our dream performance,” Hsiao-Fei is discontent that the other dancers want to replace the original concept of the “art” performance with a “tacky show” that caters to the local fruit sponsors’ tastes.¹¹ Although Hsiao-Fei’s concept of a “dream performance” is never explained to the audience, his statement reveals what it is not. He abjures the parochial, evincing a common Taiwanese

¹⁰ Lai, *Dreamers* (2011).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

person's anxiety of "being too Taiwanese."¹² Hsiao-Fei desires to present their dance through a "tasteful and global" manner (Lai 2011), while those fruit company sponsors represent regional and localized identities that do not fit his needs. Surprised that his girlfriend Chun-Chun is among those go-go dancers wearing the fruit decorated hats, Hsiao-Fei feels angry and violently tears the hat off Chun Chun's head. He blames Chun-Chun for wearing it in "an inappropriate way" that destroys his original choreography. It seems that Hsiao-Fei stands in a position of national-artistic authority and blames others for his situation as he fights for "the originality" of his art. Compared to other people's attitudes of indifference, Hsiao-Fei seemingly is the only one who worries that the piece will be "contaminated" by the compromising revisions made to cater to those fruit sponsors. His passion about his artistic originality looks almost hysterical and makes him seem like the only tragic national hero in this scene. Other people, in Hsiao-Fei's opinion, including Hsiao-Fei's girlfriend Chun-Chun, are just ordinary people who can sacrifice their arts for financial benefits. The interaction between Hsiao-Fei and other people in this scene is noteworthy in that it reveals at least two important issues—the national/cultural anxiety toward Taiwanese-ness and the gender/sexual violence taken for granted.

There is ambivalence in Hsiao-Fei's desire to contribute to Taiwan through his choreography yet simultaneous disgust toward the objects (the fruits) that actually relate to the local sense of Taiwan. According to Hsiao-Fei, "those local pineapples and watermelons are just not matching his original idea of art." He despises the decorations that represent Taiwan and expresses his feeling of discomfort in an almost hysterical manner—yelling at his fellows and rudely tearing the fruit-decorated hat off Chun-Chun. Hsiao-Fei's attitude is undoubtedly ambivalent—how can he claim to love Taiwan yet at the same time express his disgust of

¹² "Being too Taiwanese" is a common saying in Taiwan. It is usually used in a negative way to describe someone or something that is tacky and low.

Taiwan? Taiwan has been called “the kingdom of fruit” and fruit has frequently been used as a symbol for Taiwan. Certainly, there is no reason to stretch an arbitrary connection between Taiwan and fruit; it makes no sense to equate fruit with Taiwan. Yet it is exactly Hsiao-Fei’s attitude that reveals a common anxiety among Taiwanese people of “being too Taiwanese.” Hsiao-Fei’s overly dramatic reaction to the fruit—hysterically yelling to people and tearing down the fruit from Chun-Chun’s hat as if those fruits are some kind of plague—implies that Hsiao-Fei associates the fruits with Taiwan and furthermore unconsciously fears and loathes these symbolic objects. The issue here is not to argue whether or not fruit can be the symbol of Taiwan but to reconsider Hsiao-Fei’s opinion and attitude. In other words, from where does Hsiao-Fei’s ambivalence, as representative of a common anxiety toward Taiwanesehood, come?

Since the 1980s, the Taiwanization movement—which emphasizes the importance of a unique Taiwanese culture rather than viewing Taiwan solely as an appendage of China—has spurred intellectuals and artists to put effort into exploring the idea of Taiwanesehood as distinct from Chinesehood. Yet, the process of Taiwanization spawned a popular sentiment of ambivalence: it simultaneously admires a Taiwanese identity yet, at the same time, looks down on that same Taiwanesehood. Taiwanese think of Taiwanesehood as culturally lower, due to the complex background of colonial history and Taiwan’s geographic marginality. For more than 300 years, Taiwan was a colonized state under first the Qing government (1683-1895) and then Japanese rule (1895-1945).¹³ During the colonial periods, Taiwan’s indigenous people and their

¹³ After the 15th and 16th centuries, ships from European seafaring nations sailed unexplored routes in search of riches. Spain occupied northern Taiwan from 1626 to 1642 and Dutch from 1624 to 1661. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ming Government prohibited international trade for security reason. The Chinese pirates and merchants, including Cheng Chen-Kung the Chinese military leader who expelled the Dutch in Taiwan, therefore looked toward Taiwan, which by the time had not been an area of China. It was not until the business activities and crimes frequently raided Taiwan that the Chinese government saw the need for a local official in Taiwan and accepted Taiwan as part of China. After the Opium war in 1895 (a war between China and Japan because of business conflicts on opium trading), Qing Government ceded Taiwan to Japan by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. At the end of World War II, Taiwan was turned back to Republic of China because of Japan’s surrender.

culture have been continually relegated to a lower position. Before the Qing government ceded Taiwan to Japan via the 1895 treaty of Shimonoseki, Taiwan had been generally recognized by the government as, although part of China, a barbarian area occupied by pirates and black market businessmen. To avoid the growth of potential resistance forces in Taiwan, the government ruled Taiwan passively by restricting the qualification and number of migrants who were allowed to move across the Taiwan Strait and settle in Taiwan. The people on the island, including the Han migrants, Japanese pirates and indigenous people, were all called “savages” by the Qing government. Accordingly, it is not surprising that local culture in Taiwan in this period had never been paid attention to, let alone respected. After Taiwan was ceded to Japan, the Japanese government’s general policy toward Taiwan was to establish Taiwan as an important military base in its southward expansion project. Although much effort was made to improve the island’s economy, the Japanese government aggressively/brutally banned the local culture in Taiwan in order to make the island a “model colony.” The Kominka Movement launched by the Japanese government in 1937, a project aimed at fully Japanizing Taiwanese society, to a certain degree determined how the people at the time recognized the local culture in Taiwan. Even after colonialism ended in 1945, the Taiwanese’s ambivalent cultural identification was worsened by the Kuomintang Government’s oppressive rule that positioned Taiwanese indigenous culture and language below Sinitic values and Mandarin Chinese.

The Chinese Cultural Renaissance launched by the Kuomintang government in 1966 is one of the best examples of how the local culture was suppressed and belittled. This movement was announced by Chiang Kai-Shek on the centennial anniversary of Sun Yat-Sen’s birthday. Chiang, the head of the movement promotion council, announced ten goals of this movement, including reissuing Chinese classic literary works such as those of Confucius and Mencius.

Politically, this movement efficiently legitimized the Kuomintang's ruling over Taiwan by celebrating Chinese classic culture and degrading local Taiwanese culture. It was not until the Taiwanization Movement appeared during the 1970s-80s that the Taiwanese people began to emphasize and reconsider the local culture of Taiwan and the idea of Taiwanese subjectivity separate from either the Japanese colonization or the Chinese legacy.

Hsiao-Fei's ambivalence toward the Taiwanese locality is exactly an embodiment of the collective historical trauma shared by, if not all, many Taiwanese people across generations. During the 1950s, high school students were banned from speaking Taiwanese vernaculars. The collective fear of being punished and humiliated by teachers and other students because of speaking vernaculars has lasted until now—*Tai* is still generally considered a negative term that almost equals ideas like “vulgarity.” These long-term, complex colonial histories make the issue of national identity and Taiwanese subjectivity of central concern. Countless Taiwanese artists have fought for an independent identity that belongs to Taiwan. Hsiao-Fei is characterized as one of those identity-seeking artists/ patriots—he desires to honor Taiwan through his arts. Yet ironically, his arts do not allow for props like the fruit that is usually associated with the idea of Taiwan.

To express his hatred of the fruit, Hsiao-Fei tears off the fruit-decorated hat on Chun-Chun's head. It should be noted that, including Chun-Chun, the five girls standing on the stage are in the costumes of a go-go dancer—outfits that barely cover anything. They are all in red bras, black panties, black boots with high heels, and huge hats with plenty of fruits and feathers on them. Undoubtedly, these costumes are extremely sexual. The shining fabrics of the costumes and the huge red feather-and-fruit-decorated hats make the girls seem like Victoria's Secret fashion models or strippers in a Las Vegas show. The problem here is not that these girls wear

minimal, sexualized clothing, but rather that the director has Hsiao-Fei rudely, almost violently tear the hat off Chun-Chun and fails to interrogate this violent act because of the larger issue of the national birthday and of high art. The image of the flirtatious hat violently torn off of a half-naked girl is absolutely sexual. It is problematic in that the sexual violence be constructed as serving ideas that are considered “more important.” It would make sense if the role of Hsiao-Fei was designed as a parody and the director aimed to craft an argument through that method. Yet, it seems that, throughout the play, the character of Hsiao-Fei is never designated as a parody but rather as a serious young man who loves his country and his art as a national hero.

At the end of this scene, Hsiao-Fei fights with Da-Te, another male member in the dance company, over the financial crisis of the production—Hsiao-Fei insists that art should not be sacrificed for money whereas Da-Te privileges the sponsors’ opinions. This debate happens only between the two males and all the other female members, including Chun-Chun, are silent during this fight. It is interesting to compare here the male bodies to the female bodies on stage. Hsiao-Fei and Da-Te draw their backs up straight. Their eyes focus up and far away. Generally speaking, their bodies are upward and stretching. In contrast, the female bodies on stage do not move and pose in the same way as those male bodies. The girls’ eyes focus on things near and toward the ground. They stand on the stage, playing with the decorations on their hats, flirting with the boys sitting on the Harleys as if they do not care about either the financial crisis or the issues of nation and art. As a result, this scene not only implies that males, instead of females, are the only possible heroes but also legalizes the sexual violence by honoring a national and artistic passion.

The story then tells that Hsiao-Fei falls in love with Chun-Chun, who also dances in his company. Interestingly, Hsiao-Fei’s attitude to Chun-Chun is not consistent. Although rude to

Chun-Chun in the first scene, he later apologizes to her. After he apologizes, Chun-Chun immediately accepts his apology, agrees with his ideas of nation and art, and expresses her full support to him. She acts as a typical ideal woman according to the Confucian philosophy. Hsiao-Fei then gives Chun-Chun a birthday gift, which is a toy duck. Chun-Chun is happy with the gift but says that she feels lost and confused at this moment of celebration because everything around her is uncertain. It seems that the director tries to use Chun-Chun's general feeling of uncertainty at her birthday as a metaphor to describe a common collective anxiety at the national centennial anniversary. The love song "My Twenty Years" that Hsiao-Fei and Chun Chun sing in this scene connects the young romance to national concerns. The lyrics say, "[t]his is my most beautiful birthday, the most fiery and exhilarating time of youth, but why is my heart cold?" The young couple kisses when the song ends, perfectly juxtaposing puppy love and love for nation, Chun-Chun's birthday and that of the Republic of China. This line repeats many times later in other songs in the musical and represents the idea of an uncertain feeling in general.

At the beginning of scene three, the live rock band performs the song "Money" as a group of performers in contemporary clothes dances to the music. The song fades out and the people on the stage start to speak. Hsiao-Fei's parents, who are street vendors, discuss needing to work harder to earn more money to support their son's pursuit of higher education in the USA. The parents are extremely excited that Hsiao-Fei has been accepted to a MBA program yet Hsiao-Fei is obviously unhappy about this news. Throwing away the letter, he yells at his parents that they do not understand his dream. Although in a later scene, Hsiao-Fei expresses his appreciation of his parents' saving money for him, here, in a tone of authority, he rants to his parents for their old-fashioned and conservative thoughts. In educating his parents to understand the glory of his artistic dream, Hsiao-Fei speaks almost like a god. There is a moment that

Hsiao-Fei asks his parents to think about their own dreams and to “believe that a man can shine gloriously.” His parents, depicted as two foolish country folks, repeat the words “shine gloriously” as if they do not even recognize the term. The family members fight fiercely. His father then performs the song “I Just Want to be an Ordinary Fellow,” singing that he needs no dream but that of being an ordinary man without any trouble. It should be noted that Hsiao-Fei’s rude attitude toward his dance fellows and parents and his unreasonable arrogance are never criticized in the play but rather recognized as necessary to the national project. Emphasizing Hsiao-Fei’s artistic talent and passion for the national centennial celebration, the story legitimizes and glorifies his rudeness and violence. Since other people (his parents and dance fellows) are depicted as fogeys, fools or snobs, Hsiao-Fei is presented as the only hero who tries to save the arts and the country.

With Chun-Chun’s support, Hsiao-Fei applies for the opportunity to perform in the national ceremony. As the leader of the group, Hsiao-Fei instructs the whole team to rehearse their piece, which is to be performed at the national centennial ceremony. Yelling at all the dancers, Hsiao-Fei leads as an epic hero, an absolute power, and the only authority that should be followed. In a white shirt and grey pants, Hsiao-Fei walks in a confident way—his stomach in, chest out, shoulders back, and head up. He is not characterized as a parodic clown but as a real leader of the young generation. The group follows his lead, dancing to the song “One Hundred Years,” which is in the celebrative and festive C major key. While the song is played, Hsiao-Fei performs a piece of rap, criticizing the traditional thoughts that his parents and the people of the older generation share. It seems that Hsiao-Fei is to be depicted as the Taiwanese version of Che Guevara, a young hero that dares to challenge traditions and hegemony. However, Hsiao-Fei

ironically turns out to be the new dominating power that later directly cooperates with the most traditional nation-birth legacies constructed and taught by the Kuomintang government.

After fighting with his father, Hsiao-Fei and his grandfather have a talk about the definition of dream and dreamer. Hsiao-Fei finds out that his great-grandparents were among those martyrs who participated in the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt,¹⁴ one of the uprisings in the Xinhai Revolution¹⁵ (1911-12) fighting against to the Qing government. Hsiao-Fei is deeply moved and inspired by his grandfather's story.

When Hsiao-Fei applies to perform in the national ceremony, the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt becomes his inspiration for choreographing the piece. Since Hsiao-Fei chooses to use the history the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt, which is the Kuomintang party's political interpretation of the birth of the nation, as his material and topic to create his work that best (re)presents Taiwanese-ness, he simultaneously identifies with and shuns the "loss of China" that makes him a melancholic subject. Through introjecting an identity that executes power, Hsiao-Fei incorporates the Kuomintang government's national identity and enacts melancholia through his arbitrary interpretation of an artist's dream—he cannot overcome the inassimilable loss of China yet wants to claim for Taiwanese-ness that is differentiated from Chinese-ness.

The historical traumas of colonialism and then separation from the mainland after 1949 forged what I argue is the Taiwanese subject's melancholic ambivalence toward China: on the

¹⁴ The Yellow Flower Revolt (November 13, 1910- April 23, 1911, Guangzhou), also known as the Second Guangzhou uprising, is a revolution led by Huang Hsing, the Chinese revolutionary leader and the first army commander-in-chief of the Republic of China, The Yellow Flower Revolt is an uprising fighting against the Qing Dynasty. This uprising, though successful in the beginning, turned into a catastrophic defeat and most revolutionaries were killed. Today, the Yellow Flower Revolt is remembered annually in Taiwan on March 29, as Youth Day.

¹⁵ Xinhai Revolution (October 10, 1911- February 12, 1912, China) was a revolution that defeated Qing Dynasty and established the Republic of China. The revolution was named Xinhai because it occurred in 1911, the year of the Xinhai stem-branch of the Chinese calendar. The beginning date of the revolution, October 10, has ultimately become the national day of Republic of China.

one hand, he claims a Taiwanese identity differentiated from a Chinese persona and desire to be an independent subject/nation and, on the other hand, the Taiwanese subject refuse to fully grieve the loss of China (which would thereby acknowledge the end of the relationship) through an embrace of the west.

As Ann Anlin Cheng explains in *The Melancholy of Race*, Freud, in “Mourning and Melancholia,” proposes two different types of grief: mourning and melancholia. He differentiates mourning from melancholia by defining the former as a “normal” and “healthy” reaction towards the loss of a love object, and the latter as an “abnormal” and “pathological” response to that loss.¹⁶ Melancholia manifests in the unconscious as the unacknowledged loss of a love-object and therefore the refusal to grieve the loss; it refuses substitution and prevents the subject from getting over the loss. The subject is unable to recognize what part of the ego itself has been lost in the process. In failing to acknowledge the loss of a love-object, the melancholic subject introjects the lost love-object into the composition of her/his ego, making it a vital part of one’s own identity. The melancholic subject is melancholic because she/he has introjected that which she/he reviles. However, the melancholic subject is ambivalent toward the newly introjected love-object, alternating between love and hate. In other words, melancholia denotes “a condition of endless self-impoverishment”; it is psychically stuck, the effect of an un-grieved loss.¹⁷ The love-hate relationship causes tensions within the subject, who has to wrestle with new identifications in order to become stabilized. For Freud, identification occurs not only to compensate for the loss, but also occurs continually through psychic life. As Cheng points out,

¹⁶ Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (New York: Oxford U Press, 2001), 7, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

Freudian melancholia describes a chain of loss, denial, and incorporation through which the ego is born.

Recent readings of melancholia have been mostly theorized in the discussion of gender formation such as E. Patrick Johnson's articulation on Butlerian formula of heterosexual melancholia.¹⁸ The ambivalence regarding the lost love-object in the melancholic subject is the starting point for Butler's elaboration on Freudian melancholia to theorize heterosexual gender-identity formation. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that drag performance allegorizes heterosexual melancholy that by which a masculine gender is formed from the repudiation to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love, and, likewise, a feminine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the feminine as a possibility of love.¹⁹ The absence of cultural conventions for accepting the loss of homosexual love produces a culture of heterosexual melancholy because people become the one that he or she never loved and never grieved. Since that agency is always negotiated within a matrix of power, the legitimized norms construct the formation of subjectivity.

Johnson, however, employs Freud's theory of how melancholic either regresses to identification or reduced to the stage of sadism, which he argues that Butler does not elaborate, in his model of the oppression of black heterosexual men.²⁰ In *Appropriating Blackness*, Johnson states, "the melancholic receives gratification from such sadism directed toward the Other within, sadism that, in part, is due to his ambivalence toward the newly introjected love-object."²¹

¹⁸ See E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and Butler, "Critically queer" (1993).

¹⁹ Butler, "Critically queer" (1993).

²⁰ See E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness* (2003) and Butler, "Critically queer" (1993).

²¹ E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness* (2003), 50.

Johnson focuses on the sadistic dimension of heterosexual melancholy to explain the homophobia inherent in black performances. Echoing Johnson's emphasis on the ambivalence psyche of the melancholic, Cheng, in *The Melancholy of Race*, also suggests that "the melancholic's relationship to the object is now no longer just love or nostalgia but also profound resentment. The melancholic is not melancholic because he or she has lost something but because he or she has introjected that which he or she now revile."²²

Unlike Johnson and Butler, who deploy Freudian melancholia to discuss gender-race-identity formation, Cheng points out that melancholia is an equally appropriate model for theorizing racialization of Asian Americans in the United States. In modifying the concept of melancholia from its Freudian origins, Cheng develops her concept of "racial melancholia," which she defines as "a sign of rejection and as a psychic strategy in response to that rejection."²³ Melancholia tracks a mobility of rejection and internalization related to American racial culture—"first, dominant, white culture's rejection of yet attachment to the racial other and the ramifications that such paradox holds for the racial other."²⁴ The term "racial melancholia" therefore refers to a complicated process of racial rejection and desire.

In Cheng's model, on the one hand, majoritarian identity and its authority is secured by the melancholic introjection of minoritized groups; the official methods to legitimize a majoritarian authority are sustained by the denial and exclusion of others.²⁵ On the other hand, minoritarian identity, which is invisible, is reinforced through the melancholic introjection of a

²² Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (2001), 9.

²³ Ibid, 20.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ ibid, xi.

lost, never-attainable perfection.²⁶ Both sides suffer from melancholia, whereby the majoritarian identity can never totally abandon nor accommodate the other, and the invisible minoritarian identity can never fully grieve an inarticulable loss. This ambivalence toward the other and the unspoken loss—the avowal and disavowal mobility in melancholia—are the basis of the individual’s sense of her/his subjectivity. Accordingly, the two sides are entwined, with both participating in identity formation. In this way, the model of melancholia exposes a complex mechanism of psychical negotiation that troubles and destabilizes the over-generalized dichotomy of dominant subject and dominated subject. I am not, however, setting up China as the majoritarian subject and Taiwan as the minoritarian one with the intention of discussing the inter-formations of identity between the two. Instead, I focus on Taiwanese ambivalence, a single-sided melancholia that is enough to form Taiwanese identity. This melancholia is fully performed in the extravagant musical *Dreamers*.

First, Hsiao-Fei’s attitude—claiming to be devoted to the beloved Taiwan and, at the same time, belittling objects (the fruit and costumes) that might represent Taiwanese localness—reveals his intense ambivalence toward the (imagined) Taiwan/Taiwanese-ness. More complicatedly, this ambivalence is entangled with and reinforced by the historical relationship with the PRC. Once Hsiao-Fei decides to adopt the story of the Chinese Yellow Flower Mound Revolt as his inspiration for the Taiwanese centennial celebration, he becomes bogged down in the crisis of national identity. The result of this psychical negotiation is the hysterical national melancholia seen throughout the performance. Put another way, Hsiao-Fei’s attitudes toward Taiwan and toward China are the two sides of his national melancholy.

²⁶ Ibid.

Echoing Cheng's application of Freudian theory of melancholia to studies outside of gender, Paul Gilroy combines the theory with postcolonial discourses. In *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Gilroy alters Freud's definition in order to apply the term to the social pathology of neoimperialist politics.²⁷ Highlighting the political conflicts that characterize multicultural societies, he argues for the necessity of recognizing the ambiguities and defects of past colonial relations. Similar to Butler's notion that sees vulnerability as a strength, Gilroy asks us to reconsider the racial civilizing mission that has concealed its systematic brutality and institutional violence.²⁸ Gilroy's emphasis on "recognizing as a must" is the basic standpoint of my analysis of Taiwanese national melancholia. I argue that it is only by recognizing the national melancholia which is both the result and the cause of many social/national problems that we can possibly relieve the tension and violence that exist between the PRC and Taiwan, and among the government, institutions, and citizens of Taiwan.

Although in this chapter, I am not relating the identity formation to gender or racialization in Taiwan or China, which deserves its own discussion, I contend that the mechanism of melancholia as described in Cheng's and Gilroy's models which shows that it can be applied to other situations, is useful to analyze Taiwanese national identity, especially in the case of *Dreamers*. I focused on the Taiwanese melancholia toward the lost nation, without defining melancholia, as Freud does, as either pathological or healthy. The Taiwanese national melancholia to which I refer is crucially embodied by and inscribed in the way the second dream (the dream of the Xinhai Revolution) echoes the first dream (the dream of youth). In the

²⁷ Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

²⁸ See Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005) and Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life* (New York: Verso, 2004).

following section, I will discuss how the second dream functions as the imagined nostalgia and generates/maintains that national melancholia.

The Dream of The Xinhai Revolution

Listening to his grandfather's story, Hsiao-Fei is surprised by the secret box that contains a letter from his great-grandmother. According to his grandfather, the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt had more than 72 martyrs listed in official history—Hsiao-Fei's great grandparents are the 73rd and 74th martyrs in the revolt. The second story, which concerns Hsiao-Fei's great grandparents, unfolds in scene six.

In scene six, which is part of the young martyrs' narrative, we are at a village market in Qing Dynasty China with people peacefully conversing and trading goods. A young man dramatically rushes onto the stage, screaming at everybody to run because the security officers are coming. In the ensuing chaos, the officers of the Qing government arrive; at the same time, the live rock band plays the song "Money." The chief officer rudely asks Wang Wan-Ching and Lin Chun-Mei to pay extra taxes. Unable to pay, the couple desperately witnesses the officer killing one of their friends. The couple therefore decides to join the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt against the Qing government's political corruption. When killed, the pair becomes martyrs of the revolution, which, with other rebellions such as Sun Yat-Sen, Lu Hao-Tung, and Lin Juemin, eventually leads to the founding of Republic of China in 1911.²⁹

The narrative of this production problematically takes the Xinhai Revolution as the origin of Taiwan. Although the Yellow Flower Mound Revolt is indeed an uprising against the Qing Dynasty, it is only one event among many efforts and cannot be taken as the only reason that

²⁹ Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), Lin Juemin (1887-1911), Lu Hao-Tung (1868-1895) are all Qing Dynasty revolutionaries. Sun Yat-Sen is also known as the "Father of the Nation" in the Republic of China.

patriots fought in the revolution. By merely presenting two scenes of how Qing officials oppress people (scene six and nine), *Dreamers* over-simplifies the complex historical contexts of Xinhai Revolution: the corruption and the decline of the Qing Government, which was considered by the revolutionaries ineffective to modernize China and confront challenges presented by international powers, and, the ethnic resentment against the ruling Manchu minority.³⁰ Ignoring all these important historical details, *Dreamers* also (un)consciously erases the process of the entire Xinhai Revolution, which was a series of protests, insurgencies, uprisings that built toward the downfall of Qing Government over one year. *Dreamers* instead provides an utopian, heroic allegory as the interpretation of the origin of Taiwan. *Dreamers* does not answer even the most basic question—why is the Xinhai Revolution, which happened in Mainland China, is an origin for a national birthday ceremony held in Taiwan?

Besides the issue of problematic interpretations, the hybrid/chaotic performing techniques in this scene reveal an anxiety toward self-culture. It should be noted that the character of Qing officer wears costumes in *jingju* style; the acting conventions, however, do not come from *jingju*. Instead the officer demands tax payment using a mix of *kungfu* and farce that resembles the hyper-orientalized Disney movie *Mulan*. The chief officer enters the stage laughing like a western-style carnival clown as he is borne on a sedan chair. The officer jokingly denigrates the oppressed people and plays with his golden fan—skillfully rotating it. This comic oriental stereotype seems straight out of a “yellow-face” western drama. At the end of the scene, the performers on the stage dance to the rock band’s “Life Without Justice,” which describes the miserable life that the oppressed people suffer from. The dance here on the stage is a mix of modern dance and Chinese martial arts. Scene six fairly underscores director Lai Sheng-Chuan’s

³⁰ Manchus are an indigenous people of Manchuria. In 1644, Manchus conquered China and established the Qing Dynasty.

attempt of putting together various performing methods—*Jingju*-style acrobatics, spoken drama, modern dance, rock band, martial arts, farce, among others.

Indeed, the whole production of *Dreamers* is composed of a variety of elements, including: Broadway-style jazz dance (which shows its global perspective), *jingju* (which shows its traditional perspective), spoken drama (which shows its westernized perspectives), live rock band (which shows its trendiness), indigenous song (which shows its politically-correct support of Taiwanese minorities), and modern dance (which reminds the audience that the celebrated Cloud Gate Company is a Taiwanese product). Throughout the production, Broadway-style dancing is intertwined with the realistic acting. The Qing oppressors may be depicted in the *jingju* gear, but most characters perform a realistic and melodramatic acting style. As a result, the slight use of *jingju* in this musical production seems strained and awkward. The hybrid performance fairly shows its melancholic identity—it claims to represent a modern, developed, open-minded, and independent Taiwan, and at the same time, refuses to give up its affiliation with China.

Without doubt, Taiwanese theater practitioners are under pressure globally to perform an internationally recognized Chinese aesthetic; their adoption of Chinese materials is both internal to their Taiwanese subject position and also a response to global capitalism. The result is a performing style addicted to both traditional Chinese cultural objects (*jingju*), as well as to western-imported techniques (jazz dance, musical comedy, spoken drama). Put in another words, the performing subjects hastily manipulate a variety of messy codes. Performativity here is not reiterating codes without autonomy, but instead is a survival strategy for Taiwanese to secure an imagined belongingness. Accordingly, the hybridity of performing methodologies exposes

director Lai Sheng-Chuan's (or, even the Taiwanese's) desire for approval from the international audience, and, even more importantly, an anxiety of not "owning China."

To "own" China, *Dreamers* spends pages describing the process of the revolution. In scene seven, the leader of the revolution mentions the historically famous names of the martyrs such as Lin Juemin and Song Yu-Lin. The martyrs exercise their military skills and, at the same time, sing the theme song "Dreamers" all together. At the village used as the military base of the revolution, Lin Juemin, the leader of the event, assigns Wang Wan-Ching to deliver the ammunitions. At first, Wang is not confident enough to accomplish the task. Echoing Hsiao-Fei's father, Wang sings the same song "I Just Want to be an Ordinary Fellow." At that moment, the martyrs are notified that their ammunitions are destroyed, and their fellows were killed by the Qing Government because of the French army's betrayal. The martyrs are desperate. Singing the song "A Common Future," they swear to defend their goal and to create a common future together. As the lyrics state, "We share no common memories; from this moment on let our lives start to walk together."³¹ Yet this interpellation of a collective future dream depends on a dominating, violent, and selective erasure of the past. This act of erasing reveals the constructedness of the national melancholia then and now.

Furthermore, this song does not clarify what kind of future to which these people refer. Certainly, the story indicates that the martyrs plan to fight against the Qing Government. Yet the "common future" that the martyrs refer to is yet vague. It could have been an opportunity for the director to use the idea of "a common future" as a trope for the debatable future of Taiwan and, furthermore, to extend and explore the issue. However, the song that follows, "The World is for All," does not talk about any contemporary issues but only refers to Sun Yat-Sen's famous ruling

³¹ Lai, *Dreamers* (2011).

principles, “the world is for all,” that connect to Kuomintang’s political ideology, “The Three Principles of the People.” Thus far, although including popular elements such as jazz dance, live rock band, go-go dance, and *jingju*, among others, *Dreamers* is not as “avant-garde, trendy, and rock” as it claims to be in the brochure and program. It is, on the contrary, extremely conservative and doctrinaire as it uses those elements to simply legitimize and normalize the Kuomintang government’s rules and ruling, instead of involving any other social issues or political debate.

Dreamers almost looks like a standard lesson put into elementary education textbooks published by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation, the highest official agency in Taiwan for textbooks. The musical, especially this scene describing Xinhai Revolution, interestingly echoes the idea and the style of Revolutionary Opera: the model opera planned and engineered during the Cultural Revolution by Jiang Qing, the partner of Mao Zedong. Similar to the Revolutionary Opera, which functioned to serve the Communist party of the time, *Dreamers* is a government-sanctioned production that performs the national history constructed by the Kuomintang. From the beginning to the end of the production, *Dreamers* was strictly supervised by the Ministry of Culture, a unit directly under the Executive Yuan of the government of Taiwan. It is to be noted that the Kuomintang was then the ruling party and that the celebratory musical was actually a project outsourced by the government. As this hierarchical political system allows and commends this musical that follows the Kuomintang political standpoint, it is not surprising that the contractor, Lai Sheng-Chuan and his working team, produced it through the lens of Kuomintang principles. Also, although it may not be the most important point here, Lai Sheng-Chuan was born and raised in a typical “pan-blue” (a political alliance in Taiwan consisting of the Kuomintang, the People First Party, and the New Party) family. The name “pan-

blue” comes from the party color of the Kuomintang. Lai Sheng-Chuan was born on 26 October 1954 in Washington D.C., where his father Lai Chia-Chiu was serving in the Republic of China’s Embassy. Lai Chia-Chiu was among the soldiers who retreated to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek after failing in the Chinese Civil War. It is thus understandable that Lai Sheng-Chuan’s political standpoint is, if not “dark blue,” “pan blue.”

Jiang Qing’s Revolutionary Operas follow the rule of *Sentutzu*, which means “three emphases” in English. According to Yu Hui-Yung’s famous article “Jang wenyichieh yungyuan chengwei hsuanhuan Maozedong ssuhsiang te chenti,” published by Chinese newspaper *Wen Hui Bao* on May 23rd, 1968.³² *Sentutzu* requires, first, emphasizing the positive roles among all roles, second, emphasizing the heroes among all positive roles, and third, emphasizing the main hero among all heroes. Interestingly, the roles in *Dreamers* are characterized according to the *Sentutzu* principle. In scene eight, in a night market, Da-Te introduces Hao, a gangster, to Hsiao-Fei and Chun-Chun. Realizing that Hao is the sponsor of the fruit decorations that he does not think compatible with his dance piece, Hsiao-Fei rudely walks away and upsets Hao. Hao tries to convince Hsiao-Fei that financial benefits should be their first priority due to the difficult environment and that he can make Hsiao-Fei the winner by making several calls to the judges of the audition. Hsiao-Fei, however, replies that he believes in the “integrity of the piece.” Da-Te tries to persuade Hsiao-Fei, yet Hsiao-Fei criticizes Da-Te by describing him as a fool without dreams. Da-Te then threatens that he will leave the group and take away other members. The two physically fight. In the chaos, Hao attempts to sexually harass Chun-Chun. To rescue Chun-Chun, Hsiao-Fei was struck savagely by Hao and his gangsters. It should be noted that Hao is

³² Yu Hui-Yung, “Jang wenyichieh yungyuan chengwei hsuanhuan Maozedong ssuhsiang te chenti,” *Wen Hui Bao* (May 23, 1968).

characterized as a typical negative role—greedy, erotic, and frivolous. Wearing a dramatic black fur vest, a woman straw hat, and a pair of neon yellow tight short pants, Hao dresses almost like a drag queen. His falsetto even makes him less masculine. Hao’s gangsters, a group of three, wear sunglasses and typical local Taiwanese shirts (similar to Hawaiian shirts by appearance). The way they walk is also typical local Taiwanese style: slouching, feet toward outside, and pushing chins and groins forward. Compared to these negative roles, Hsiao-Fei walks and fights like a noble soldier: chin up and chest out. Da-Te is characterized as a typical weak man that is easily seduced by negative powers. He is basically a positive role but one that cannot resist the temptation that surrounds him. Chun-Chun and another girl, who believed to be Da-Te’s girl friend, are characterized as weak and innocent positive ones that need to be rescued and reclaimed by the hero. Hsiao-Fei, especially in this scene, is characterized as a real hero who leads people to complete the mission (the dance).

Throughout the performance, it is clear that the Qing officers and Hao are the negative roles, Da-Te and other group members the positive roles, and Hsiao-Fei the true and only hero. Emphasizing Hsiao-Fei as the true and only hero, *Dreamers* sneakily legitimizes Hsiao-Fei’s philosophy of adopting the Xinhai Revolution as his inspiration to honor the centennial celebration of his imagined country (whether that be ROC or Taiwan). In this light, the technique of *Sentutzū* becomes one of the clues to *Dreamers*’ national melancholia.

Furthermore, just like Jiang Qing’s Revolutionary Operas usually have happy endings to honor the proletarian heroes contributing to the nation, *Dreamers* provides a delightful ending to excite the audience. In order to work out the happy ending, *Dreamers* once again juxtaposes the dream of the youth and that of the Xinhai Revolution. At the end of scene eight, Hsiao-Fei and Chun-Chun perform the love song “Where Have I Met You Before” together, implying they are

the incarnations of Hsiao-Fei's great-grandparents. The lyrics say, "If I met you a hundred years ago, would I have a chance to be with you; I remember me with my pigtail and you with your bound feet."³³ Reinforcing the association between the young couple with Hsiao-Fei's great-grandparents, at the beginning of scene nine, Lin Chun-Mei and Wang Wan-Ching also perform the song "My Twenty Years" that Chun-Chun and Hsiao-Fei have sung before in scene two. Their performance here is the prelude of the coming revolution. Again, unable to pay the tax, Lin-Chun Mei is suffered from the Qing officers' abuse: she is sexual assaulted by them, which case reminds the audience of Chun-Chun's case. Before Wang Wan-Ching leaves for the revolution, he plants a tree for their newly born son and sings "The thick tree roots will let you see the years; past the roots through the earth you will see your ancestors."³⁴ Wang Wan-Ching's singing echoes the Chinese proverb "One generation plants the trees in whose shade another generation rest," which asks people to appreciate what their ancestors have done for them, and completes the metaphor of tree reoccurring throughout the performance.

Finally, at the end of scene nine, the Xinhai Revolution begins. While the rock band performs the song "Blessing," a female dancer in a contemporary red dress spins ceaselessly in modern dance technique in the fog of dry ice on the stage. It is understandable that this unexpected dance piece is probably designed to emphasize the feeling of uncertainty and anxiety toward the coming revolution. Even so, this sudden piece appears awkwardly that it does not match with the scene of Chinese peasants, nor does it produce any montage effect. The piece simply shows how the musical tries too hard to install a contemporary dance to "fashionize" and "(post)modernize" the whole production.

³³ Lai, *Dreamers* (2011).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

In scene ten, a cabaret style show called “One Hundred Degrees Burning Taiwan” first appears on the stage. The audience hears Hao introduces the show as his piece for the competition. With a neon purple sign of “100” lit on the scenery, fifty female go-go dancers in yellow lingerie, fruit-decorated hats, and red pumps and five Harley motorcyclists, as seen in the first scene, and one young man in shining pink suits, dance and sing in a cheerful and flirting manner on the stage. After Hao’s piece, Hsiao-Fei, in pure white clothes, enters the stage and introduces himself as the leader of Dreamers. Hsiao-Fei’s piece then starts. A group of young people, all in pure white costumes with half-transparent fabrics tied on their shoulders, performs modern dance to the theme song “Dreamers.” Compared to the colorful lighting and fancy setting of Hao’s piece, the staging of Hsiao-Fei’s piece is simple: dry ice and blue-wash lighting throughout the piece. Since Hsiao-Fei’s piece is the final winner, it is obvious that Hao’s vulgar, local, cabaret show functions to emphasize the legitimacy and superiority of Hsiao-Fei’s elegant, global, Xinhai-Revolution-themed piece. Again, *Dreamers*, paradoxically, tries to honor Taiwan through demeaning Taiwanese locality and highlighting the Chinese history. Immediately after the scene of competition, the martyrs of the revolution appear on the stage and are about the start the war. The spectacular lightings, dry ice, artificial wind, torches, and electronic moving sceneries all function to produce the atmosphere of the revolution. Although being killed one by one, the martyrs stand and sing with strong energy. At the same time, the rock band plays the national song of ROC with the national flag is projected on the big screen on the stage. The actor who plays Sun Yat-Sen enters, traveling across the stage. People, now including the martyrs and the contemporary youths, scream and laugh hysterically with huge revolution-victory flags in their hands. Juxtaposing the victory of Xinhai Revolution and that of Hsiao-Fei’s piece,

Dreamers finally completes its own mission of integrating the two dreams into one that fully embodies the national melancholia that I have discussed above.

At the end of the story, Hsiao-Fei, his parents, and Chun-Chun, are all together celebrating Hsiao-Fei's dream coming true: his dance piece is accepted as the key performance of the national ceremony. It is understandable that the happy ending of the story attempts to glorify Taiwan by combining the national day with the characters' success. However, this seemingly satisfactory ending (exploring his family heritage and maintaining his artistic integrity while being a dutiful son and good boyfriend) does not really satisfy the questions and doubts raised by the critics and audiences regarding the political implication embedded in the title of the performance, which I will discuss in detail in the following.

What Happened to The Title of The Centennial Celebration?

Over the past fifty years, the relationship between the China and Taiwan has determined the way Taiwan's government operates. After the Kuomintang Government retreated to Taiwan and adopted a defensive strategy in 1949, the question of whether to take back Mainland China or to establish Taiwan as the "orthodox China" became the topic of an extensive and problematic debate. In an interview with the German newspaper *Deutsche Welle* in 1999, Lee Teng-Hui, the then current president of Taiwan, stated that, "[S]ince the introduction of its constitutional reforms in 1991, Taiwan has redefined its relationship with mainland China as being state to state relations or at least special state to state relations."³⁵ After withdrawing from the United Nation in 1971 due to the political oppression by People's Republic of China, the Taiwanese

³⁵ See Lee Teng-Hui, Personal Interview by Dieter Weirich, Gunter Knabe, and Simone de Manso Cabral from *Deutsche Welle* (1999) at the following link:
Chinese source: http://www.cass.net.cn/zhuanti/taiwan_1/comments/german.htm (accessed September 9, 2012)
English source: <http://www.taiwandc.org/nws-9926.htm> (accessed September 9, 2012).

government subsequently lost its representative position in the World Health Organization, the World Bank Group, and the International Monetary Fund.³⁶ Until 1998, Taiwan failed in its attempt to reenter those international organizations because of the economic and political opposition exerted by the People's Republic of China.³⁷

Due to the political history of how Taiwan interacts (in an extremely subtle way) with the People's Republic of China, *Dreamers*, a product(ion) of the Taiwanese government, was carefully supervised by government authorities. In the design of the program book and the official website of centennial celebration, the nuance of Chinese and English titles of the performance given to Taiwanese and international audiences illustrates how the idea of nation is simultaneously reinforced and ironically erased at this supposedly historical and political moment—the centennial national celebration. The precise translation (from Chinese) of the entire title of the performance should be *Republic of China, Wonderful 100—Dreamers*, instead of the one officially disseminated, *Republic of China Centennial—Dreamers*.³⁸ The removal of

³⁶ In 1971, in a reversal of its long-standing commitment to the Kuomintang government of Taiwan, and a policy of non-recognition of the communist People's Republic of China, United nation voted to seat the PRC as a permanent member and expel Taiwan.

³⁷ As the political and economic conflicts between PRC and ROC exacerbated, PRC Government has made Taiwan's diplomatic situation even more difficult.

³⁸ The original Chinese title of the production is “Chingtsai yipai shengjih paitui, yaokun yinyuehchu menghsiangchia.” Portions of the musical can be seen at the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJnTpibLzYo;>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdXG_g683G0;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIWmubxV5Cc;>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dx17Eu81rI8;>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaOv-05Wo-o;>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Koz8mAGIu7Y;>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EK_HLOGPJc0;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzeniVCFVe8;>

the segment *Wonderful 100*, from the title, is precisely the starting point of all the debates about this national celebration. In 2010, when the Taiwanese government first announced the Chinese title of the centennial celebration, political activists, including students, scholars, and politicians, from both the Kuomintang and the Minjintang voiced their concerns.³⁹ While the partisans of Kuomintang claimed that a clear statement indicating the history of nation-establishment was missing, arguing that it should be called “Nation-establishment 100,” the partisans of Minjintang declared that Taiwan should be announced as an independent nation, one whose identity is not linked to China.⁴⁰

First, the segment *Wonderful 100* clearly reveals how sensitive political phrases, such as “nation-establishment,” are replaced by relatively vague, optimistic, and even utopian adjectives, like “wonderful.” Although the first segment of the Chinese title, *Republic of China*, indicates that Taiwan “is” the Republic of China, the middle title, *Wonderful 100*, through its vagueness, tactically avoids any mentioning of the “action” of establishing the ROC. Due to the fear that those “inappropriate” words—the words refer to the “action” of establishing ROC—might lead to political oppression and revenge from the PRC, the Taiwanese government finds an alternative to replace the word “nation-establishment” that implicates Taiwan as an independent country, and at the same time, refuses to give up defining itself as Republic of China. “*Wonderful 100*,” therefore, as a dreamy and magical title, signifies a dream of nostalgic, utopian, and sentimental melancholia.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unefTscvKVC>; and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjVUQ1mZw3Y>.

³⁹ Minjintang is a political party in Taiwan, and the dominant party in the Pan-Green Coalition. It has traditionally been associated with strong advocacy of a distinct Taiwanese identity.

⁴⁰ See Lin Nan-Sen, “Taichengfu painien chingchu huipi chienkuo yin chengyi,” *The British Broadcasting Corporation* (2010) at the following link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/trad/china/2010/03/100330_taiwan_100anni.shtml (accessed September 9, 2012).

Second, the missing word (i.e. “wonderful”) in the English title subtly reveals the Taiwanese government’s political awkwardness toward the international public. The name “wonderful 100” is controversial because it is not clear what “wonderful 100” actually means. Without acknowledging the event is for the national centennial celebration, one might be hard to presume any connection between “wonderful 100” and the founding of ROC. This linguistic disconnection signifies the government’s political strategy—removing the controversial, almost strange word “wonderful” from the English title so that the political debates about the “wonderful 100” can, at least, be contained between China and Taiwan. Because the English title contains the word “centennial,” which seems to fairly describe the content of the event and, dodges the troublesome word “wonderful,” the English title successfully avoids any international assumption about the sensitive relationship between Taiwan and China. Since this play on words—the replacement of the political vocabulary “nation-establishment” with the vague word “wonderful”—only appears in the Chinese version of the title, the debates over the political issues of whether Taiwan is (part of) China are preserved as a domestic problem.

Women as National Abjection

In the melancholic landscape, loss becomes denial and exclusion. Exclusion naturalizes the complicated loss of the inassimilable other. Echoing Cheng’s notion of racial melancholia but approaching it from a different psychoanalytic angle, Karen Shimakawa argues in *National Abjection* that the forms of Asian Americanness that appear in U.S. culture are a function of national abjection—“a process that demands that Americanness be defined by the exclusion of Asian Americans who are either cast as symbolic foreigners incapable of integration or

Americanization or distorted into an ‘honorary’ whiteness.”⁴¹ To explain, the national abject must be made present and jettisoned at the same time in order to contribute to the formation of the national subject. As Shimakawa argues, “Asian American is a category both produced through and in reaction to abjection within and by dominant U.S. culture—a discursive formation that both describes a demographic category and calls that category into being.”⁴²

Shimakawa borrows Julia Kristeva’s notion of abjection to fashion her model of national abjection within the context of U.S. culture. For Kristeva, the process of abjection is an attempt to circumscribe and differentiate something that is paradoxically an undifferentiable part of the whole.⁴³ In *Power of Horror*, Kristeva argues that the experiences of abjection are decidedly rooted in the body. She defines abjection as an ambivalent process of subject formation in which things that the self cannot assimilate are expelled, disavowed, and designated repugnant. This traumatic process of dividing the self from what the self refuses to be is the mechanism that defines the subject and object dichotomy and further underpins individual and collective identity/identification.

In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler utilizes the notion of abjection to discuss gendered social subject formation. Butler analyzes the way white, heterosexual male bodies function as centralized within discourse whereas others do not. For Butler, “the exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet ‘subject,’ but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject.”⁴⁴ In other words, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection,

⁴¹ Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection* (Durham: Duke University, 2002), 1-22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴³ Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, and an abject outside, which is inside the subject as its own founding repudiation.⁴⁵ Butler further points out that the identification with abjection will be persistently disavowed and this disavowed abjection will threaten to expose the self-grounding presumptions of the sexed subject. It is therefore necessary to, according to Butler, consider this threat as a critical resource to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility.⁴⁶

Unlike Kristeva and Butler, however, Shimakawa does not see Asian Americanness as resulting in the formation of an Asian American subject. Asian Americanness instead occupies a role mutually constitutive of national subject formation in relation to and as a product of U.S. Americanness. For Shimakawa, Asian Americanness is uniquely the specific index of a national ontology that fortifies the nation and its boundaries through the constitution of the Asian American as the abject to be refused, punished, and marginalized.

Like those of Butler and Kristeva, Shimakawa's model of abjection grapples with the connections between the body and politics. For Shimakawa, although it may not be possible to wholly eliminate the element of abjection from the process of subject formation, one may come to a consciousness of that element and produce a demystification of power.⁴⁷ Shimakawa's formulation of cultural and political abjection offers a way to understand the links between the psychic, symbolic, legal, and aesthetic dimensions of national identity as performed by Taiwanese people. The literal and symbolic exclusion of indigeneity and femininity has been fundamental to the formation of Taiwanese-ness. The construction of nation operates through

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection* (Durham: Duke University, 2002), 101.

exclusionary means. It is through abjection that the (seemingly) stable national subject is constituted.

The literal and symbolic exclusion of femininity has occurred in the formation of the national identity of Taiwan. Through this gender abjection, the seemingly stable national subject is constituted and maintained. The national abjection of Taiwan is not separated from the sexist discourse of Confucian principles. According to *Lunyu*,⁴⁸ women are to subordinate to men who contribute to the nation. In order to be an “ideal woman,” one should be gentle, perseverant, and submissive. This “ideal woman” can be largely found in Taiwanese contemporary theaters, especially those focusing on collective nationality.

In *Dreamers*, Chun-Chun and Lin Chun-Mei, the two female roles in the stories from different generations, are shaped as the “Taiwanese ideal women” that, instead of directly participating in the national project, put all efforts into supporting their male partners’ pursuit of the project. Instead of directly participating in the project, which, according to Confucius doctrine, should only be pursued by men, the ideal woman takes care of the families, kids, and her man. While Chun-Chun’s male partner Hsiao-Fei worries about his life career and how his artistic work can contribute to the nation, Chun-Chun is only concerned about her romance with Hsiao-Fei and what she can do to support Hsiao-Fei.

It seems that, for Chun-Chun, the national project matters only when it is related to her male partner. In scene four, while Hsiao-Fei crazily educates all others of his passion for art and nation, Chun-Chun is silent. She works as Hsiao-Fei’s personal secretary and mental support. In scene five, while Hsiao-Fei’s father is irritated by Hsiao-Fei’s career plan, his mother is also silent during the fight between the father and the son, only trying to comfort the men.

⁴⁸ *Lunyu*, as known as the Analects of Confucius, is the collection of saying and theories attributed to the Chinese philosopher and Educator Confucius and his followers.

For Lin Chun-Mei, the only reason for her to follow her husband to join the Xinhai Revolution is to take care of her husband and other male martyrs participating in the uprising. As an ideal woman, Lin Chun-Mei is not involved with the planning of the revolution. Instead, she cooks and cleans, and maybe “comforts” the team, as a “typical good woman” that follows the gender norms of Confucian principles.

As Shu-Mei Shih argues in “Gender, Nation, Transnational perspectives,” women are always absent from national events, issues, and institutions.⁴⁹ Shih points out that women are the minority gender group of the minority country (Taiwan) and as such, the symbol of women is easily sacrificed in the political strategies that deal with national issues. However, she asks about the possibilities that this double-minority-ness has to produce an alternative power through which women might access and enter (trans)national discussions. Shih’s proposal can be useful in terms of a tactical approach. Yet it seems that, opposing Shih’s model of a double-minority potential, the female characters in *Dreamers* are not aware of the capacity of their minority status, nor do they have an intention to participate the national discussion.

By employing theories of abjection discussed by Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Karen Shimakawa as well as Shu-Mei Shih’s perspectives on gender and nation, I examine how the absence of women from national events, issues, and institutions functions as a process of abjection. Read as abject, femininity must be simultaneously made present and jettisoned in relation to the patriarchal, normative, Confucian, Han Taiwan. In other words, femininity occupies roles that are necessary to and constitutive of national subject formation.

While both Cheng and Shimakawa articulate identity formation through psychoanalysis and account for both guilt and the denial of guilt, Cheng uses the model of melancholia to

⁴⁹ Shu-Mei Shih, “Hsingpie, chungtsu, kuakuoshihchiao,” Chien Ying-Ying edits, *Nuhsing hsinling chih lu* (Taipei: Fembooks Publishing, 2003), 25.

examine how both majoritarian and minoritarian groups suffer from both psychological rejections of and attachment to each other, whereas Shimakawa elaborates the notion of abjection to explore how nationality is defined by domestic exclusion of minority groups. Different as they are, both approaches emphasize the relationship between majoritarian and minoritarian groups. As Butler states in *Precarious Life*, one is not only constituted by one's relation with others but also dispossessed by them.⁵⁰ Relationality is not only a descriptive or historical fact of identity formation but also an ongoing normative dimension of political lives.⁵¹ Butler proposes to confront the political predicament and common human vulnerability that precedes the formation of identity. This vulnerability can become exacerbated under certain historical and political conditions, especially those in which violence is a common way to authorize self-defense. Butler therefore argues for an ethical recognition, which is important to the constitution of vulnerability. In other words, grief is not to be resigned to inaction but to be understood as the slow process by which one develops a point of identification with suffering itself.⁵² For Butler, grief furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility.⁵³ As she claims, "grief contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am."⁵⁴ Grief displays the thrall in which one is held by one's relations, in ways that challenge the notion of one as autonomous and in control. According to Butler, recognizing the national traumas of rejection and denial can possibly highlight an opportunity for

⁵⁰ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

a reconsideration of relationality between conflicting groups and the importance of establishing radically egalitarian national awareness. In this light, an inquiry of how *Dreamers* works within and against the national melancholia and abjection can be a potential topic that not only provides a critical discussion of identity formation but also brings about a turning point to reconsider how these national phenomena can be perceived and elaborated.

The (un)Happy Ending

Extensively funded by the Council for Cultural Affairs, *Dreamers* was replete with extravagant stage designs—the dry ice devices, the golden sculpture set in the huge water pool on the stage, the multiple electric large-scale sceneries, and three-story-high tower with rock bands on it, hundreds of moving lights— which effectively delivered the government’s message of how wealthy and energetic Taiwan’s economy has become. However, *Dreamers* drew criticism from Taiwanese intellectuals such as Chi Wei-Jan, Lin Tsai-Yun, Hung Hung, Feng Guang-Yuan, among others for its staging.⁵⁵ According to an article published on *China Times* by Chi Wei-Jan, *Dreamers* did not meet the standards expected from such a high-budget production and also illustrated “how the government has seriously contaminated the performing

⁵⁵ *Dreamers* aroused serious debates over the production. The Taiwanese director Hung-hung criticized the play as inhabiting politics rather than arts. Similarly, Chi Wei-Jan, another Taiwanese playwright and a professor of Drama and Theater at National Taiwan University, questioned the script and representation of the play. The Taiwanese choreographer Lin Hwai-Min known internationally for his work with Cloud Gate Dance Company also expressed his regret that this high-budget production did not help draw people closer. After the presidential election in 2012, responding to such negative comments, Lai Sheng-Chuan stated that he focuses on creating rather than manipulating budgets and that he is willing to listen to the public critiques. The critiques thereafter intertwined with vicious political squabbles, expanding into larger debates regarding the relationship between the theater industry and the political field in Taiwan. See *Performance Critics* online reviews (Hung Hung 2011; Lin Tsai-Yun 2011) and Lin Hwai-Min (2011).

arts in Taiwan, and how the theaters have pathetically degenerated into mobs fawning on the government.”⁵⁶

At the same time, performing artist and critic Yao Jui-Chung, among others mentioned above, launched a movement called *Wenhua Yuannien* (文化元年, Cultural Renewing) that asks for reconsideration and revision of the established cultural policies and collusion between governments and cultural organizations. They state (in Chinese) in their manifesto:

Dreamers, whose production received more than two billion Taiwanese dollars from the Taiwanese government crucially reflects the serious symptoms of the current cultural industry of Taiwan. This is a movement launched by a group of art/cultural workers to ask for a healthier modification to the national cultural policies. We ask people to face to this issue together, to change the situation wherein politics dominate cultural development, to figure out ways through which local arts and cultures may operate with diversity and agency, and to enrich the cultural lives of Taiwanese citizens and make Taiwan a better country.⁵⁷

On the blog and in the events of *Wenhua Yuannien*, practitioners such as Yao Jui-Chung and Hung Hung, Mayao Biho, Lee Chien-Chang, among many others, published and presented many articles and speeches regarding the problematic power structures that have dominated cultural development in Taiwan. The debates and fights over the centennial celebration events became a series of snowballing scandals and *Dreamers* was just the tip of the iceberg. Other events during the celebration also aroused serious debates. For example, the *Wenhua Yuannien* activist Lee Chien-Chang, who is, ironically, Lai Sheng-Chuan’s student, refused to be the director of the

⁵⁶ Chi Wei-Jan, “Menghsiang huanmieh te kuochia,” *China Times* (Taipei) (17 October 2011), A14.

⁵⁷ This manifesto is originally published on *Wenhua Yuannieh* and is translated into English by me.

Taitung Painien Tipiao Locheng Wanhui (Taitung Centennial Landmark Opening Night Party). Lee Chien-Chang was first invited by Lin Hwai-Min, the artistic director of Cloud Gate, but then refused to accept the job as he visited Taitung in person and talked to the indigenous couple Banai and Nabu, the leaders of the anti-nuclear movement. Recognizing that the newly built “Centennial Landmark” destroys the natural environment of Taitung and also involves the controversial Lungmen Nuclear Power Plan Project, Lee Chien-Chang resigned the directorship and wrote a public petition to Ma Ying-Jeou. This petition was also published in the *Wenhua Yuannien* and was considered by all activists as the key that activated the *Wenhua Yuannien* movement. *Taitung Painien Tipiao Locheng Wanhui* was not a random, occasional example; it reflects that the production of *Dreamers* is intertwined with the even more complex structure of government-business collusion and of dominating Kuomintang policies. However, these controversial ideologies and related social issues pursuant to the production are entirely hidden by the dreamy story of the play.

Indeed, *Dreamers* obscures complicated political and social issues by installing an unclarified concept of “dreaming” in the play. These dreams, including Hsiao-Fei’s dream of pursuing “the ideal art” and his great-grandparents’ dream of establishing “a better country,” are vague and never fully explained.⁵⁸ The production therefore avoids confronting or clearly displaying reality: the political and social implications are too complicated and sensitive to be staged. As it blurs all the topics by offering a utopian term “dreamer,” the performance becomes entertainment by obfuscation and glosses over all possible debates. To respond to the harsh criticisms, in a public press conference held in Taipei (January 18, 2012), Lai Sheng-Chuan explained that *Dreamers* absolutely does not involve in any embezzlement and that he has

⁵⁸ Lai, *Dreamers* (2011).

decided not to participate in any national events in the future.⁵⁹ Rather than taking sides, I point out that, even though the ostentatious production did not clearly address specific political issues, as a product(ion) of government-theater cooperation/collusion, it significantly highlighted the melancholic ambivalence of the island.

I suggest that, rather than decrying the controversial budget of seven million US dollars and the arguable quality of the production, one can take *Dreamers* as a performance that fairly underscores Taiwanese melancholic ambivalence toward the lost China. In other words, *Dreamers'* value is not, as the director, producer, and the government claim—to represent the Taiwanese people's dreams across generations, but rather to expose what is refused, denied, and covered up in this melancholic “dream.” As Freud stresses that melancholia is involved in the formation of the ego by complicated interactions between loss, refusal, and identification, *Dreamers* unveils the way in which Taiwan is, in fact, constituted by an imagined nostalgia toward China—the political codes that one reiterates to sustain the identity of Taiwan.

The national melancholia appearing in *Dreamers* (in)directly works through the formation of Taiwan's national identity. In this essay, I attempted to point out that melancholia could be a robust critical methodology for theorizing national identity. It is not only a theoretical model of identity that provides a vocabulary for discussing the invisible dimensions of the intersection of politics and the arts in Taiwan, but also an open-ended critical framework for understanding the constitutive role that melancholia plays in national subject-formation. I consider melancholia as the term that creatively approaches the identity formation of the political subject in Taiwan. As Cheng notes, the ambivalence toward the other and the unspoken loss—

⁵⁹ See Chiu Chiung-Ping, “Lai Sheng-Chuan: menghsiangchia tsungtoutaowei toupushih pian,” *United Daily News* (18 January 2012) at the following link:

<http://udn.com/NEWS/NATIONAL/NAT1/6854092.shtml> (accessed September 9, 2012).

the avowal and disavowal mobility in melancholia—are the basis of the individual’s sense of her/his subjectivity. My elaboration on Taiwanese melancholy toward China emphasizes that even if the melancholic subject is obsessed with what it has lost, s/he also consumes and gains nourishment from that loss, which becomes subsumed as a part of the subject’s identity.

Dreamers simultaneously reflects and forges Taiwan’s ambivalent, melancholic identity. It is never the essence of Taiwanese identity in Taiwan that determines the performance; rather, it is the reciprocal relationship between Taiwanese identity and China and this contemporary performance that highlights the interactive, fluid, and flexible situation of both sides. In the last scene, three groups of dancers enter the colorfully lit stage. Each group of dancers wears costumes of different colors: red, white, and blue—the colors of the national flag of Taiwan.⁶⁰ Within the song “One Hundred Years,” the dancers cheerlead in an energetic manner. Following comes the indigenous musician Hu Te-Fu’s singing “The Wish Fulfilling Tree,” which elegantly combines indigenous language and Mandarin Chinese. The song is performed in a sentimental and touching style: Hu Te-Fu sings the song in a warm voice and holding a little boy by the hand. The lyrics of the song use the metaphor of a tree to express appreciation for the ancestors’ contribution, which here seems to refer to the sacrificed martyrs of the past (represented by the grand parents we have seen in the story). This image of a tree, symbolizing the ancestors’ contribution, appears everywhere throughout the performance. Lateral sliding flats are painted with trees, and images of trees are projected onto the back wall of the stage. These trees are not designed to look realistic, but are the typical formalist trees usually found in children’s picture books. Combined with the colorful scenery, the dual sets of characters (the grandparents and the

⁶⁰ The Taiwanese national flag, commonly described as blue sky, white sun, and a wholly red earth was officially adopted in Mainland China by the Kuomintang in 1924 to represent the revolutionary martyrs sacrificed in the anti-Qing movements and Sun Yat-Sen’s notion of Three Principles of the People. Blue symbolizes nationalism and liberty; white represents democracy and equality; and red refers to the citizens’ comradeship.

contemporary descendants), and the trope of “dreamer,” the metaphor of the tree not only connects to the popular issue of ecological sustainability but also makes the performance a kind of political allegory that attempts to educate the audience about the essence of the country as descended from a noble family tree, and to foster appreciation for this.

Undeniably, the musical, as part of the centennial celebration sponsored by the Kuomintang government, is directed through its particular political viewpoint. The Taiwanese national flag appears again and again to demonstrate how strongly politics saturates the production—the flag is held in audience members’ hands, projected onto the canopy of the stage, symbolized in the costume colors—In turn, Hu Te-Fu’s ending song gently concludes the whole performance with an indigenous note that de-homogenizes the political agenda of Kuomintang government. Certainly, one might argue that this sentimental song has no connection to the story but only functions as an “indigenous element” to prove the egalitarian setting of the production. It is, however, this aspect of the production that subtly exposes and transforms the political goals of the show into a flexible constitutive force that not only arouses debate but also further generates and enriches the notion of Taiwanese identity.

Formosa Carnival

Without a doubt, we can find ways to defend *Dreamer* by emphasizing its well-intentioned attempt to provide a pop culture, avant-garde national-level musical to celebrate the centennial day of the ROC. However, this attempt cannot and should not mask all the national, political, identificatory, gender, and racial debates created by the setting, the (re)presentation, and the promotion of the production. As compared to the controversial *Dreamer*, *Formosa Carnival* (寶島歌舞, 2011) is generally considered a more successful musical production that

was also a part of the government-sponsored centennial celebration events.⁶¹ Unlike *Dreamer*, a national production organized by world-renowned artists such as Lai Sheng-Chuan, *Formosa Carnival* was a smaller production created by emerging practitioners with less funding. Nonetheless, *Formosa Carnival* was favorably reviewed in print papers and online forums. Directed by Taiwanese theater, film, and music practitioners Wang Hung-Yuan, Wang Hsih-Wen, Chiang Chin-Lin, Lin Hsiao-Chien, and Lu Lung-Shih, *Formosa Carnival* was a flash mob performance that took place in Taipei Railway Station, the Carrefour supermarket in Taipei, and the National Center for Traditional Arts in Yilan (in chronological order). Produced by Studio M and Activator Marketing Company, both groups led by younger artists, *Formosa Carnival* cannily reinterprets two classic Taiwanese popular songs, Lim Giong's Taiwanese rock-and-roll *Marching Forward* (1990) and Chang Yu-Sheng's Chinese song *My Future is Not Dream* (1988). In the first performance of *Formosa Carnival*, which took place in Taipei Railway Station at 9:50 AM on October 12th 2011, seventy performers in various historical Taiwanese costumes acted and danced to Lim Giong's song *Marching Forward*. In these vintage costumes, some of the performers played famous historical figures from Taiwanese history. For example, at the beginning of the show, a young man in the traditional uniform of a Qing minister wandered in front of the station with a wooden sign in his hand. Via the name written on the sign, the audiences immediately realized that this young man was playing the role of Liu Ming-Chuan (1836-1896), the first governor of the newly established province of Taiwan. Other performers played activist students in high school uniforms popular in the 70s; some wore stereotypical pure white outfits and portrayed the Cloud Gate dancers; some wore baseball uniforms and acted as

⁶¹ *Formosa Carnival* can be seen at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DplRi9abusU>.

members of the famous Red Leaf Little League. There were also performers who acted as the traditional Taoist Dragon Dance street artists and Techno Nezha. In addition to these famous Taiwanese cultural symbols, there were small orchestras that played Taiwanese and western instruments, integrating both traditions into the theme song, *Marching Forward*. Not surprisingly, like *Dreamer*, *Formosa Carnival* adopted the image of the ROC national flag—one performer's costume is made of a huge national flag. Instead of performing all at the same time, these performers danced and sang group by group, projecting not to the audiences at the station but to a moving camera. This camera recorded the whole performance in one long take (approximate time 6:45), which made the piece an endless journey tracing back Taiwanese history. Further, this compositional strategy leads the online audiences to (re)visit the station, which is a historical building representing Taipei City.

Published on YouTube, *Formosa Carnival* received positive comments from performance critics, scholars, and the public for not only its great use of long-take but also for its vintage aesthetics. Part of the video of *Formosa Carnival* reproduced the original song's classic music video, which is surely a collective cultural memory for most contemporary Taiwanese people. For example, at the beginning of the video, the song title's font was designed to copy the artistic style of Lim Giong's version. The vintage aesthetics of the video demonstrated a collective nostalgia toward the Taiwan's past and a shared (un)conscious exclusion of contemporary Taiwan.

Without any big, resplendent theater setting, *Formosa Carnival* is three small outdoor flash mob performances, yet, similar to *Dreamers*, this production adopted many elements associated with Kuomintang principles and the Chinese legacy such as the ROC national flag, the Qing government attire, and Cloud Gate style modern dance. Most importantly, just like

Dreamers, this production was strongly supported by the current government and was promoted as part of the centennial celebration events. The issue at stake is that, unlike *Dreamers*, which was a controversial case that led to fierce fighting among the theater practitioners, politicians, and citizens in Taiwan, *Formosa Carnival* seems to have been a great success. Since both adopt similar national/political symbols and are sponsored by the same government for the same purpose at the same occasion, it is clear that the point is not simply what performing elements being used but, more importantly, how they are used in each case. As compared to *Dreamers*, which directly transplanted the anachronic Kuomintang history on to the performance and entirely ignored the precarious national/political issues of the centennial occasion, *Formosa Carnival* flexibly and creatively used those elements by simultaneously highlighting and parodying national icons such as the renowned Cloud Gate Dance Company and Red Leaf Baseball League. For example, the way the performers played the role of a Cloud Gate dancer was campy—the white outfits they wore were exaggeratingly complicated (almost like Japanese Ninja outfits) and one of the performers, with an extremely dreamy and enjoying facial expression, was holding an electric fan to sway the other dancers' outfits in a comedic way. The humorous presentation of *Formosa Carnival* reduced the violence and hegemony of adopting the Kuomintang ideology in the performance. Furthermore, by recalling all these national honors that have become part of the collective memories of Taiwanese citizens, *Formosa Carnival* effectively aroused the audiences' feeling of belonging and therefore (re)produced love and nostalgia toward the island.

During the fighting after the centennial celebration, *Formosa Carnival* was frequently discussed in comparison with *Dreamers*. My comparison of the two performances is not to define *Dreamers* as a failure and *Formosa Carnival* a success but to point out that, first, the

(re)presentation of the performing elements deeply influences the audiences' reactions and that, second, the audiences' reactions reveals that the national/political status of Taiwan is indeed a sensitive issue, a collective anxiety, and a melancholia for the Taiwanese people, both abroad and at home. Furthermore, it is not to say that *Formosa Carnival* is a perfect performance that should be the model case for future nationally-identified performances. Similar to *Dreamers*, *Formosa Carnival* did not participate in the national/political discussion in depth but rather provided a carnivalesque, happy show that brought the audiences temporary amnesia of the current national/political impasse. It is, however, *Formosa Carnival's* success in terms of audiences' reaction that highlights the need for deeper recognition of and further research into national identification in Taiwan.

Part of the government-sponsored centennial celebration events, *Formosa Carnival* however presents Taiwanese identification that is extremely different from the one presented by *Dreamers*. Despite that the theme of "identity struggle" appears in all three pieces, it is clear that the theme is demonstrated differently. Well-combing the Taiwanese popular songs and cultural achievements, *Formosa Carnival* effectively arouses the audiences' passion toward the island and thus implies a collective crave for a local identity. Unlike the above that receives relatively positive comments, the controversial *Dreamers* rarely involves local issues raised at this moment on this island and relies on the anachronistic Kuomintang interpretation of the ROC founded a century ago on the Mainland. This becomes the biggest reason that very limited audience can be touched and inspired by *Dreamers*, even the production possesses astonishing amount of financial support. Government sponsor should not be the central problem as long as there is no bribery and corruption. *Formosa Carnival* surely sets off *Dreamers'* controversies and provides

possible alternatives and further discussions for future government-sponsored cultural productions.

Conclusion

Dreamers is a particularly fruitful site at which to examine national identity formation because its inception and continued operation are driven largely by the process of identification. Through an analysis of Taiwanese contemporary theater productions *Dreamers* that makes use of this Freudian model of melancholia, I demonstrate the popular Taiwanese sentiment that refuses to grieve the loss of China. By perceiving the imagined sense of the Han, the racialized cultural sign of China, as Taiwan's symbolic father, I want to argue that Taiwan enters into a melancholic state, introjecting and incorporating the loss of the mainland by claiming to *be* the Republic of China, using the "traditional Chinese characters," embodying Chinese customs, and practicing Chinese body techniques, among others, while at the same time denying the loss of the mainland. This national melancholia works with, and is sometimes hidden by, the government's cultural policy that has to do with the subtle political relationship between ROC and PROC. During the performative process of introjecting this loss, the Taiwanese national identity paradoxically transgresses and reaffirms the Chinese other. Just as Freud stresses that melancholia is involved in the formation of the ego by complicated interreactions between loss, refusal, and identification, *Dreamers* unveil the ways in which Taiwan is, in fact, constituted by a nostalgia for an imagined China, by political codes that are reiterated to sustain the identity of Taiwan.

It is precisely against the attempts to dodge and deny the relationship between Taiwan and China, I wager, that a possible Taiwanese identity might be mobilized. Yet, when

Taiwanization becomes a politically-correct fashion, both scholars and politicians ignore the connection between China and Taiwan, which deeply affects Taiwanese identity formation.

My choice of melancholia to address Taiwanese identification is based on the recognition that scholars in performance, theater, and cultural studies avoid psychoanalysis when discussing national identity. I develop the model of Taiwanese melancholia with no intention of using psychoanalysis to diagnose the symptoms of national injury. I point out how *Dreamers* reveals “national injury” and “national grief” through examining the complex etiology of political chaos that is instilled into melancholic Taiwanese subjects. The social and subjective formations of the national subject connect strongly to the psychological experience of Taiwanese grief.

Dreamers is a dream that tells the story of a nightmare—a nightmare that during this centennial celebration led to the fierce fighting and distrust between theater practitioners, politicians, and the citizens in Taiwan. Yet it is this nightmare that highlights, produces, and transforms the (un)conscious melancholia and the anxiety of the Taiwanese people when facing sensitive political issues. My purpose in this essay is not to denigrate the values of the production in particular, or attack the entire Taiwanese theater industry in general. In contrast, facing rather than replicating the dream, I see this work of art a jumping-off point for more critical discussion. The performance, which, if we approach it critically, invites us to dissect our nostalgia and begin to address fundamentally what and who we Taiwanese are as a nation and a people.

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**Toward a Queer Island Disidentification of Taiwan: Jade Y. Chen¹'s *Mazu's Bodyguards*
and Golden Bough Theatre's *Pirates and Formosa***

Notice the ignored voices buried under the dominating structure!

Jade Y. Chen, *Mazu's Bodyguards*

How wonderful it is—we are the descendants of pirates!

Wang Rong-Yu, *Pirates and Formosa* program book

The beautiful moment when the cross-dressed Taiwanese Lin Chih-Nan kisses his/her Japanese sister-in-law Miwa Ayako on the lips on stage queers the traditional patriarchal norms that have been a fundamental part of the official national identity. This incestuous relationship contradicts the privileged heterosexual family model and traditional Confucian principles, teasing out a queer island disidentification that signifies Taiwan's unique postcolonial contexts. This is a scene from Jade Y. Chen's cross-cultural opera *Mazu's Bodyguards*, which opened at the National Theatre Concert Hall on December 11th 2009.²

Against a huge rainbow sail raised upon Han Captain Cheng Fei-Hung's pirate ship, Alwida, a Dutch female pirate and an SM lover aim to lead pirates from different countries as well as the Siraya indigenous people from Formosa (Taiwan) on a journey to find the mysterious

¹ Jade Y. Chen, is a Taiwanese writer and theater practitioner who has spent more than ten years studying and working abroad. She received her bachelor's degree in Chinese Literature at Chinese Culture University and double master degrees in literature and history at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, France. She worked as an actress in Spain, a theater director Off-Off-Broadway in New York, and a contracted journalist in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*¹ and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.¹ Her novel *Mazu's Bodyguards* has won many awards, including The Dream of the Red Chamber Award: The World's Distinguished Novel in Chinese and the Taiwan Literature Award and has been translated into Japanese and German. Attracting a great deal of attention at home and abroad, *Mazu's Bodyguard* is popularly touted as "the most important "national allegory" in contemporary Taiwan.

² *Mazu's Bodyguards* is one of the performances included in the "Art Image, Taiwan" project conducted by National Theater Concert Hall in 2009.

treasure, the “heart of ocean.” By presenting images of pirates of different races and genders surviving on the island and theatricalizing an islandscape, the play queers the Chinese-centrist identity of “descendants of dragon”³ that the Kuomintang has promoted for the past sixty years. This is a scene from Golden Bough Theatre ’s *Opela* (胡撇仔) musical *Pirates and Formosa* premiered at Metropolitan Hall on October 28th 2011.

The titles, *Mazu’s Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa* point to an “oceanic” and “insular” Taiwanese-ness: Mazu is a Taoist sea goddess guiding sailors home, and pirates fight and survive on the sea. Both performances manipulate *Gezaixi*⁴ technique to fashion a new Taiwanese theatrical aesthetic that reflects multicultural/multiracial disidentification and (post)colonial struggles. Both productions also consist of Western theatrical techniques and local performing practices, creating cross-cultural performances that denote the cultural uncertainty and hybridity of Taiwan, undoing the truth-claims of nationalist identitarianism and Chinese centrist hegemony that have been advanced by the Kuomintang for their political purposes. Most importantly, the strengthened female characters in both performances rebel against the Confucian gender norms that are deeply interwoven with official national discourse. However, the two performances differ in tone: *Mazu’s Bodyguards* presents a melancholic tragedy that highlights those oppressed and traumatized; whereas *Pirates and Formosa* offers a joyful comedy that renews the early history of Taiwan through parody and pastiche, local jokes and humor.

The multiple histories of colonization, the complex domestic political situation, and the current Cross-Strait relationship inform Taiwan’s current status as a postcolonial and

³ See note 6 on page 6.

⁴ *Gezaixi* is a form of sung-drama or opela performed in the dialect of the Minnan (southern Fujian), the language of the major Han Chinese ethnic group in Taiwan.

melancholic island.⁵ Since the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the Chinese Civil War, Taiwan has been considered a military base to re-conquer mainland China. Patriotic songs and poems popular during the post-retreat period such as *Ode to the Republic of China* emphasize the nostalgia toward and the spirit to win back mainland China. From the Kuomintang's point of view, the island of Taiwan simply functioned as a temporary refuge that served the collective goal of returning to the mainland. However, as June Yip points out in *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*, the abandoning of the objective of "reconquering the mainland," the lifting of Martial Law, and the dissolution of Taiwan's provincial government "have contributed to the increasingly strong demands for a reassessment of the islands' 'national' identity, including the possibility of an independent Taiwan"(6). Despite the fact that the idea of retaking mainland China has become an anachronistic cliché and a hybrid Taiwanese identification has been gradually replacing the Chinese identity, Kuomintang ideological violence remains as historical debris that continues ghosting the island. The shared political traumas and ethnic antagonisms caused by disastrous events such as the 228 Massacre (1947) emphasize the necessity of a queer island disidentification, which is fashioned and highlighted by the performance that this project discusses.⁶

Thus far, scholarship in Taiwan tends to define *Mazu's Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa* as shared national allegories that stage familiar histories and reflect the collective memory of most Taiwanese people. Differing from this perspective, I consider *Mazu's*

⁵ Cross-Strait relations refer to the relations between mainland China and Taiwan separated by the Taiwan Strait, and especially the relations between their respective governments, the PRC and the ROC.

⁶ The 228 Massacre was an anti-government uprising in Taiwan which was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang Government and which resulted in the massacre of numerous civilians.

Bodyguards and *Pirates and Formosa* both queer, de-hegemonic, and postcolonial performances that not only represent colonial traumas but also, more importantly, challenge the official, Kuomintang-advanced, historical grand narrative that has relied deeply upon Confucian gender norms and the exclusion of women as subjects of nation-building processes. The pressing issue to be examined here is the complexity of ideological operations and subversive resistance coded within the queer play in *Mazu's Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa*. I argue that the queer energies and lives in the two plays disrupt the psychological mechanism of national melancholia that I analyzed in Chapter 1.

In the critical discourses on national identification, postcolonial critiques have provided robust models for examining tactical resistances of the colonized working within and against dominating powers. For example, in *Postcolonialism*, Robert Young emphasizes that anti-colonial practices were revolutionary, transformative and hybrid mixtures of the indigenous and the cosmopolitan, diasporic formations of intellectual and cultural resistance that restructured and reproduced power and knowledge.⁷ While significant, postcolonial critiques tend to homogenize the colonized in order to emphasize resistant tactics and, in that homogenization, seldom account for seminal gender and sexual differences. Yet it is exactly the interlacing of gender and sexual identificatory practices with histories of colonization and of indigenous peoples that actually form the inclusive term “Taiwaneseness.” According to Chang Heui-Yuan’s definition given in *A Theater of Taiwaneseness: politics, ideologies, gezaixi*, “‘Taiwaneseness’ refers to the nature of Taiwanese culture and its presumed attributes. It is largely connected with the culture and history of southeastern Chinese immigrants who first arrived in numbers during

⁷ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 1-11.

the 17th century and continued pouring in through the Qing dynasty.”⁸ Chang yet continues, “it (Taiwaneseness) not only excludes the culture of the aborigines, who were the first settlers of the island, but also draws a line against the latest immigrants from all over mainland China in the 1940s.”⁹ Differing from Chang’s designation of the term, I see “Taiwaneseness” as an inclusive idea that emphasizes the diverse networks and interactions among different racial/social groups on the island as opposed to the singular connection between Taiwan and China. Traditionally, the term “Taiwanese people” commonly used by Taiwanese scholars, omits these radical differences among groups of people who live on the island. So, rather than adopting the term “Taiwanese people,” in this chapter, I choose to use the phrase “people who live in Taiwan.” Moreover, instead of applying postcolonial models to the study, I choose to use queer theories to ground my arguments in the intersection and interaction of gender codes and national identification. As Michael Warner states, in *Fear of Queer Planet*, “queer struggles aim not just [at] toleration or equal status but at challenging those (normative) institutions and accounts.”¹⁰ Queer theories not only address specific categories of LGBT people but also, more importantly, unveil the operations of a social system that weave together gender norms and the national myth, such that they co-produce one another.

First, the literal and symbolic exclusion of femininity, which has been a necessity for the formation of an official national identity, is not separate from the sexist discourse of Confucian principles. As this prevailing, dominant tradition privileges the idea that everyone does his/her

⁸ Chang Huei-Yuan Belinda, “A Theater of Taiwaneseness: politics, ideologies, gezaixi,” *TDR* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), 111-129.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of A Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xiii.

duty and takes his/her role, women are forced to play the good mother, wife, and daughter and, of course, follow the patriarchal, reproductive heterosexual norms of Confucian philosophy. A male is expected to be a “righteous Chinese man” who contributes to the beloved China.¹¹ This gender norm constitutes and sustains the seemingly stable national subject that the Kuomintang pursues. Second, Confucian aesthetics have been deeply incorporated and appropriated by the Kuomintang to fashion an official image of the ROC that asserts Taiwan’s legitimacy over China. Rather than pursuing sensual pleasures, Confucian aesthetics stress the ideals of constancy, unchangingness, moderateness, and obedience, emphasizing the “integrity,” from which arts emerge. The term *Yi* (藝) points to the arts education that transforms “a wild man” into “a righteous man.” The *Doctrine of the Mean* states that “a righteous man” is to “maintain balance and harmony by directing the mind to a state of constant equilibrium”. These concepts are represented by ROC nationalist symbols like the plum blossom, which is said to embody the nontransgressive, understated, and perseverant spirit.

The discussion above illuminates the way in which Taiwanese norms associate Kuomintang ideology and Confucian principles.¹² These norms are exactly what *Mazu’s Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa* queer through their heterogeneous, excessive, and parodic performing strategies. Focusing on the queer play in both productions, I draw on the gestures that perform incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between individual acts and dominant norms. These allegedly stable relations have been a fundamental part of the constructed national

¹¹ The well-known Kuomintang-produced proverb ‘be a energetic student, be a righteous Chinese man’ was very popular before the 1990s.

¹² The Kuomintang’s attempt to use Confucian philosophy to claim political legitimacy was first embodied by its Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement launched in the mid 1960s. In his online article ‘The three mistakes by the Kuomintang promoting of *Four Books and Five Classics*’ (2011), Cao Chang-Qing argues that the Kuomintang’s promoting of Confucian philosophy before the presidential election in 2011 reveals the government’s authoritarianism developed from Confucian collectivism.

narrative legitimized by the Kuomintang. Functioning as a radical “verb” instead of a fixed noun, a queer island disidentification ceaselessly “tears down boundaries of identity” and highlights those who are excluded/rejected by Chinese mainland normativity.¹³ As Fran Martin argues in *Situating Sexualities*, the usage of queer in Taiwan is a “product of the interactions between the contexts of its initial production in the US and those of its appropriation in Taiwan.”¹⁴ It is never simply a replica of American discourse but a localized discussion that reflects Taiwan’s postcolonial and transnational attributes.

Since Taiwanese experimental theater blossomed in the 1980s, queer politics and poetics have been often associated with and represented by anti-normative and anti-essentialist performing perspectives that target classical, traditional Chinese norms. Tien Chi-Yuan’s *Maoshih* (1988), often deemed the first queer theater work in Taiwan, troubles Confucian heteronormativity by parodying classical Chinese literatures. Recently, BDSM Nation, a queer performance group, has contested sexual norms through its “perverse aesthetics” which combines local animation subcultures with SM practices.¹⁵ Taiwanese queers have constructed what Hans Tao-Ming Huang considers as an “articulatory position” that refutes the heteronormative hegemony supported by certain nationalists.¹⁶ Drawing on Stuart Hall’s model of “articulation” that connects disparate elements together to form a temporary unity, Huang tackles the implicit yet violent moral regulation of queers subtly woven into the Confucian

¹³ Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (1993), 230 and Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003), 71.

¹⁴ Martin, *Situating Sexualities* (2003), 5.

¹⁵ The word *Pientai* (變態), which means “perverse,” is stated on the BDSM Nation official website: <http://www.bdsm.com.tw/>.

¹⁶ Huang, *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan* (2011), 2.

ideology.¹⁷ Similarly, Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei argue against the Chinese gender norms that, according to them, reinforce Confucian reticent poetics.¹⁸ According to Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei, “the reticent poetics,” which is guided by a “presupposed” Confucian moral philosophy, construct a hierarchy that excludes the non-normative and thus become a “dominant aesthetic-ethical value...passing for the most ‘traditional’ of virtues in modern ‘democratic’ guise.”¹⁹ Analyzing from a different angle, Josephine Chuen-juei Ho points out that Taiwan’s desire for political independence requires the government to adopt conservative policies catering to the global discourse of human rights.²⁰ This phenomenon shows how queer struggles have been deeply intertwined with national issues. Elaborating the queer perspectives discussed by Huang, Liu, Ding, and Ho, I aim to historicize the queer meaning—minority sexuality, island heterogeneity and local particularity—produced by *Mazu’s Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa*. It is this local queerness that signifies the island’s colonial melancholia, which is, in this performance, embodied by the characters’ strong hatred and anxiety toward the Chinese government and Confucian norms. Queerness becomes a material for the local islanders to create new forms of insular expressions intertwined with the historical particularities of Taiwan.

In the following, I will outline the primary performance strategies used in these two works—cross-dressing, *Gezaixi*-arias, *Opela*, realistic acting, local humor, modern dance, Taoist practices, indigenous rituals, and image/video projections.²¹ By marking the way in which these

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸ Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei, “Reticent poetics, queer politics” (2005), 30-55.

¹⁹ Ibid, 11.

²⁰ Ho Chuen-juei, “Queer existence under global governance: A Taiwan Exemplar,” *Beyond the strai(gh)ts, Positions East Asia Cultures Critique*, volume 18, number 2 (Fall 2010), 537-554.

²¹ *Opela* (pronounced as O-peh-lah) is translated from the Japanese pronunciation of opera. See Hsieh Hsiao-Mei, “Opera: Its Definition and Historical Development,” *Chung-Wai Literature Monthly*, 31:1 (May, 2002), 157-174.

performance strategies operate to unveil a common ambivalence toward Confucian gender norms and the national identity crisis, I contend that the sense of Taiwanese-ness produces and is produced by the interplay of identification and disidentification. These performance strategies are techniques of, what I argue is, a queer island disidentification on stage. By “queer island disidentification,” I refer to a specific disidentifying movement that rather addresses the inter-vulnerability among dis-empowered cultural minorities on the island, whether indigenous, domestic or international, whether gendered masculine or feminine, and whether identified as heteronormative or queer in sexual practices. It constructs and imagines a temporary queer subject/position that is meant to highlight and enliven the island minorities that have been veiled and muted in the grand narrative of Chinese centrist ideology. In both musicals, the non-normative sexuality practiced by the female characters, the kitsch aesthetic embodied by the gaudy stage props and projections, and the cultural hybridity represented by the multi-linguistic lines and diverse performing skills all point to the queer island disidentification that enables a new reading of Taiwan.

Part I: *Mazu's Bodyguards*

Intro

The original novel of *Mazu's Bodyguards* tells the story of a Taiwanese woman—the author Jade Y. Chen—who traces her family history by narrating stories of each family member, including her grandparents, great-aunts/uncles, parents, aunts/uncles, her husband, and herself. These stories intertwine with famous historical events that happened in/around Taiwan in the past fifty years. The theatrical version²² of *Mazu's Bodyguards* eliminates some of the stories and

²² The play is composed of one hundred and forty nine short scenes.

histories in the novel to focus on the love triangle among the characters of the first generation—the author’s grandparents and great-uncle and the author’s complex relationship with her grandmother and mother. Differing from traditional nationally-identified spectacles that usually follow a single, male protagonist, *Mazu’s Bodyguards* adopts multiple female characters whose quests organize the dramatic perspective of the play. Furthermore, this gender exchange queers the original novel as well as the official history. Jade Y. Chen, also the director and playwright, weaves these cross-generational private histories/scandals into the public histories/traumas of colonization, exploring Taiwan’s complex ethnic, cultural, and political history. Instead of reiterating the official national history enacted by the Japanese Government during the colonial period (1895-1945) and by the Kuomintang since retreating to Taiwan in 1949, the play rather describes how identity crisis and political chaos invade, influence, and intimidate the lives of her family members. Although constrained by historical situations, her family members, especially the female members such as her grandmother and mother, do not simply surrender to the patriarchal norms but tactically protect their dreams and (sexual) desires.

A complex love story among Taiwan, China, and Japan

The seemingly sentimental love story in *Mazu’s Bodyguard* actually reflects and embodies the complex national triangulation of imperialist Japan, nationalist China, and colonial Taiwan during the last hundred years. Instead of simply providing a clichéd romance in which the audience can indulge themselves, the play allegorizes island disidentification by describing the intricate relationships among characters that are dedicated to different countries and political parties. Besides, by emphasizing a gender/sexual rebellion against traditional patriarchal norms, the story highlights how queering gender can possibly initiate a queer island disidentification. On

the one hand, the story tells how the character Ayako abandons her familial-arranged engagement and turns to her sexual fantasy and, later, her passionate love for her brother-in-law. On the other hand, the play has the famous *Gezaixi* sheng actress Sun Tsui-Feng act the role of Ayako's brother-in-law Chih-Nan in cross-dress. The performance queers the heterosexual setting of the original script/novel and destabilizes the gender/sexual codes that are fundamental to the construction of the official national identity.

Mazu's Bodyguards begins with Ayako's story during the Japanese colonial period. She is the first rebellious character appears in the play. Ayako, a Japanese-born girl is miserable within her patriarchal family—her parents are dead and her aunt and uncle only take care of her brother and their own children. Ayako is not allowed to study or to enjoy any entertainment. Her only task is laboring for the family fishing business and performing other chores. She therefore anxiously awaits her arranged marriage because that is her great chance to escape from this family. However, her fiancée Yoshino, a Japanese policeman working in the indigenous areas of Taiwan, is brutally murdered by the indigenous Seediq people in the famous Wushe Incident²³ in 1930. Ayako is then led to identify the body of her dead fiancé, Yoshino, from the mountains of bodies. When told that one of the headless bodies is her fiancé the woman cannot help vomiting. She runs away and then passes out. At first, Ayako still considers herself Yoshino's wife even after he passes away—she assists her parents-in-law in coping with the funeral. However, instead of continuing to behave like a typical Japanese woman mourning for a dead fiancée that she has never met and becoming a widow for good, Ayako honestly tells her parents-in-law that she rarely thinks of Yoshino and does not want to be his wife. Despite her parents'-in-law fury about her betrayal to Yoshino, Ayako ultimately breaks the settled engagement and leaves Japan. It

²³ The Wushe Incident began in October 1930 and was the last major uprising led by the indigenous Seediq people to fight against colonial Japanese forces in Taiwan.

should be noted that, in the moment of recognizing the dead body, Ayako already broke the rules of being an ideal Japanese woman—she reveals her fear and escapes from the dead body. Ayako does not directly turn away from the situation. She helps on the follow-up works for days and then chooses to leave for her new life. Ayako and Yoshino's failed wedding, which was supposed to be held in Taiwan, implies the Japanese government's colonial attempt over Taiwan. Ayako's attitude toward her dead Japanese fiancé can be seen as her first rebellion against gender norms in the play. It also foreshadows Ayako's abandonment of her love of the Japanese for the Taiwanese later in the story. In short, Ayako abandons, or at least tries to abandon, not only gender codes, but also her Japanese identity.

By chance, at a post office, Ayako runs into Lin Cheng-Nan, a young man lives in Taiwan who dreams of flying airplanes and his younger brother, Lin Chih-Nan, a Marxist activist. For Cheng-Nan, the dream is inseparable from devotion to the Japanese Emperor—it is through serving in the Japanese air force that he can really become a national hero and glorify his new mother country, Japan. Cheng-Nan's decision to join the Japanese air force reflects a common national identification shared by people who lived in Taiwan in the colonial period. On the one hand, the cultural, economic, and educational policies implemented by the Japanese government effectively promoted the concept of the Bushido spirit that aims to devote itself to the *Tennō*.²⁴ On the other hand, the national identificatory turn functions to transform the traumatic memory of being colonized into another form of passion.

For Chih-Nan, however, his Marxist ideology, strongly attached to the Chinese Communist party developed in Mainland China, conflicts with Cheng-Nan's Japanese national identity. Chih-Nan is among the Marxist activists who participated in the Taiwan Peasant

²⁴ *Tennō* refers to Emperor of Japan.

Association and Taiwanese Communist Party.²⁵ In scene 99, in a seminar, Chih-Nan and his Marxist fellows boldly predict that the Chiang Kai-Shek's regime will end soon and the Chinese Communist Party will take back Taiwan. People on stage speak up to express their thoughts on the political status of Taiwan in intellectual tones. Their conversations demonstrate their goal of improving civil rights and producing higher national profits to take care of the citizens. It seems that the play attempts to represent and reinterpret those had been politically constructed as “*Feitieh* (匪諜).”²⁶ In addition, by presenting how Chih-Nan and his fellows are brutally seized and arrested by the Kuomintang officers, the play also describes part of the 228 Massacre that has been denied and removed from national history by the official government. The play thus (re)presents “the political others” who were extremely targeted and omitted by the Kuomintang and, by doing so, the play precisely and boldly allegorizes the political complex between China and Taiwan.

It was not until recently that many artists began to directly address the issue of the 228 Massacre and reveal the constructiveness of the ROC history, identity, and ideology. Early works such as Hou Hsiao-hsien's historical drama film *A City of Sadness* (1989), although depicting the 228 Massacre and its aftermath, is commonly criticized as covering up instead of uncovering the historical traumas.²⁷ After 2000, the year in which Chen Shui-Bian and Lu Hsiu-Lien of the Democratic Progressive Party were elected president and vice president respectively and put an

²⁵ The Taiwanese Community Party was a revolutionary organization active in Japanese colonial period of Taiwan. It existed around merely three years, yet its politics and activities influenced Taiwan's anti-colonial and anti-Kuomintang enterprise such as the 228 Incident in 1947.

²⁶ “*Feitieh*” is a negative term invented by the Kuomintang and commonly used by people in Taiwan during the 1940-1980 to refer to Communist spies in Taiwan.

²⁷ *A City of Sadness* is the first work in Taiwan that deals with the 228 Massacre. Yet critics such as Liang Hsin-Hwa, in his edited book *Hsintienying chih suu*, suggests that the film marginalizes the 228 Massacre and thus does not count as a historical narration or reflection.

end to more than fifty years of Kuomintang rule of Taiwan, the political taboos became popular materials for both serious creations and parodic arts.²⁸

Thus far, the play notably endows the three characters with different national/political identifications: Ayako, a Japanese woman who leaves the love of a Japanese man for a Taiwanese man; Cheng-Nan, a Taiwanese man who devotes himself to the Japanese; and Chih-Nan, a Taiwanese man who cannot give up his love and nostalgia toward the Communist Party of China. By describing how Ayako abandons Yoshino and then later turns to Cheng-Nan and then Chih-Nan, and how Cheng-Nan and Chih-Nan cannot get along with each other, the play indicates the relationship among the three different national/political powers.

Both Cheng-Nan and Chih-Nan fall in love with Ayako. Being thankful for Cheng-Nan's help and support is not the only reason for Ayako to marry him. The big screen on the stage shows Ayako's dream in which Yoshino's image gradually turns into Cheng-Nan's. In the novel, Jade Y. Chen describes in detail Ayako's sexual desire for Cheng-Nan, who seems to be her first sexual fantasy. The performance, although not revealing as much information as the novel does, implies that Ayako sexually desires Cheng-Nan through the projection of her erotic dream. Ayako's sexual dream can be seen as her second rebellion as it is contrary to the patriarchal tradition that oppresses and constrains the expression of women's sexual desire. In appearance, Ayako seems to be a typical Japanese lady—gentle, perseverant, polite, and walking nicely in her red kimono. Yet this character almost demolishes the stereotypical impression. Her tactical and radical reaction to the death of her never-met fiancée and her brave desire for Cheng-Nan demonstrate a powerful challenging of the gender norms.

²⁸ Events like The Themed Exhibition of 228 Massacre and Arts Fare held by The Memorial Foundation of 228 in the spring of 2008 have occurred only since the taboos were broken following the party alternation in 2000.

The two then marry and settle down in Taichung. It should be noted that, at this time, the character Ayako does not speak in Japanese any more. Instead, she starts to speak in Minnan, a major dialect used in Taiwan. Ayako states in *Gezaixi* her appreciation for her new life in Taiwan: “I like myself now/ I am away from the nightmares and tortures...I love the people around me here/ I love my life now.” She even subtly expresses her sexual satisfaction: “the man in bed belongs to me/ Cuddling with him pleases me.” Ayako’s *Gezaixi* arias not only imply her national identificatory turn but also perform her mental and corporeal rebellions in ways that forecast her ultimate revolt against the social norms of a heterosexual family.

In contrast to Ayako and Cheng-Nan happily celebrating their first-born child, Chih-Nan focuses on Marxist movements to distract from his passion for Ayako. However, Chih-Nan’s Marxist identity forces his sponsors to immediately end their support of Cheng-Nan’s airplane career. Cheng-Nan eventually decides to pursue his dream by joining the Japanese air force. With Cheng-Nan rarely home, Ayako and Chih-Nan fatally fall in love with one another. The triangle love among Ayako, Cheng-Nan, and Chih-Nan allegorizes the complex political relationship of the colonized Taiwan with the colonizer Japan and the nostalgized China.

The *Gyokuon-hōsō*²⁹ played on the stage signifies the historical background of the play: the final period of World War II in 1945. At this moment, Cheng-Nan miraculously returns home yet is seriously mentally collapsed. To escape from real life, he turns to a beautiful male *dan*³⁰ and again leaves home. Chih-Nan and his Marxists fellows soon become the Kuomintang’s targets for arrest. Chih-Nan has no other option but escape to a temple. At night, Chih-Nan

²⁹ Gyokuon-hōsō was the radio broadcast in which Japanese emperor Hirohito read out the Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War, announcing to Japan had accepted the Potsdam Declaration demanding the unconditional surrender of the Japanese military at the end of World War II.

³⁰ Male *dan* refers to traditional Chinese male specialist in female roles.

breaks into Ayako's bedroom, asking her to escape with him. Ayako decides to stay. In the novel, Jade Y. Chen clearly reveals that Ayako's second daughter Hsin-Ju is Chih-Nan's. The theatrical version, does not however present this part of the family story, but does describe Ayako desperately crying and mourning over Chih-Nan's departure. Instead of eloping with Chih-Nan, Ayako chooses to stay and survive by herself. Her choice seems metaphorizes an ultimate separation of the local Taiwan from colonial Japan and the Communist China.

What makes this national allegory even more complicated is that the character Chih-Nan is played by actress Sun Tsui-Feng in cross-dress, who makes this character seem more like a butch woman than a man. This cross-dressing not only renders the incestuous love between Ayako and Chih-Nan even more anti-normative but also smashes the heterosexual discourse essential for the official national construction, which I am going to discuss next.

She is such a beautiful butch!

In *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theatre and Gender*, Alisa Solomon highlights that “the mutability of human identity promised by theater, and figured by the norm of transvestism, is precisely what makes theater the queerest art, perennially subject to railing by those with a stake in promoting the ‘natural order’ of the status quo.”³¹ Similarly, in *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, Li Siu-Leung, argues for a focus on the “indeterminacy of cross-dressing as a destabilizing force” and for providing “a revisionist history of the potential resistance of Chinese female players as agents in negotiating patriarchal containment and male ideological authority in performance.”³² According to Li, the characteristic—the very impermanence—of “performing”

³¹ Alisa Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theatre and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 2.

³² Li Siu-Leung, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (2003), 3.

makes performance dangerous and resistant to the powered hierarchy. Theater can be a “possible transforming agency” that problematizes established relations of power.³³ In this section, I investigate the way in which *Mazu’s Bodyguards* tactically combines the techniques of cross-dressing, Western realistic acting, and operatic arias to fashion an innovative *Gezaixi* that effectively delivers the idea and issue of queer to the audience. The form, which I term “innovative *Gezaixi*,” not only reflects the multicultural/multiethnic identificatory tactics used by the performers, but also mobilizes and is mobilized by a queer reinterpretation of the Taiwanese nationality.

Performed by Ming Hwa Yuan, it is not surprising that the leading performers of *Mazu’s Bodyguards* come from the same family. Established in January 1929 by renowned Taiwanese *Gezaixi* performer Chen Ming-Chi, Ming Hwa Yuan is a *local Gezaixi* troupe and also a family business run by the entire family clan. Chen Ming-Chi is a specialist in *Gezaixi*, the traditional Taiwanese stylized opera, which synthesizes music, drama, dancing and acrobatics and which takes on the four principal roles of *sheng* (生, males), *dan* (旦, females), *jing* (淨, painted-face warriors) and *chou* (丑, the clown, a master of satire). Under Chen’s guidance, Ming Hwa Yuan became a troupe of professional caliber and has performed in prestigious venues such as the National Theater.

The performers who play the role of Miwa Ayako and Lin Chih-Nan are Sun Tsui-Feng and Chen Chao-Ting, who are the mother and daughter of the *Ti-Tzu* (地字) family group of the Ming Hwa Yuan family.³⁴ Chen Tzu-Hao, who plays the role of Lin Cheng-Nan, is Sun Tsui-

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ming Hwa Yuan is currently divided into eight small groups, which are: *Tian, Ti, Hsuan, Huang, Jih, Yueh, Hsing, Chen* (天地玄黃日月星辰).

Feng's nephew and Chen Chao-Ting's cousin. As the most celebrated *Gezaixi sheng* performer in Taiwan,³⁵ it is not surprising that Sun Tsui-Feng plays the leading male role of Lin Chih-Nan. The cross-dressing performing style used by *sheng* actresses such as Sung Tsui-Feng, Yang Li-Hua, and Yeh Ching is in a way similar to that of the actresses of the famous Japanese all-female theater troupe Takarazuka Revue.³⁶ In the *Gezaixi* tradition, actresses playing male roles is a common performance method. Both Western and Eastern traditions, such as Shakespeare, the classical Greeks, Japanese and Chinese, include all-male theaters—cross-dressing was only men playing women. In this example, however, it is reversed as women cross-dress and assimilate male roles and thereby undermine patriarchal traditions.

It is therefore both understandable that Sun Tsui-Feng plays the male role and that the family members of Ming Hwa Yuan perform *Mazu's Bodyguards* together. Here I want to point out that the casting of *Mazu's Bodyguards* highlights two notable issues that have not been discussed in related research of the performance: the unspeakable incest and the hidden queerness, which I argue as forces for mobilizing island disidentification. In other words, by emphasizing the queer love scene of the play, I propose a mechanism for queering nationality through queering gender and sexuality. As I have discussed earlier, Confucian heterosexual gender norms function to enact a normative ROC identity—one is excluded from its national identity by not following the gender/sexual norms. The queer love scene troubles the patriarchal setting of not only Jade Y. Chen's original novel but also the national identity.

In scene 77, Chih-Nan says to Ayako: "You are the only one in my heart/ I don't care if you are my wife or my sister-in-law/ You have been the most important one for me/ the earth

³⁵ Sun Tsui-Feng is called "The Top *Sheng* In Taiwan."

³⁶ Yang Li-Hua and Yeh Ching are all celebrated *sheng* actresses in Taiwan

rotates because of you.”³⁷ Performed in a realistic manner, Chih-Nan’s romantic cliché, which makes the audience laugh, effectively relieves the tension on the stage and, more importantly, makes their incestuous love as “normal” and common as that of any other couple in the world. They act exactly as a couple in love—Ayako finally holds Chih-Nan’s hand tightly, slowing walking down the stage.

In scene 93, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are destroyed by an atomic bomb launched by the U.S. army. Supplies and resources become less and less. Under these poor conditions, Ayako’s child is sick and sent to the hospital. When waiting outside the hospital, the lovers pour out their hearts to each other. The two perform an antiphonal *Gezaixi* aria with lyrics that boldly state their love to each other. They sing: “How many times I wish to open the door of your room/ How many times I wish to comfort you with myself.”³⁸ Chih-Nan kisses Ayako. Ayako hesitates for a second and then finally kisses him/her back.

It is hard to ignore that the kissing couple on the stage are actually mother and daughter by blood in real life. One of the reasons that this kissing scene is so noticeable is that the actresses perform using a very realistic acting style. Even though the play adopts *Gezaixi* as one of the performing techniques to interpret the story, the style of performance is realistic: instead of presenting emotions in an exaggerating tone and using stylized movements/dances as traditional *Gezaixi* does, the play almost always relies on realistic acting to present the story. The facial expressions on Ayako and Chih-Nan are visible but not exaggerated, the rhythms and tones of their speaking plain and sentimental. Every action and reaction of their performance seems logical and to have a hidden goal. Stanislavskian method acting has been a popular performing

³⁷ Jade Y. Chen, *Mazu’s Bodyguards* (Taipei: Ink Press, 2009), 148.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 152.

technique in Taiwanese theaters and has been used by many local practitioners to modify and revive traditional theaters such as *Jingju* and *Kunqu*.³⁹ It is therefore understandable that the actresses integrate techniques of realistic acting into *Gezaixi*. The faint blushing of Ayako's face and the subtle trembling in Chih-Nan's shoulders highlights the realistic interaction of the two actresses. Even the *Gezaxi* songs that the actresses perform are of a cross-cultural style: the actresses sing *Gezaxi* with Western orchestra string music instead of Chinese gongs and drums music. Without the exaggerating effects produced by gongs and drums, the actresses' singing becomes more lifelike. The *Gezaxi* is no longer stylized; it is realistic in the play. This realistic acting renders the kissing scene of Ayako and Chih-Nan very striking. If the actresses were to perform in a stylized way, it might not be so striking that the kissing couple are two women because cross-dressing is a frequently used technique of traditional *Gezaxi*. Yet interestingly, the realistic acting not only reinforces that the characters Ayako and Chih-Nan are played by two actresses who are mother and daughter in real life, but also connotes the potential homosexuality between the characters. In other words, although the original characters in the story are heterosexual lovers, the performance setting of the play, whether consciously or unconsciously, presents Ayako and Chih-Nan as a lesbian couple.

One might argue that Sun Tsui-Feng is traditionally a *sheng* performer, which means she performs male instead of queer female roles and there is no point to emphasize the potential homosexuality between the characters. Certainly, if examining Sun Tsui-Feng's other works, one would notice that the style of her costume and makeup is extremely masculine. For example, in *The Revenge of the Prince* (2005), playing the role of Prince Chiu Kung-Huan, Sun Tsui-Feng's costume is doubtless masculine—the thick shoulder pads, the over-sized male robe, the crown of

³⁹ A famous example is Wei Haimin (1957-). In Cotemporary Legend Theater's *Medea*, she successfully combines Western realistic acting form with *Jingju* techniques to reinterpret the character Medea.

prince, thick eyebrow, and the typical male hair style in Chinese historical drama. Her postures and movements also match her masculine style. If one does not know that Sun Tsui-Feng is a female performer, it is almost hard to tell that the performer on the stage is cross-dressing.

However, Sun Tsui-Feng's style in *Mazu's Bodyguards* is different from the masculine style mentioned above. On the promotional posters for the production and the bottom cover of the published play script, Sun Tsui-Feng wears a black rock-and-roll leather suit, a pair of black boots, and a black jazz hat with black and green feathers on it. The leather suit fits her body well and reveals the shape of her body. Her smoky eyes glitter with shining green shadow. Her posture is more like that of a drag-king rock singer than that of any stereotypical male figure. In the performance, Sun Tsui-Feng wears a well-fitting black Mao suit⁴⁰, which does not make her look like a man but more like a cross-dressing, handsome woman. Although in the interview⁴¹ the actress stated that she practiced for more than three months thinking and behaving like a man in order to perform well the male character in this production, it is hard to suggest that the character Chih-Nan performed by Sun Tsui-Feng is a stereotypical male figure as the actress probably expected. Baldly speaking, the character Chih-Nan in the play looks very much like a typical older butch in Taiwan⁴². The characters Chih-Nan and Ayako do not look like a heterosexual couple but more like beautiful lesbian lovers.

That said, I am not attempting to arbitrarily define the characters Chih-Nan and Ayako as lesbian lovers. My point here is rather to argue that the casting of *Mazu's Bodyguards*, although probably done in an unconscious way, tactically challenges traditional patriarchal normativity by highlighting the traditionally unspeakable issues of incestuous/ consanguineous marriage and

⁴⁰ Mao suit is a style of male attire also known in China as the Zhongshan suit.

⁴¹ United Evening News, 2009, 11, 29.

⁴² In Taiwan, a typical older butch—gentle, polite, and always dressing up nicely—is often called “uncle.”

homosexuality. In fact, the production never claims to challenge the patriarchal system. Nor did the performers directly claim to display homosexuality on the stage. Certainly, words like “subverting all possible visual taboos” are printed on the brochures and programs of the production; yet, neither the theater troupe nor the director ever publically stated an attempt to subvert the tradition norms through this performance.⁴³ The performance *does* instead of *says* this challenge and thereby successfully transmits the hidden transgressive ideas to the audience. In this light, *Mazu’s Bodyguards* highlights the way in which the production, instead of directly encountering the norms, works within and against, disidentifies the patriarchal normativity.

After the open dress rehearsal for journalists and reporters, the “incestuous intimate show” performed by Sun Tsui-Feng and Chen Chao-Ting became the focus in many reports.⁴⁴

According to an interview⁴⁵ conducted by journalist Chiu Chiung-Pin, Chen Chao-Ting indicates that she felt embarrassed and awkward playing the love scene with her mother in the male role, especially as they perform sexually intimate acts, including kissing on lips. That said, both Sun Tsui-Feng and Chen Chao-Ting indicate that they were excited to challenge the traditions of *Gezaixi*. Although, in the contemporary performing arts industry in Taiwan, sexually intimate scenes are seen frequently, it is not an element commonly used in traditional *Gezaixi*, not to mention that the actresses who play this scene are mother and daughter in real life. In Taiwan,

⁴³ Original: “Tienfu soyu koneng te shihchueh chinchi (顛覆所有可能的視覺禁忌, Subverting all possible visual taboos).”

⁴⁴ The title of this report on Nownews is “Sun Tsui-Feng fanchuanpannanchuang ho nuerh shewen takao pulun chihlien (孫翠鳳反串扮男裝，和女兒舌吻大搞不倫之戀, Big incest gossip: the Cross-dressing Sun Tsui-Feng tongue-kissing her daughter).” The description of the picture in the news is even more sensational—“Feishui pulo waijientien; Sun Tsui-Feng lienshang nuerh (肥水不落外人田？孫翠鳳戀上女兒, Good things should not be shared with others? Sun Tusi-Feng in love with her daughter).”

The news can be found at the following link:

<http://www.nownews.com/2009/11/11/952-2531549.htm>.

⁴⁵ United Evening News, 2009, 11, 29.

incest has been commonly considered unacceptable by law and normative social values. The mother and daughter casting also reminds of the shocking gossip of the incestuous relationship happened in the actress's real life.⁴⁶ In this light, the point at stake is not that the performance challenges the tradition of *Gezaixi* but that, I argue, it challenges and transgresses the tradition of the patriarchal, heterosexual, Confucian system in Taiwan.

It must be admit that this gender/sexual disidentification is done, in part if not entirely, through the integration of local *Gezaixi* and Western culture. The popular cultural costumes and realistic body languages shown on/by Sun Tsui-Feng suggest the necessity of the Western style that promises the possibility of gender/sexual liberation from local tradition.

My point here is not to take Ming Hwa Yuan as an example to compliment or encourage the idea of consanguineous marriage and/or incestuous relationships, nor is it to uncover the gossip again in order to suggest that the troupe relies on this method to maintain their business. My attempt is rather to point out that the sexually intimate scenes in *Mazu's Bodyguards*, on the one hand, connote the homosexuality between the characters by having Sun Tsui-Feng and Chen Chao-Ting performing the love couple and, on the other hand, highlight the paradox that local gender/sexual rebellion relies on and has to be associated with the dominating Western paradigm.

⁴⁶ It was big news in 2007 when TVBS journalist Lee Hui-Jen published an article (TVBS News, 2007, 3, 27) reporting gossip of incest between Sun Tsui-Feng's husband Chen Sheng-Fu and her sister. In fact, the three are all cousins—they are the grandchildren of Ming Hwa Yuan founder, Chen Ming-Chi. Sun Tsui-Feng's sister ultimately gave birth to Chen Sheng-Fu's illegitimate daughter and this whole thing is never a secret in Ming Hwa Yuan. Responding to Lee Hui-Jen's report, Sun Tsui-Feng stated that she had already forgiven her husband and sister and decided to help raise their illegitimate daughter. Actually, the affair among the three is not an exceptional case. As a local theater troupe run by a family clan, Ming Hwa Yuan maintains this family business, to a certain degree, through consanguineous marriage. The elder male members such as Chen Ming-Chi usually have multiple wives. In addition, many family members marry their cousins. In 2004, which was the International Year of The Family, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) selected Ming Hwa Yuan as the delegate family of Taiwan in honor of their celebrated family-business theater troupe, which has contributed greatly to the cultural industry in Taiwan. In other words, Ming Hwa Yuan's family-business theater troupe is a successful case of local cultural business in Taiwan.

In this case, the local Taiwanese theater practitioners, by adeptly combining the cross-dressing tradition of *Gezaixi* with realistic sexually intimate acts, as well as the renowned family history of Min Hwa Yuan as a trope of the play's story, facilitate local queer identification and work with the long-existing alliance of Confucian philosophy and patriarchal normativity in Taiwan. It might not be the practitioners' original attempt to achieve this queer goal through the disidentifying process. However, it is these unexpected queer effects of the cross-cultural *Gezaixi*, which are not in the original novel but only in the theater, that provokes the traditional norms of gender, sexuality and family. These queer effects, as Eve Sedgwick describes, whose meaning seemed mysterious, excessive, or oblique in relation to the codes most readily available to us, become a prime "resource for survival."⁴⁷ These queer effects are power and a weapon of destruction and creation.

One might claim that it is problematic to define the production as a parodic performance as it is unclear whether the performers and the director attempted to do so. Classic gender parody performances such as the American queer artists Split Britches's various pieces and Cuban-American queer artist Carmelita Tropicana's pieces are mostly designed by the artists in order to facilitate specific artistic/political manifestos. It seems that *Mazu's Bodyguards*, however, is not originally designed as a radical parody show to problematize the Taiwanese gender norms. The basic tone of the production is actually serious and melancholic. Neither the performers nor the director have ever stated any philosophy of gender parody. That said, the tactical, creative process of lesbianizing the original heterosexual couple in the story becomes mobility capable of altering the official gender ideology constructed by the traditional norms and reinforced by the familial and gender policy set by the government. Whether or not the performance should be

⁴⁷ Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (1993), 3.

defined as a gender parody performance, it indeed performs a local family history through the queer lens.

Mazu's Bodyguards seems to highlight a way by which traditional gender norms can be flexibly and tactically used as weapons to destabilize the norms. Discussing gender norms in the Chinese context, in *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*, Bret Hinsch mourns the loss of a Chinese gender culture that is tolerant to homosexuality.⁴⁸ Hinsch contends that the hegemony of Western science and medicine led to this loss. Resonating with Hinsch's idea, Chow Wah-Shan, in *Post-colonial Tongzhi*, argues that gender culture in the Chinese cultural context is totally different from that of the Western paradigm—the former perfectly works with the Chinese tradition of harmony/tolerance.⁴⁹ Accordingly, for both Hinsch and Chow Wah-Shan, the queer experience in Chinese society needs to be distinguished from Western patterns and analyzed within the specific Chinese cultural context. Conversely, in their famous article “Reticent poetics, queer politics,” Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei argue against Chow Wah-Shan's Orientalist notion of Chinese gender norms that, according to them, reinforce Confucian reticent poetics. Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei define “the reticent poetics” as a “dominant aesthetic-ethical value passing for the most ‘traditional’ virtues in modern ‘democratic’ guise.”⁵⁰ Echoing and extending Liu Jen-Peng and Ding Naifei's anti-essentialist definition, Huang Tao-Ming, in *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan*, argues against the violent and hegemonic alliance between Orientalism, heteronormativity, and Confucian reticent

⁴⁸ Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ A famous Chinese proverb: *Yiheweigui* (以和為貴, Harmony is precious).

⁵⁰ This article was first published in Chinese in 1998.

poetics.⁵¹ Huang Tao-Ming further places this discussion into the analysis of Taiwanese national identification and suggests that the compulsory norms of nation/country sustain and reinforce this alliance.⁵² I agree with Liu Jeng-Peng, Ding Naifei, and Huang Tao-Ming in their arguments against an essentialized definition of Oriental gender norms. It is dangerous and risky to emphasize and value the Chinese tradition of harmony and tolerance when analyzing gender/sexual experiences in Chinese societies. This wishful thinking regarding Chinese traditions tends to over-simplify the complex power relationships between institutions, social norms, customs, and individuals.

That said, instead of exorcising the Chinese traditions of harmony and tolerance, I see them as potential materials/weapons for the gender parody in *Mazu's Bodyguards*. The emphasis on the distinction between queer experiences in Chinese societies and in the Western world is important as it highlights the need to articulate the former within a specific historical/cultural context that is very different from the latter. The complexities of gender norms must be located in their social-cultural context in order to be effectively decoded. Furthermore, by intertwining these specific contexts into the discussion of queer experience, it is possible to retrieve the tactical and activist potential of Chinese gender norms. In other words, rather than encountering the norms, it can be more effective to use the norms in order to protest/play against them.

Mazu's Bodyguards is one such performance that demonstrates queer politics and poetics by extensively using Chinese tradition. First, it is exactly because *Mazu's Bodyguards* does not directly *claim* to perform lesbian and incestuous affairs that the production successfully integrates the gender discussion into the performance and its reception and avoids possible

⁵¹ Huang, *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan* (2011), 21, 22.

⁵² *Ibid*, 22.

oppression and rejection from (if any) extremely conservative audiences. One might consider the production's pacifist silence as a symptom of conservatism and weakness. Yet, undeniably, this harmonious and tolerant silence effectively helps deliver the queerness of the production to the audience. Second, the cross-dressing tradition of *Gezaixi* demonstrates itself as an art tolerant of queer elements. In other words, doubtlessly, one can see the Chinese philosophy of harmony and tolerance as a ghostly disciplinary power that cooperates with other institutional powers; however the Chinese philosophy can also be used as creative tool for protesting gender transgression and further queer politics insofar as it is fully recognized by its paradoxical features. In addition, as a highly celebrated *Gezaixi* theater group, Ming Hwa Yuan's performances are always accepted and welcomed by Taiwanese audiences of all ages. Sun Tsui-Feng, the so-called "Top *Sheng* Performer in Taiwan," has a great reputation—both her accomplished performing career and her charity involvement have made her a famous and well-regarded public figure. These conditions make the queer elements in *Mazu's Bodyguards* tolerable, and even appreciated.

Mazu's Bodyguards is a great success not only because it has high theatrical grosses but also in that it fashions a model of queer island disidentification that is extremely different from the univocal one set by the official government. The performance challenges the Confucian heterosexuality constructed and sustained by the violence of national powers. One might say that, compared to performances such as Minkuan Taiwanese Opera Troupe's *Koai chingchun* (2006), *Mazu's Bodyguards* cannot be seen as a queer performance because it does not directly work on queer identification but rather features heterosexual love as adapted from Jade Y. Chen's novel.⁵³ Yet, the theatrical presentation of the play does/needs not equal the original novel—the former can be seen as an independent piece not responsible to the latter. Through its cross-dressing

⁵³ *Koai chingchun* is a production written by Yang Hsing-Chih and directed by Fu Yu-Hui. This production innovatively presents lesbian identification through *Gezaixi*.

Gezaixi presentation, the performance powerfully queers the story. In addition, its queer story is tightly intertwined with historical materials related to contemporary Taiwan. Unlike *Koai chingchun*'s focus on individual queer romances, *Mazu's Bodyguards* teases out a queer island disidentification that embodies the identificatory struggles within and against Chinese-centrist, Confucian-patriarchal hegemony.

Female gazing eyes

Interestingly, there are two female characters witnessing everything on stage. The first one is Ayako's daughter, Shizuko. According to the play, Shizuko and her elder brother, Ken-Jyo, do not have a good relationship. Ken-Jyo bullies Shizuko by seizing her toy and pressing her face into a plate of water. Shizuko does not easily surrender to Ken-Jyo; she tries hard to fight back although she ultimately fails. Wearing a Japanese style school uniform, Shizuko abandons the female etiquette learned from Japanese education—she strides confidently toward her brother and strikes him instead of accepting the bully like an obedient Japanese lady. Interestingly, compared to Shizuko, Ken-Jyo is characterized as an immature, mischievous, almost mentally retarded adult even though, according to the play, he performs excellently in school and is a lot older than Shizuko. On stage, Shizuko seems to be the one who acts rationally. When alone, Shizuko cries out loudly, bewailing her patriarchal family and craving her mother Ayako's love. Unlike Ken-Jyo, the spoiled male child who receives a lot of attention from the family, Shizuko is extremely lonely and depressed. In order to survive within the patriarchal environment, Shizuko becomes very strong and perseverant. When Shizuko is notified that her uncle Chih-Nan

joined the 228 Incident,⁵⁴ she is eager to know about the political situation of Taiwan and is not satisfied with the version that the school and government teach her. Extremely aware of her identity crisis as caused by the complicated colonial history, Shizuko is the only one who keeps reminding her postwar-traumatized father, Cheng-Nan, that the war was over. She is also not at all afraid to yell at and fight back against the Japanese male classmates who try to tease her. In scene 70, when the Japanese seize her and label her a “fake Japanese” and a “Chinese,” Shizuko screams and yells at them: “I am neither Japanese nor Chinese/ I am Taiwanese!” Shizuko’s daring statement shows her survival identification that signifies a common anxiety shared by most of the citizens of Taiwan. Shizuko is in the narrative: witnessing her family members struggling in the colonial identity complex and traditional gender discrimination, she acts as part of the story and demonstrates a rebellious force that cannot be hidden and muted by the gender and national norms.

Another one is the author Jade Y. Chen, performed by modern dancer Liao Hsiao-Ting, dressed in black, who frequently enters the stage and involves herself in the scene. This dancer does not speak to interrupt or interpret the story. A silent character throughout the play yet outside the narrative, the dancer represents two different tactical powers: a comfort and support to the female characters in the play and a strong transgression against traditional norms ruling over female body.

Dancing or acting to comfort and support Ayako and Shizuko, she creates a metaphysical connection among the three women. The connection implies that the performance is a journey of

⁵⁴ 228 Incident was an anti-government uprising in Taiwan that began on February 27, 1947. It was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang government and which resulted in the massacre of numerous civilians, beginning on February 28.

tracing back historical memories.⁵⁵ For instance, in scene 54, when Ayako weeps for her love with Chih-Nan, the dancer walks toward her, comforting her. Ayako seems to feel a comforting power around her—she looks around but she cannot see the dancer. At the very end of the play, when Ayako bewails Chih-Nan’s departure, the dancer enters the stage and supports Ayako. Holding Ayako’s hands, the dancer starts to dance. Falling to the floor many times, Ayako finally also starts to dance. It seems that dancing becomes a way of communication for these women.

In scene 4, on the left side of the stage, the dancer holds hands with a young Caucasian man and slowly walks toward the center. The Caucasian is silent, standing aside. At first, it seems that the dancer tries to express something to the Caucasian—she gazes at the Caucasian and then starts dancing. While dancing, she gradually turns away from the Caucasian and seems to be intoxicated with the joy of dancing alone. She dances to the piano melody in a peaceful way. Her body stretches and circles flexibly as if she is trying to feel and explore the memories within this space.

The dancer dances again in scene 64. The lighting projected on the stage presents giant geometric shapes that undo the realistic setting. Psychedelic electronic music also fashions a dreamy atmosphere. The dancer moves fast and wildly—her belly contracts and releases, her body keeps turning and circling, her arms and fingers stretch widely, and her breath corresponds with her movements. Her black dress is loose and short, which easily exposes her body and skin especially when she moves in an exaggerated way. In contrast to Ayako being tightly wrapped in the kimono and Shizuko being somehow limited by the Japanese school uniform, the dancer is totally able to freely move, use, and play with her body. Her bare feet and carefree movements

⁵⁵ The audience knows from the script and program that the dancing woman and the Caucasian refer to Jade Y. Chen and her husband and that the other characters are Jade Y. Chen’s family members of the prior generation.

resemble Isadora Duncan's choreography, which emphasizes a specific notion of freedom and the connection between emotions and movement. In a sense, she liberates her body from gender norms of tradition, which demands women to carefully cover up their bodies. Up to now, the Confucian philosophy, which strictly disciplines women's behaviors, remains the law of Taiwan—"indecent exposure" is still recognized as a kind of "sex offenses." While not illegal, the dancer's uncovered thighs and wild movements indeed rebel against the traditional gender norms. In this case, the dancer rebels against the local gender norms through techniques of Western modern dance.

The music used here—Peace Orchestra's "Who Am I"—signifies the theme of the dance.⁵⁶ It seems that the dancer turns to Western techniques when expressing and processing her identification. The electronic music and the European-American modern dance used in this scene reveal an ambivalence by which the dancer identifies with Taiwanese-ness through cultures of the Western other. In other words, she simultaneously identifies and disidentifies with Taiwan and the Western other. This is an unstable identification process in which the subject has to compromise and negotiate with various national/cultural codes in order to survive identity crisis.

In this model, identification and disidentification work in tandem with each other. In *Disidentification*, José Esteban Muñoz defines disidentification as "descriptive of the survival tactics the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship."⁵⁷ According to Muñoz, through working against and within heteronormative representations, parodic bodies can perform certain degrees of agency via their

⁵⁶ Peace Orchestra is a musical solo project from Viennese trip-hop-dub producer Peter Kruder.

⁵⁷ Muñoz, *Disidentification* (1999), 5.

tactical playfulness. Muñoz provides a great model for targeting the way in which gendered and culturally minoritarian groups play and flirt with normative codes. Similarly, in *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed argues that a body is able to leave the grid of heterosexual norms through queer desire. As Ahmed states, the compulsory norms operate as “straightening device[s], which reread signs of queer desire as deviations from the straight line.”⁵⁸ Arguing for a politics of disorientation, Ahmed points out that queerness disrupts and reorders social relations by not following the accepted paths. The desires that incline away from the norms function as mobility and catalysis of queer performances.

In the discussions above, focusing on the way Ayako, Shizuko, and the author are characterized and represented in the performance, I aim to highlight how gender play initiates national (dis)identification that counters official discourse advanced by the government. The three queer the norms of gender, nation, and culture through their desires. Ayako abandons the gender norms of the marriage-family continuum by betraying her never-met fiancée Yoshino and loving her brother-in-law Chih-Nan; Shizuko challenges the gender norms of female behavior by striking/arguing back against her brother Ken-Jyo and the Japanese students in order to defend her imagined Taiwanese identity; the dancer troubles the gender norms that demand a woman’s body to be covered by freely using and exploring her body. While through different means, they all challenge the seamless and univocal Confucian gender principle, which strictly disciplines women’s thoughts and behaviors. Instead of directly countering the norms, these rebellious women tactically negotiate within and against the norms. It is in this process of negotiation that a island disidentification of Taiwan emerges and develops. In other words, the desire-initiated gender disobedience stimulates queer island disidentification.

⁵⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23.

Performing the unmarked: Taoist practices, Indigenous rituals, and more⁵⁹

Thus far, I have been developing a sense of the term “queer island disidentification” in the analysis of the performance. What I mean by “queer island disidentification” is a disidentificatory force that destabilizes the legitimate national ideology and highlights those who are omitted, removed, and rejected by the official discourse. It does not function as a universal power that can be applied to all countries of the world but needs to be flexibly changed according to different cultural and historical contexts. A queer island disidentification points to the constructiveness of national identity and thus aims to disrupt and complicate that identity formation by demythologizing the official discourse. The notion does not only denote same-sex sexual object choice. As Sedgwick points out, the term deepens and shifts as many intellectuals and artists, such as Issac Julian and Richard Fung, use the idea of “queer” to work on new kinds of justice for the fractal intricacies of ethnicity and postcolonial nationality, among many others.⁶⁰ The term “queer” can thus possibly be described, rather than defined, as a power and an attempt “to make invisible possibilities and desires visible; to make the tacit things explicit; to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled and, with the relative freedom of adulthood, to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged.”⁶¹ In other words, as Sedgwick phrases it, “queer” refers to “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning.”⁶²

⁵⁹ I borrow the term “unmarked” from the title of Peggy Phelan’s book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*.

⁶⁰ Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (1993), 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁶² *Ibid*, 8.

In scene 121, two Kuomintang agents ask Cheng-Nan to turn in his brother Chih-Nan, who is a Marxist activist working against the Kuomintang. The agents shout at Cheng-Nan rudely and spit on his face, calling Cheng-Nan and his families “fake *wokou* (倭寇) who betray China.”⁶³ Despising the Kuomintang officers, yet not daring to fight back, Cheng-Nan has to swallow his anger and desperation. This scene clearly displays the serious tension and conflict between the local residents and the retreating Kuomintang. A question emerges here: from where does this negative sentiments come?

In Taiwan, the Kominka Movement launched by the colonial Japanese government from 1937 to 1945 aimed to totally transform the people in Taiwan into loyal subjects of the Japanese Emperor by promoting a Japanese lifestyle and strictly forbidding local languages and cultures. The colonized people’s reaction against the Japanese colonial government soon turned into the new hatred toward the Kuomintang government when they found the new government very disappointing. Compared to the Japanese colonial government, the Kuomintang government was seriously corrupt and undisciplined. Yet similar to the old regime, the new one provided very limited resources and positions to the local people in Taiwan and thereby enhanced the conflicts between the Kuomintang and the locals. Since Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan in 1949, sinicization has been a dominating discourse that deeply relies on an exclusive ability to interpret Taiwan as the only and the real China. People who do not belong to the category of mandarin-speaking Han, including Taiwanese-speaking Han (*benshengren*), Hakka, and more than 14 ethnic groups of indigenous people, are systematically excluded under the Kuomintang regime in order to create and sustain the idea that the ROC, instead of the PRC, is the real China. Reacting to this governmental ideology, the concept of de-hegemony has become a pressing issue since

⁶³ *Wokou* is a negative term commonly used by Chinese official to refer to Japanese people. The term means “Japanese pirate.”

the lifting of Martial Law in 1987.⁶⁴ The Taiwanization Movement begun in the 1980s has enhanced the theory of de-Sinicization and urged many artists in Taiwan to discard Chinese elements and emphasize various local cultures in their works. Covered-up events such as the famous indigenous holocaust, the Wushe Incident, launched by the then current Japanese Government and the 228 Incident caused by the Kuomintang's oppressive regime have become hot topics in local artistic creations.⁶⁵ *Mazu's Bodyguards* is exactly such the kind of work that highlights those unmarked people in Taiwan. In the following, I will examine how the play presses the issue through directly displaying local Taoist practices and indigenous rituals on stage.

In scene 7, the Japanese soldier shouts at eight colonized laborers, stating that the colonized should quit smoking opium as learned during the Qing Dynasty and appreciate the civilization brought by Japan's rule. Ayako, in a red kimono, holding a suitcase, enters, waiting for her fiancé to pick her up. Yet, when she mentions her fiancé, Yoshino, who serves at Wushe guard station, a Japanese policeman is so shocked and scared that he bows to her and then runs away. The terrifying sounds of bomb spread around. A female voice-over in Japanese describes the massacre from the standpoint of a Japanese soldier. At the same time, Japanese soldiers and local laborers move headless bodies onto the stage. Shocked by the accident, Ayako asks herself in Taiwanese: "the Japanese poisoned the Seediq indigenous people?" She immediately responds to herself in Japanese: "No, no/ the Japanese army are not that vicious!" Ayako's lines, as spoken in two different languages, demonstrate the play's attempt to highlight the historical event through different viewpoints.

⁶⁴ The martial law period began on May 19, 1949 and ended on July 15, 1987.

⁶⁵ Examples are the 2011 Taiwanese film *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* directed by Wei Te-Sheng and Wang Mo-Lin's a series of recent performance art that deals with governmental violence.

In the following scenes, the Seediq indigenous song spreads on the stage. A male voice-over in Taiwanese Mandarin⁶⁶ informs the audience of the Wushe Incident as an uprising against colonial Japanese forces in Taiwan that ultimately caused the extinction of the Seediq people. The large screen shows the historical photographs of Chief Mona Rudo and other leaders of the Seediq. While the song continues, six performers wearing indigenous outfits—white, patterned fabrics that do not cover their whole bodies—enter the stage. They slowly and carefully walk toward downstage. The lighting projects shades of trees onto the floor. The six performers, with different poses, stand in a line, subtly moving as if ready to hunt/fight—their eyes focus ahead, face muscles twist, and arms rise in the air. One of the performers suddenly leaves the team, and starts tearing along the stage and around other performers. This performer hysterically runs and gallops as if spending all his energy to fight and escape. This process continues until the sound of a bomb exploding and the running performer falls to the floor. When the lights fade out, only the photographs shown on the screen are visible. On stage is a mix of Seediq ritual dance and (post)modern choreography. Although the indigenous costumes, languages, and music are recognizable to the local audience, the way the performers repeat their movements as if revealing the absurdity of human affects, behaviors, and interactions borrows a Western aesthetic inspired by European-American (post)modern choreographies, such as works of Pina Bausch and Trisha Brown.

Compared to the indigenous rituals, which are mixed with Western postmodern aesthetics, local Taoist practices are presented in a relatively “authentic” tone. In scene 37, Ayako decides to marry Cheng-Nan and settle down in Taipei. The image shown on the screen is

⁶⁶ I use the term Taiwanese Mandarin to refer to a kind of Taiwanese-accented Mandarin used by the people who live in Taiwan in recent decades. Taiwanese Mandarin is notable different, in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, from Beijing Mandarin (or, Standard Mandarin), which was used by the Kuomintang government when it retreated to Taiwan in 1949.

a photograph of Taipei city in 1932. Huge puppets of Taoist gods *Mazu*, *Pachiachiang* (八家將), *Nezha* (哪吒), and *Chiyehpayeh* (七爺八爺) enter the stage. A live band of gongs and drums is set at middle upstage. The sounds of firecrackers, gongs, drums, and other local instruments are heard throughout the whole theater. In this stunning scene, these Taoist gods march on stage as if they are performing on the streets. Nothing is changed; the audience sitting in the theater witnesses the god march right in front of them on the stage. The only difference is that, unlike the crowds on the streets who can directly interact with and participate in the march, the theater audience can only watch the march at a distance. At the very end of the play, the parade enters the stage and performs again. This time the Taoist gods walk in a straight line, taking a curtain call. In this scene, the Taoist ritual becomes a spectacle that, on one hand, reproduces and revives what has been removed from the official stage, yet on the other hand, more importantly, reveals itself a displayed sample of culture. The spectacle therefore simulates the paradoxical nature—neither alive nor dead—of the local culture, which signifies the national status of Taiwan at the present moment.

Mazu's Bodyguards certainly is not the first performance that directly presents local Taoist practices on stage. Lin Hwai-Min's *Liao Tien-Ting*, first performed in 1979, is generally considered the first piece that conjoins Taoist practices of *Pachiachiang* with modern dance. Lin Lee-Chen's dance theater works *Miroirs de Vie*, first performed at the National Theater in 1995, is also celebrated for its (re)presentation of Taoist practice, *Miroirs de Vie*, on stage. Yet different from *Liao Tien-Ting* performing the well-known legend of the hero Liao Tien-Ting and *Miroirs de Vie* choreographing a universal philosophy of life through Eastern aesthetics, *Mazu's Bodyguards* emphasizes the identity crisis/conflict commonly shared by people who live in Taiwan by adding Taoist practices into the story. The Taoist practices displayed in *Mazu's*

Bodyguards point to a specific historical context that belittled and forbade local cultures/values in order to construct the Han Chinese identity.

Following World War II, in the crisis of losing Mainland China and international recognition, the Kuomintang Government devised a single-language policy in Taiwan, which aims to “recover” the Chinese culture and to eradicate the “poison left by the Japanese.”⁶⁷ This policy allowed only Mandarin Chinese and prohibited other Chinese dialects such as Holo and Hakka, let alone indigenous languages. The Ministry of Education drafted the Taiwan Province Extraordinary Period Implementation Rules for Education Guidelines to reinforce the Mandarin agenda. To execute the agenda, the government demands that all the institutions, including schools, hospitals, and mass media, among others, use Mandarin Chinese as the only language. As the result, local languages and cultures were steadily rejected and commonly considered low elements. With this background, it is not surprising that Taoist practices such as god-parade and indigenous rituals were easily targeted, and even arrested, by the official institutes. In this sense, the Taoist practices and indigenous rituals (re)presented in *Mazu’s Bodyguards*, a play that features stories across Japanese colonial period and Kuomintang White Horror time, are significant in that these performances on stage remark those unmarked, unveil the vulnerable relationship between the powered and the disempowered, and further queer the authorized ROC national identity.

Part II: *Pirates and Formosa*

Intro

Written by Yu Hui-Fen, directed by Wang Rong-Yu, with music by by Su Tong-Da and Ric Jan, *Pirates and Formosa* is Golden Bough Theatre’s theater production performed in the

⁶⁷ These terms were used by the Taiwan Province Mandarin Promotion Council during the 1950s in Taiwan.

same year and same month as Lai Sheng-Chuan's *Dreamers* (October 2011), which I discuss in Chapter 1. Unlike *Dreamers*, which was labeled the "Centennial Rock and Roll Musical," a subtitle that promotes the play as an international/Western style production, *Pirates and Formosa* was described as the "Spectacular *Taiko* Musical," which points to an "oceanic" and "insular" local consciousness staged by the play.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the idea of *Taiko*, proudly used in *Pirates and Formosa*, is exactly the thing that *Dreamer* character Hsiao-Fei hates and fears the most. The idea of *Taiko* not only reflects its turning away from Chinese-centrist identity but also implies the important connection between the pirate legends and the early colonial histories of Taiwan. With the lifting of Martial law in 1983, the concepts and words *Tai* and *Taiko* have become popular and are used often by artists, activists, and intellectuals. What I aim to underscore here is that the idea of *Tai* importantly functions to produce and sustain an imagined Taiwanese disidentification, working against the national myth and state apparatus and within the global market. The reproduction of local, exoticized elements on stage in concert with a global performance style both mirrors the current identity crisis and highlights what local survival tactics might be.

The queer Taiwanese-ness, which serves as the primary tactic here is first strongly visualized in scene 3, when a huge ship constituted by a skeleton of girders with a huge rainbow-printed sail slowly rises from downstage. The girders are decorated with rainbow-colored neon lighting chains. This rising ship then rotates 360 degrees so that the audience can clearly see the whole structure of it from different angles. Illuminated by a spotlight through a cloud produced by dry ice, the rainbow pirate ship shines on the stage, visualizing the queer island

⁶⁸ The term *Taiko* (台客) was originally constructed as a negative word that denigrates local cultures and languages. Recently, the term has turned into a disidentificatory word proudly used by new generations to differentiate from the Chinese-centrist identity; Formosa, literally meaning "beautiful island," is a Portuguese colonial name for Taiwan.

disidentification. Since 2007, Taiwan LGBTQ Pride has combined the internationally used symbol of the ‘rainbow’ with various local elements, such as symbols of the island and the sea, to promote Taiwanese queer values. The rainbow sail and light bulbs on the stage evoke this local queer activism. At the moment, various institutions, working within Taiwanese and Confucian laws that deny most forms of queer rights, continue to defend marriage-family heteronormativity. As the government and the Protect Family Alliance argue against Civil Partnership Rights and the Civil Code Amendment Proposition, performances such as *Pirates and Formosa*, among many other queer works, create what I argue is the *Tai* camp that sees the Cross-Strait Relationship as a jumping-off point from which to launch more critical discussions on the insular diversity that plays a fundamental role in reorienting identification away from the Kuomintang and towards queer possibilities.⁶⁹

Without a doubt, *Pirates and Formosa* is a mixture of Western musical structures and Taiwanese local elements. By producing and presenting local theatrical elements wrapped in a Western structure, the play calls for a collective Taiwanese identity that can stand out and solve the present national/political impasse. One might point to the paradox of the play’s aesthetic tactics as it risks being simply incorporated by the global mainstream, which is primarily a Western form. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Gayatri Spivak points out that, under transnational globalization, there exists a demand that the Third World has to “speak up as an authentic ethnic fully representative of his or her tradition.”⁷⁰ As she states, “the Third World can enter the resistance program of an alliance politics directed

⁶⁹ On 8 September 2013, Taiwan Civil Partnership Rights Alliance launched a petition called “Toyuanchengchia, Wochihchih (多元成家，我支持, I support diverse family formation)” that asks for legitimizing queer civil rights by amending civil code of Taiwan. The petition ultimately successfully handed over the bill to the Legislative Yuan for examination in the October of the same year.

⁷⁰ Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 60.

against a ‘unified repression’ only when it is confined to the third world groups that are directly accessible to the First World.”⁷¹ In this model, to make it onto the global stage, one must use the global style of the musical but represent some local, exoticized elements to be of interest and readable. Spivak further argues that, by reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns may actually reinscribe their subordinate position in society and therefore rehearse neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure.

Certainly, *Pirates and Formosa* seems to fit the postcolonial model that emphasizes the unbalanced relationship between the Third World and the First World. Yet, to be noted, in the case of the play, the local, exoticized elements represented through the global style are adopted to attract the local instead of the international audience. The play is a domestic exploration of Taiwanese identification instead of an international claim of Taiwanese-ness. Surely this local search reflects the complexity of contemporary transnational trafficking aligned with colonial after-effects and global capitalism, but it needs to be clarified that the play is not produced, at least at the first place, to cater to the taste of orientalist and exoticist zealots abroad.

This play is not a melancholic story featuring current identity crisis but a comical one that reinterprets Taiwan’s history during the 17th century, when pirates and businessmen from the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Japan entered and colonized the island. The conflicts and cooperation among the Western colonizers, the Qing government, the Han and Japanese pirates, and the Siraya indigenous people in Taiwan create the story of *Pirates and Formosa*. Among the people in Formosa during the time, women are usually erased from the official history. Presenting the female characters in a way that queers the Confucian gender norms, *Pirates and Formosa* fragments, appropriates, rewrites, renegotiates and utterly transforms the official

⁷¹ Ibid, 277.

history written by the officials of the time. The play intriguingly undermines the ideology that sees the “returning (China)” the ultimate success of nation by performing, to use Judith Halberstam’s phrase, “queer art of failure.”⁷² The “failure” poetically embodied in the subversive characterization of female roles, kitsch performing skills and campy staging of the play points to the precariousness and absurdity of models of national success. In dismantling the logics of national success and failure with which the people living in Taiwan have been taught to live, this play alters the very structures by which it organizes and inhabits national codes.

The Dutch SM queen, the Hakka pirate, and the Siraya warrior

At the very beginning, the curtain rises upon a screen showing a cartoony picture of pirate ships on the sea as the sounds of shouting, yelling and screaming spread across the stage. A group of characters composed of pirates and Western colonials enters and starts performing a stylized ballroom dance to a Taiwanese song entitled, “Welcome to the new world.” Dancing and singing, the people speak in different languages—Minnan, Hakka, Japanese, Dutch, Spanish, and English—to express their dream of finding treasure at Formosa. Among the people dancing on stage, a female character—wearing a dramatic red curly wig, exaggerated historical dress, and long boots with white-face makeup and red lipstick—catches the audiences’ eye. Her red gloves resemble the metal claws of the Marvel comic character Wolverine in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (Gavin Hood 2009). Her breasts and thighs are exposed through the front crack of the dress. Not a stereotypical beauty by Asian aesthetics, she looks chubby, short, and strong. She later introduces herself in Irish to the audience: “I am the beautiful, proud, cruel woman pirate Alwida

⁷² Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

/ I will lead the red-hair pirate group to honor the ancient Viking spirit of pirates!”⁷³ The two other male pirates, Bardyck and Tequila, both in cartoony costumes and colorful wigs, swear to follow Alwida’s lead.

In scene 1, on stage, Alwida walks as a dominant queen and holds a metal chain that attaches to two male pirates crawling like pussycats on the floor. She turns around and shows the audience her slaves. When turning, she steps on one of the slaves with her high heels. The slave moans sexually with a joyful expression on his face. Playing with both of her slaves at the same time, Alwida refuses to participate in the dirty mission led by the Qing government officer, Aiyaya, stating that she despises government the most. While speaking, she sexually touches her body with a delighted expression on her face. Her aims are the treasure and the Han captain Cheng Fei-Hung, who the audience later learns is Alwida’s sexual fantasy.⁷⁴ Unlike Chinese women who obey Confucian gender norms that require them always to move slowly and narrowly, Alwida fights freely and fiercely with her thighs open wide and her arms fully stretched.

Without a doubt, Alwida is a female character that cannot be tolerated in normative Chinese society. Her political domination and sexual aggression make her almost look and sound like the so-called *Huokuoyaonu* (禍國妖女), which means “wicked fairy that destroys the country,” in the Chinese context.⁷⁵ Yet it is this *Huokuoyaonu* that overturns the traditional gender discourse and mobilizes a feminist discourse forbidden by the official government of the past. Certainly, she is no “angel”—her selfishness, rudeness, and greed make her resemble a

⁷³ The name Alwida might come from Awilda, a mythical female pirate in 5th-century Scandinavia.

⁷⁴ This character, a Han pirate whose last name is Cheng, recalls the pirate Zheng Zhilong, the father of the Formosa King Koxinga in the 17th century.

⁷⁵ Wu ZeTian, the female emperor of the Tang dynasty, is often described as a typical *Huokuoyaonu* in official histories and in much Chinese literature.

typical villain in the musical. Nonetheless, her personality indeed challenges the gender codes of an ideal woman and thus disrupts the expected relationship between different socially constructed genders.

Cooperating with Alwida, Shui Dingdang, an aggressive Hakka pirate who works as the helmsman in Cheng Fei-Hung's group, is characterized as a typical woman warrior as popularized in local video games.⁷⁶ In a fuchsia colored mini dress, reformed kimono top, and pair of white boots with little ribbons in her hair and a long stick in her hands, Shui Dingdang is always ready for a fight. Instead of being simply a pretty face providing visual pleasure for the audience, she acts assertively and wildly. When interacting with other pirates, Shui Dingdang seems to enjoy flirting and feels neither shy nor ashamed about it. As a pirate, she rebels against the laws and the officials. When the Qing officer threatens to murder her sister, the twisted muscles on her face show her unhidden anger. Beating her breasts and roaring like a beast, Shui Dingdang vividly embodies an anti-Confucian figure.

Different from Alwida and Shui Dingdang who are characterized as pirate invaders, the indigenous princess, Saram, embodies the colonial imagination of the wild, exotic, primitive island woman. She wears a nude bodysuit with tattoos printed on it and fabrics that cover her genitals. Her braided hair decorated with colorful beads and shells increases the "indigenoussness" of the character. The bamboo forest set on the stage and the mountain landscape animation projected onto the big backdrop signify the natural beauty of the island. Bathed in chartreuse light, a flower fairy acted by a male ballet dancer dances on the stage, celebrating the endless circles of life. Running, singing, and dancing wildly and passionately, Saram expresses her love for the island. Against the traditional Chinese female etiquette that requires women to keep

⁷⁶ Shui Dingdang's style resembles the image of the most famous video game female character Chun-Li in *Street Fighter II* (1991).

inward postures, she always walks with her weight low and thighs open and carefully observes the surrounding.

One might argue that characters such as Alwida, Saram, and Shui Dingdang resemble “dragon ladies” that provide visual pleasures that invite the male gaze. One might also argue that, by shaping themselves into aggressive and pugnacious women, these characters perpetuate, instead of challenge, the patriarchal gender system in that they encourage female readers and audiences to aspire, or be more like, men. However, these female characters refute the gender norms by tactically playing with patriarchal principles instead of directly countering the rules. They do not imitate males at all but decorate and dress themselves in the ways they desire. Their exposed bodies have little appeal for the male characters on stage. Alwida always shows her breasts and thighs as if she is simply masturbating and pleasing herself.

While these characters seem to share a rebellious attitude against Chinese gender norms, they actually come from different areas. Although all speak the same Taiwanese dialect Minnan, none of them are actually Minnan people—Alwida is Dutch and speaks Irish sometimes; Shui Dingdang, Hakka; Saram, indigenous Siraya. By presenting these characters as coming from different places but all speaking Minnan, the play reflects that the contemporary people living in Taiwan, though mostly speaking Minnan, are not actually Minnan. In doing so, the play obliterates not only Chinese-centrist ideology but also Minnan-as-the-only-Taiwanese hegemony, signifying the cultural and ethnic diversity of the island.⁷⁷

Focusing on the gender play in *Pirates and Formosa*, I draw on the gestures that perform incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between gender and sexual desire. These allegedly stable relations have been a fundamental part of the constructed national narrative legitimized by

⁷⁷ Taiwanese dialect—*Taiyu* (台語)—usually refers to Minnan only.

the ruling powers. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the literal and symbolic exclusion of femininity, which has been a necessity for the formation of an official national identity, is not separate from the sexist discourse of Confucian principles. As this prevailing, dominant tradition privileges the idea that “everyone does his/her duty and takes his/her role,” women are expected/forced to play the good mother, wife, and daughter and, of course, follow the patriarchal, reproductive heterosexual normativity of Confucian philosophy.⁷⁸ The gender abjection constitutes and sustains the allegedly stable relations between gender and sexual desire and, moreover, the seemingly stable national subject. In other words, the Confucian patriarchal heterosexual normativity has cooperated very well with the constructed national discourse. *Pirates and Formosa*, however, queers the official discourse by underscoring female sexual desires that were usually forbidden and depreciated and, further, performs how the women on stage partake of a big mission through their desires. They probably are not ideal mothers, wives, or daughters, according to Confucian principles and patriarchal norms, yet they are absolutely living beings with living desires that escape and exceed from the normative constructions.

The imaginaries of pirate *Paotao* and officer China

The local term *Paotao* (寶島), which means “treasure island,” emerged during the 1970s and has since been popularly synonymous with Taiwan. Although identical to the Japanese title for Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, the word *Paotao* is popular slang frequently used in the name of many local brands.⁷⁹ Throughout the play, the animations projected on the screen

⁷⁸ A famous line from *Lunyu*: “There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son,” (translated by James Legge in 1893, Chapter 11, Book XII: Yen Yuan, *Lunyu*).

⁷⁹ In *Islands in History and Representation*, Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith highlight the complex and interdependent dynamics between islands and mainlands. *Pirates and Formosa* offers ways to reconsider the

show a series of stereotypical *Paotao* images: merchant ships loaded with treasures sailing under beautiful sunshine, Formosan sika deers running through grass green valleys, indigenous tribes in tropical tea fields with rainbows across the sky. These images produce an imagined *Paotao* that functions as a metaphor for possibility and promise, an emblem of comfort and protection, and a motif of home and nostalgia. They also resonate with the imagined Formosa—an exotic paradise or utopia—projected by the colonizers and voyagers from Europe and Japan. Indeed, Han China was not the only colonial power on the island in the past centuries. Yet, the question is, why does Han China become the target of such hatred in this performance? While the pirates of different races cooperate to find the treasure, the only villainous character—the Qing officer Aiyaya—ceaselessly schemes to murder the pirates, steal the treasure, and destroy the island.

In scene 3, when Aiyaya threatens to kill by saying “there are one thousand and four hundred missiles set to aim at you,” a great number of the people sitting in the theater always laugh. According to news on *The Washington Post* on August 24th 2011, a Pentagon report asserted that China is developing one thousand and four hundred long-range missiles aimed at Taiwan “to deter Taiwan independence and influence Taiwan to settle the dispute on Beijing’s terms.”⁸⁰ The Cross-Strait relationship has been an issue since the Chinese Civil War and the retreat in 1949. For more than sixty years, the Taiwanese Government has relied on vague terms and slippery semantics to describe Taiwan’s separate yet not officially independent status quo. As I have discussed in chapter one, Lai Sheng-Chuan’s *Dreamers* is the best example of this political strategy. Avoiding political firestorms has long been an important task for the Taiwanese governments, especially the Kuomintang. Since then president Lee Teng-Hui’s

relationship between Taiwan and China, which reveals how the island of Taiwan plays a fundamental role in decolonial and disidentificatory processes.

⁸⁰ William Wan, “China still focused on Taiwan, Pentagon report finds,” *The Washington Post*, 24 August 2011.

“special state-to-state relationship” remarks touched off a political conflagration that involved the governments of the U.S., Beijing, and Taiwan, Taiwanese officials have been much more sensitive and careful when confronting these issues.⁸¹

The long-term political anxiety commonly shared by the people living in Taiwan ultimately stimulates a local reaction, which seeks to relieve the collective stress through tactical humor. Aiyaya’s threatening words embody this kind of inside humor that effectively entertains the audience, yet it also mirrors a common infatuation-resentment complex toward Chineseness, which is usually represented by the image of a Qing officer in Taiwanese nationally-identified performances—a clownish villain in exaggerated historical costume that resembles *Jingju* and historical television characters speaking pseudo-Beijing-accented Mandarin and acting like the typical corrupt antihero who oppress innocent citizens for self-profit. In *Pirates and Formosa*, the character is even named “Aiyaya,” which, on the one hand, implies the character’s direct connection to Qing royals and, on the other hand, parodies the name by making it sound like a typical phrase used to express disappointment or displeasure.⁸²

And yet the 17th century history of the island performed by *Pirates and Formosa* simultaneously inhabits and disrupts this political and cultural anxiety. By representing and constructing the island’s history and reinterpreting the pirates of different races as the ancestors of the current people who live on the island, the play not only effectively dissolves the essentialist coherency between Taiwan and China but also, more importantly, fashions novel forms of insular expression that focus on cultural heterogeneity. Indeed, in an unconscious way,

⁸¹ Personal Interview by Dieter Weirich, Gunter Knabe, and Simone de Manso Cabral from *Deutsche Welle*, 9 July 1999.

⁸² *Ai*, as the first syllable of the royal family name Aisin Gloro in the Qing Dynasty, denotes the Qingness of the character Aiyaya; the meaning of the Chinese expression “aiyaya” is similar to the expression “oops” in English.

the performance reveals its own anxiety toward this coherency in that the excessive elements render the entire show as an intense, dazzled spectacle that lacks a core aesthetic tone. This anxiety manifests as a postcolonial demonstration that resists any political/cultural ideology that attempts to monopolize the island. As presented by the performance, the people on the island are no longer “the descendants of dragon” but as director Wang Rong-Yu hails, “the descendants of pirates.”

Throughout the performance, the diverse images of “pirate”—pirates of different races and genders—emphasize, to use Michel de Certeau’s concept, the “tactical power” of cooperation within the anti-capitalist mob.⁸³ Piracy is typically an act of robbery or criminal violence at sea that challenges official law. The pirates work together to collect and recycle resources in their own ways. The interactions—fights, cooperation, and marriage—between the pirate characters signify the complex postcolonial dynamics among different powers/players on the island. Forbidden piracy becomes an alternative that these resistant islanders imagine and pursue. On the other hand, the pirate characters express a collective dream—starting a new life with their newfound fortunes on the utopic island. The island serves as an imagined destination of freedom outside of the Chinese ideological mainland. In this light, the interactions among the pirates become tactical appropriations of power that contradict the Chinese-centrist norms and other forms of ideological dominance. Piracy becomes a queer trope of Taiwanese-ness that might help the audience rethink the postcolonial and melancholic scenario of the island. Always sailing across the borders of oceans, playing within and against the official, cooperating for the imagined utopia, and producing alternative ways of life, the pirates in *Pirates and Formosa* vividly promote a disidentificatory and tactical power from which the notion of queer island

⁸³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36-37.

Taiwanese-ness grows. This notion is located within theatrical spectacles that represent the forbidden local “repertoires.”⁸⁴ These spectacles, functioning as ephemeral and reflective images, illuminate and bridge the sense of island and the configuration of imaginaries.

Tai camp

Fashioning the model of queer island disidentification, I see camp as a political-aesthetic strategy that well supports and embodies the queer parody performed by the play.⁸⁵ In “Notes on Camp,” Sontag claims that the ridiculousness, artifice and frivolity of camp refers to “a mode of seduction” that employs ‘flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation.’⁸⁶ The seriousness of camp is anti-serious: it is playful, comic, and parodic. In *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, however, Moe Meyer argues that Sontag’s definition of camp as sensibility risks becoming an empty universal term that banish the queer from the discourse.⁸⁷ Understanding camp as not simply an aesthetic style but rather a political critique embodied in signifying practices that constitute queer identities, Meyer argues for the development of a “performance-centered methodology” that “privileges process, the agency of knowledgeable performers, and the constructed nature of human realities.”⁸⁸ As a process, camp parody provides the marginalized agent access to representation, the apparatus of which is controlled by the dominant order.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

⁸⁵ Yeh Tzu-Hua, in *Nanwang te hsinai te jen: Chinchihyenshe te hupiehtzu meihshueh*, beautifully weaves Sontag’s camp notion into her discussion of *Opela*. Part of my research is influenced by her work.

⁸⁶ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Picador, 2001), 275-292.

⁸⁷ Moe Meyer edits, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5-11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 1-20.

In the abstract of her paper, “Re-exploring camp aesthetics from contemporary Taiwanese queer films,” Wang Chun-Chi argues that the ambivalence of European-American camp discourse renders the idea flexible when imported to Taiwan.⁹⁰ She points out that, by appropriating local elements, Taiwanese queer films theatricalize the irony and incoherence of *Tai* culture, constructing local camp discourses. Translated as *Kanpu* (敢曝), which means “dare to expose” in Chinese, or as *Kesien* (假仙), which means “affectation” in Minnan, the idea of camp has transformed into a local aesthetic and politic of resistant performativity that questions the heteronormativity appropriated by the colonial powers and the Taiwanese governments for specific political purposes.⁹¹ In Taiwan, many underground, avant-garde performance groups have contributed to the discourse of *Tai* camp. A famous example would be Blushing Diva Theater Group’s celebrated performance *More than just an Oh-So-Perfect doll, I swear!* (2011), in which queer artist Tony Fish integrates Taiwanese Minnan pop songs and drag queen shows into his coming-out monologue, all presented in an overly sentimental tone.⁹² The performance reveals how queer politics associate with local cultures, enriching the notion of *Tai* camp. In this light, *Tai* camp can be perceived as a product, but not the end product, of local queer struggles that can be repeatedly incorporated and appropriated to fashion even more forms of *Tai* camp.

⁹⁰ Wang Chun-Chi’s abstract can be seen at the following link:

http://www.csat.org.tw/paper/D-6-4_王君琦_a.pdf.

⁹¹ *Kanpu* is used by Liou Liang-ya, Luo Ching-Yao, and Hsiao Juey-Fu. *Kesien* is used by David Der Wei Wang. See Xu Ben’s article “Panchuang chiyi, piaoyenchengchih ho kanpumeihseh (扮裝技藝、表演政治和敢曝美學, Drag techniques, performative politics, and camp aesthetics)” at the following links:

http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4cacf1f301000ah1.html.

http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4cacf1f301000ah2.html.

⁹² Also see Luo Ching-Yao’s dissertation “Queering Across the Border at the Crossroads: The Queer Discourse, Body/Voice Politics and Cultural Practice in Taiwan (1990–2002),” (2005).

Working as one kind of *Tai* camp, the local performing method *Opela* used in *Pirates and Formosa* strongly signifies the multiculturalism and postcoloniality of the island. *Opela* refers to a specific style of *Gezaixi* developed during the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan. Crafted in order to survive the censorship of the colonial government, which by that time forbade Taiwanese local cultures, it integrates a variety of performing elements including Japanese popular songs and western orchestra into the local practices of *Gezaixi* and thus fashions a hybrid and kitsch style of performance. To survive, *Opela* develops into a tactical, humorous, and pugnacious performance method that well-uses its ridiculousness to obscure Confucian norms.

An *Opela* usually requires using a variety of performing elements to produce an extravagant, spectacular sensual pleasure, appealing to an over-dramatic, soap-opera style performance that strongly stimulates the affect of performer and audience. In doing so, *Opela* is extremely sensitive to the grassroots popular (sub)cultures and slang, which the Kuomintang had targeted as vulgar and shameful things to be banned. *Opela* becomes a tactical repertoire that reserves the officially forbidden. It transmits, embodies, and revives those excluded from the grand narrative of classical Chinese aesthetics. Certainly, *Opela* is not the only tradition that exists outside classical Chinese aesthetics. The cultures of Dai, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and many others are not in the realm of Chinese centrist identity. The campy performance style of *Opela*, however, is unique because of its activist features. *Opela* works actively and flexibly; it develops and transforms ceaselessly; it always gazes at the norms and searches for alternatives to them. In other words, it is the relationship between *Opela* and Chinese norms that renders the former different from other non-Chinese aesthetics.

Fashioning a hyper-hybrid performance, the *Opela* of the play recycles and appropriates a variety of popular elements and materials. For examples, Tequila, one of the minions of Alweda,

resembles captain Jack Sparrow in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series (Gore Verbinski 2003). Except that his wig is green, his makeup, costumes and even body postures are all inspired by the movie character. Yet Tequila does not simply imitate the popular image of Jack Sparrow but parodies it—the actor exaggerates the dramatic, stylized, eccentric features of the movie character. Chanting about the natural beauty of the island and dancing with her hair blowing in the (artificial) wind, Saram looks like the Disney Princess Pocahontas in *Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg 1995). Shui Dingdang and Kuki Tara, both crews of Cheng Fei-Hung, are reminiscent of fighting characters in *kungfu* video games; the style of Petro is similar to that of Legolas in *The Lord of the Rings* film series (Peter Jackson 2001, 2002, 2003). The play does not simply borrow these elements to represent a melodramatic mix but to appropriate and mutate the elements to create and reflect a cultural collage in a parodic tone. Characters in the play often act/move in ways seem opposed to the style in which they were originally set. At first glance, Cheng Fei-Hung's vulgar postures and costumes render him a stereotypically masculine Chinese mafia figure; however the character soon reveals his hobby of doing extremely feminine sexual dance—touching his genitals while subtly showing the curve of his body. Similarly, pirate Petro, seemingly a Prince Charming equipped with bows and arrows, shows his silliness and awkwardness when the siren touts him as having a good heart. Pirate Alwida, apparently an aggressive, bloodthirsty figure, when introducing herself to other people, turns into a coy child speaking and moving as if it were her first time doing so.

Beside the characters, the music and staging also reveal the parodic appropriations of the play. The prelude, “Welcome to the new world,” first presents a typical Taiwanese *Nakasi* melody and then switches into a rock-and-roll ballad in English.⁹³ All of a sudden, the tempo

⁹³ *Nakasi* is a traditional popular music form in Taiwan, usually associated with working-class culture such as the old tea parlors and drinking bars.

becomes allegro, and all the performers dance in a comic way on stage—the seemingly heroic, epical characters envisioning a utopian future thus change into common people celebrating their lives. The name of the legendary treasure for which the characters are crazy—“The Heart of the Ocean”—is exactly the same as the one in the film *Titanic* (James Cameron 1997). Yet later the play reveals that the “The Heart of the Ocean” for which the pirates are looking is “a very potential tourist sight undersea,” which echoes the commonly seen tourist slogan launched by the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan. Another great example is the scenery: a canvas board with words “The dream is right in front of us” on it. Interestingly, the audience sees the wording mistake on the board—the original words “The dream is not far way from us” are crossed off and fixed as “The dream is right in front of us.” The revision connotes the absurdity of this kind of clichéd slogan that is often used by the Taiwanese government for identity education. Through revealing the constructedness of authenticities and authorities, the performance plays with these pop codes in order to, on the one hand, gesture toward the multicultural and (post)colonial character of Taiwan and, on the other hand, deconstruct the official hegemony, which defines the island as the miniature of imagined Han China. Falsely performing the norms as if worshipping the official, the performing sneakily dodges and troubles the norms through irony, parody, and farce. The production thus performs its (dis)identificatory politics through a pleasant and playful method that parodically injects pop (sub)cultures into the performance.

Opela performance seems to be of a style of over-performing: everything on stage, including the materials and the tensions used and produced by the play, seems excessive, exaggerated, and sometimes even out of control. The *Opela* in *Pirates and Formosa* not only celebrates the hybridity of diverse performing methods but also creates a theatrical space and time that is hyper-artificial and anti-elitist: the cartoony animation of landscape projections, the

colorful light bulbs shining on stage, the neon-colored wigs and costumes worn by slang-speaking characters. Various performing skills and methods, including *Gezaixi*, indigenous ballads and rituals, Broadway jazz dance, modern dance, martial arts, circus, burlesque, choir, soap opera, talk show, and clown show, are all squeezed into the play. The kaleidoscopic element produces a heteroglossic power that elicits multiple interpretations. Alwida, for instance, in her modified European dress and red bodysuit, with the dramatic red wig and burlesque feather hat on her head, plays with her sex slave and dances to Broadway music while negotiating with Cheng Fei-Hung in Minnan dialect. This character simultaneously inhabits and destroys numerous cultural codes, all hybridized, reformed, or reorganized in order to create a novel island aesthetic.

Certainly, as critic Hung Hung points out in his review “Tsuyeh huo tsushu te kuotsu hsianghsiang,” the melodramatic plot and stylized characters of the play that follows Manichaean dualism risk weakening the musical’s critical valence as a national allegory through local plebian aesthetics.⁹⁴ However the rough, artificial, flat, and stylized performance produces a transgressive power that parodies what has been claimed as normative and official and further points to the serious poetics and politics of anti-normativity from which a queer island disidentification emerges and flowers. This is not to imply that the campy features of the play abandon and dispose of the norms, nor is it to demonstrate that parody can totally subvert the performative codes. It is to highlight a tactical guerrilla action that fights through creative processes of playing and negotiation.

⁹⁴ See Hung Hung’s review at the following link:

<http://pareviews.ncafroc.org.tw/?p=1188>.

Up to now, the official name of Taiwan has appeared as the “Republic of China,” which seems to refer to mainland China instead of the island. The geology textbooks edited by the Ministry of Education even mark the mainland as part of the ROC territory. The mainland becomes an imagined extension of the island and the island becomes an unacceptable doppelganger for the mainland. As an activist aesthetic sensitive to national issues, *Opela* becomes an applicable weapon for island artists. The parodic performance style of *Opela* draws forth a tactical power of *Tai* camp that can effectively arouse and produce insular consciousness not only fighting against the Chinese-centric ideology but also, significantly, emphasizing the historical particularity of the island. The tactic shared by the local audiences functions as material and weapon to reveal the national, racial, and gender myth, which privileges the male Han people living on the island and interprets Taiwan as the Republic of China. In this sense, the play catalyzes a queer island disidentification that tactically and actively disrupts the official one.

Conclusion: “Finally, we arrive at Formosa, the utopic island that we have been imagining for such a long time!”⁹⁵

Taiwan’s quandary over how to position itself has always been a serious issue. The issue directly relates to various domestic disasters such as Chung-Chiu’s death and international conflicts caused by the intense Cross-Strait relationship and the complex (post)colonial histories of the island. (De)constructing Taiwanese identification continues to be necessary now. The idea of “nation” and/or “island” can be volatile; the semantic games on national terms have avoided possible military action and maintained a seeming peace between Taiwan and China. Yet it is this volatility that highlights the contingencies of both official ROC and local Taiwanese self

⁹⁵ Yu Hui-Fen, *Pirates and Formosa* (2011).

articulations. It also connotes the possibility of a potential insular expression that exceeds the stale debate over the Cross-Strait Relationship and further points to the indelible (post)colonial melancholia and multi-cultural trafficking exemplified by *Mazu's Bodyguards* and *Pirates for Formosa*.

Both pointing to an “oceanic” Taiwanese-ness, *Mazu's Bodyguard* and *Pirates and Formosa* strongly perform a queer island disidentification differentiated from the “continent” ROC national identity. The multiplicity of disidentification destabilizes the univocal, anachronistic ideology produced within specific historical contexts. However it is the interplay of the local disidentificatory tactics and the official ideological strategies that illuminates the unique Taiwanese identification. Both plays focus on the local experiences and memories that have been muted and hidden by the official ideology. Instead of mythologizing the Kuomintang figures and reinforcing a Chinese centrist parochialism, *Mazu's Bodyguard* and *Pirates and Formosa* (re)present Taiwan's traumatic history and multicultural/racial identifications through the lens of local minorities, whose voices and insights have been often shrouded by the grand narrative of the Kuomintang. In this sense, both can be deemed as a dis-and-then-re-rememberation project that disturbs the official ones.

This chapter employs critical theories of queer studies, island (dis)identification, and cross-culturalism to address the configuration of powers and identification at stake in contemporary Taiwan. *Mazu's Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa* present the stories that tease out the multiplicity and chaos of Taiwanese culture that has been covered up by the Chinese-centric hegemony. By highlighting the queer possibilities in *Mazu's Bodyguards* and *Pirates and Formosa*, I hope to place these two productions in the discussion of and the debate over the issues of island identity/identification at the present moment. Emphasized by the

musicals, a discourse of the insularity functions productively for the citizens of different races to delegitimize the violence caused by national myths and to maintain different collectivities on the island. The disidentification not only underlines the rich networking among different groups on the island today but also the ways in which Taiwan has been working as a pivot point of transnational trafficking.

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Performing Citizen Rebellion: Wang Mo-Lin's *A Soldier's Pay* and *Antigone*

POLYNEICES

Chamomile, thistle, and heartsease grew from the corner outside the iron window. I talked to them everyday. I checked to see if their stems and leaves grew more. The soldiers came once and pulled them all out. Not a single root was left. I still cannot forget the anger and pain I felt in my heart then. It was like seeing me oppressed by them.

Wang Mo-Lin, *Antigone*¹

On July 4th 2013, Hong Chung-Chiu, a 24-year-old Taiwanese corporal in the Army of the Republic of China, was reported dead after being forced to perform vigorous physical training under disciplinary confinement for, according to the Army, illegally bringing a camera phone into the military base. Emerging evidence seems to indicate that a conspiracy between the Kuomintang Government and the military system led to Chung-Chiu's death. His death, however, was swiftly concluded to be accidental. Although Kao Hua-Chu, the current Minister of National Defense, bowed in remorse for Hung's death and nominally resigned from office—his resignation was immediately rejected by the President Ma Ying-Jeou—and the Ministry of National Defense promised that the crucial evidence, a defective monitor video tape, would be handed over to the Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau, Taiwanese activists organized Citizen 1985, an activist organization that aims to unveil and reinvestigate pending criminal cases that occurred within the Republic of China's Army during past several decades.² These cases include the deaths of numerous soldiers including: Lu Meng-Ying, Yao Tai-Yuan, Tsai Hsueh-Liang, Chen Chun-Ming, Hong Wen-Pu, Chiang Kuo-Ching, Huang Kuo-Chang, Ying

¹ I deeply thank Wang Mo-Lin and Wang Yung-Hung (王永宏) from Guling Street Avant-Garde Theatre / Body Phase Studio for providing me the script of *Antigone*.

² See Citizen 1985's official website at the following link:

<http://pttcitizen1985.blogspot.com/>.

Ching-Feng, Lei Cheng-Ju, Chiang Ming-Chun, Chen Guang-Che, and many yet unnoticed others.³ Later in August, a quarter million people gathered at Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Office of the President to protest human rights violations and institutional violence; sadly, however, president Ma Ying-Jeou, who is also the commander-in-chief, responded ambivalently, providing no substantial response. The suspects in Chung-Chiu's death were all released on bail under the protection of the state apparatus and political ideology set up by the Kuomintang.

Besides the soldiers listed above, many more victims suffered and were killed by brutal violence, which was shielded by institutional loopholes. The countless murder cases have seriously impaired the public image of the National Army and have prompted the development of many performance pieces addressing the issue. Many extraordinary scholars have also stressed this issue through varied approaches. Lin Wen-Chi, for example, in *Huayutienying chung te kuochia yuyen yu kuotsu jentung*, focuses on what she argues is the “rupture” between Chinese-centrist identity and newborn local Taiwanese identification.⁴ This rupture points to a significant identificatory transformation that signifies the entangled complex of the Cross-Strait history. In another example, in *Enquiry into Subjectivity: Modernity, History, Taiwan Contemporary Dance*, Chen Ya-Ping discusses the way Taiwanese dance theater, through semioticizing the dancing body, represents the violence and traumas inscribed on individual bodies by the state apparatus.⁵ The example she discusses, Taiwanese choreographer Tao Fu-

³ See the list at the following link:

<http://kissinwang.ezyou.cc/6.shear/Love%20&%20Justice/armykiller.htm>.

⁴ Lin Wen-Chi, *Huayutienying chung te kuochia yuyen yu kuotsu jentung* (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 2009), 3.

⁵ Chen Ya-Ping, *Enquiry into Subjectivity: Modernity, History, Taiwan Contemporary Dance* (Taipei: Taipei National University of Arts, 2011).

Lang's dance piece *Ahh!?*, embodies the way in which local artists protest institutional ferocity and governmental violence. National identity/identification and institutional violence in Taiwan have proved to be pressing issues at this time. As domestic and local as the issues seem to be, they actually share similarities with various scenarios around the world. However, the essential problems of the National Army are not yet solved. Similar criminal cases have happened one after one and the law of the nation continues to defend the criminals.

What is the essential problem in the National Army and how does it relate to contemporary performances? While the queer island disidentification that I developed in the previous chapter proposes a novel discourse to trouble and deconstruct the alliance of Confucian heteronormativity and the official identity legitimized by the Kuomintang, it is still an urgent issue that national remnants continue functioning to support institutional violence that causes serious domestic and transnational fights and conflicts. There is no way that celebrating the postcolonial hybridity of the island while ignoring the political violence, which still haunts the people on the island, can achieve a more just and egalitarian Taiwanese society. In chapter one, I have argued that Taiwan's national melancholia renders itself as the refusal to grieve for the loss of China. In this chapter, I aim to further the argument by revealing how this national complex is embodied in and corporealized by the violence performed by state and military officials onto the citizens' bodies. To do so, I see performances as political acts that effectively uncover and protest against this dominance via its features of impermanence and reflexivity. My question is: in not refusing to grieve the loss, how does a performance mourn for officially ungrievable lives and thereby contest the institutional violence implicated in the sensitive, awkward, and subtle national status of Taiwan?

It is thus urgent for performance practitioners, critics, and scholars to reveal this officially unspeakable institutional violence through the lens and form of performance. Due to the bureaucratic inertia and structural deficiency of current Taiwanese law, approaching the issue through performance can be a tactical, flexible, and alternative way to uncover what the National Army, and the military law standing behind it, have hidden. Yet the essential problem of the National Army is not the Army nor the law itself but the entire ideological apparatus mythologized by the government for Project National Glory.⁶ Indeed, it seems absurd that the still-existing Kuomintangian identity, which is dedicated to the ultimate unification of the Mainland and Taiwan, still obstinately determines the structure of governance in Taiwan even as Taiwan-oriented, multicultural, and anti-Chinese identification has overwhelmingly swept across the island. This absurdity resulting from the Cross-Strait history has (in)directly caused numerous tragedies, including the criminal cases mentioned above and the invisible collective traumas of racial conflicts brought by historical nightmares such as the 228 Incident.

In this chapter, I propose a model in which performances on and off stage protests against institutional violence and mourns for the victims who are officially unmourned. In this model, performance can provide powerful weapons and transgressive agency in order to trouble the heteronormative principle of ideal militant bodies as related to the Kuomintang political identity. To explore this model, I examine the ways in which local and foreign contemporary performances engage the issue through different kinds of theatrical representations. In this chapter, I select two theater performances directed by Wang Mo-Lin—*A Soldier's Pay* (2004) and *Antigone* (2013)—as examples that protest institutional violence through performances/choreographies on stage. These performances, when mobilized, developed and

⁶ Project National Glory was a military attempt by the Kuomintang Government to try to recapture Mainland China held by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The missions began in 1965 and were dropped in 1972.

received within different cultural contexts, demonstrate a similar question: how can performance end violence by performing violence? By juxtaposing the two pieces, I suggest how the Taiwanese performances contribute to broader debates regarding institutional violence around the world. In addition, Wang Mo-Lin's *Antigone*, created by performance artists from Taiwan, Korea, and China, demonstrates a potential prospect of reconsidering political violence and national identification through a transnational and cross-cultural perspective. It is my goal to probe into these performances developed within different temporal contexts to further the discussion of national identification and to have the discussion affect, change, and improve Taiwan's status quo.

A famous Taiwanese activist/performer/director, Wang Mo-Lin has spent many years producing works that target the intervulnerable relationship between citizen bodies and national violence. For Wang Mo-Lin, this relationship, which has constructed the institutional structure of politics in Taiwan, is fleshed out in the form of the Republic of China Armed Forces. Originally the National Revolutionary Army before being renamed in 1947 due to the implementation of the Constitution, the Republic of China Armed Forces were designed to serve in the mission of retaking Mainland China from the People's Republic of China. Its military purpose is intimately associated with the Chinese-centrist ideology over the last half century. Despite the fact that the idea of retaking Mainland China has become an anachronistic cliché and that a hybrid, multicultural Taiwanese identification has been gradually replacing the Chinese identity, the Army remains as historical debris that ghosts the island.

Since 1987, Wang Mo-Lin has examined and analyzed the way a Chinese legacy was inscribed on Taiwanese performing bodies. One example is his famous article that criticizes Lin Hwai-Min's choreography that, according to him, does not address the relationship between

contemporary issues and dancing aesthetics but simply reflects a hegemonic cultural discourse of China.⁷ In this sense, it is fair to say that Wang Mo-Lin's notion of Asian body, does not search for a body aesthetic that legitimizes Taiwan as the preserver of the authentic Chinese culture, but rather one that is able to reflect and protest against the (post)colonial traumas, the political oppressions, the institutional violence, and the various discriminations.

After retiring from the army in 1982, Wang Mo-Lin went to Japan and studied drama and theater at Chuo University for three years. During this period, Wang was deeply moved and inspired by the way Japanese Butoh practitioners use their bodies as weapons of protest for social movements. As learned from Butoh, the idea of a body that is penetrated by history, nationality, and governmentality becomes his focus. As Susan Blakeley Klein states in *Ankoku Butoh: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, the sense of self as an unified subject is formed and sustained by the unconscious acceptance and introjection of those social norms/institutions that domesticate the chaotic instincts.⁸ Klein further points out that, according to Butoh aesthetics, "it is only by abandoning the notion of the individual subject, and fragmenting the body through self-torture, that we can be released from the deeply imbedded social archetypes conditioned into every fiber of our bodies."⁹ Butoh's theory of reconceiving the social norms and identity crisis that is inscribed onto and conditioned into the bodies provides a tool for the activist artist/artistic activist to probe into the relation between arts and politics.

Certainly, as Lin Yu-Bin asks in "Wuta te fachan yu chin Kanoko tsai Taiwan," the question is, what does this Japanese postwar product mean to Taiwan at all?¹⁰ As a performing

⁷ Wang Mo-Lin, "Ni chente kanchien shenhsinling ma?" *Performing Arts Review*, issue 109 (July 2002).

⁸ Klein, *Ankoku Butoh* (1989), 33.

⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

¹⁰ Lin Yu-Bin, "Wuta te fachan yu chin Kanoko tsai Taiwan" (2007), 161.

method that is inspired by and developed within the context of postwar Japan, Butoh seems to particularly point to the idea of a Japanese body. Lin Yu-Bin discusses later in his article the development of the Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Company and its founder Hata-Kanoko's artistic manifesto. He argues that Hata-Kanoko's focus has turned from fashioning a model of body vocabulary that refers to a specific Asian country to highlighting "another Butoh" that focuses on the everyday lives of the people of Asia, who fight to survive.¹¹ The specificity of a single culture does not matter that much any more. Taiwanese Butoh rather focuses on the similar structure of traumatic affects and traumatized bodies and searches for a theatrical language for them to access resources to fight and survive. This attempt is well embodied in Wang Mo-Lin's *A Soldier's Pay* and *Antigone*, which addresses the shared traumas through performing the tortured, traumatized bodies on stage.

I divide this chapter into two parts. The first part argues for the necessity of an uncanny aesthetic of experimental theater that troubles the alliance of national myth and bourgeois norms in Taiwan. Employing Freud's theory of the uncanny, I examine the way in which *A Soldier's Pay* represents the forgotten and erased murder case through its sound design, stage installation, and grotesque performing bodies on stage. The staging of the play provides a painful experience of watching a performance and thus alerts the audience to the aesthetic illusion of harmony constructed by the collusion of political identity and pleasurable artistic taste/entertainment. The second part analyzes his latest transnational production, *Antigone*. Grounding my argument in Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet's notion of minor transnationalism, I point to a potential transnational uprising achieved by the cooperation of different East Asian countries, each with their own repressed national traumas. Further, I highlight how both performances, through

¹¹ Ibid, 172.

sexualizing the female characters/performers on stage, produce a theatrical spectacle that signifies a sexualized political scenario. This sexualized political scenario not only displays the interplay of gender/sexuality and power/politics but also reflects how the female body is often used and consumed by political theaters. In this chapter, I investigate the way in which contemporary theater practitioners protest (trans)national hegemony and violence. By performing and choreographing the vulnerability and politicality of theater, the practitioners argue for the need to recognize how theater can work to embody, reflect, trouble, contest and alter further politics. I aim to highlight possible methods to perceive the complex connections between performance and politics, proposing that theater can be a powerful medium in transmitting and inspiring ideas and thoughts about citizen rebellion.

Part I. *A Soldier's Pay*

Intro

When the shrill high-frequency sounds and extremely unbearable loud environmental resonances start spreading through the dark little theater, the audiences are terrified—some of them tremble, crouch, moan, or even try to cover their eyes and ears. Throughout the performance, the non-stop sounds almost cover the performers' monologues and conversation, making the audiences even much more anxious about the entire experience of seeing a show. The sounds haunt the theater as if long-suffering ghosts who have been locked up for a long time have been released. Performers appear at the dark corners of the stage. The desperate expressions on their pale faces and the bloodstains on their ragged clothes denote the disastrous pain they have shared. Throughout this a torturing process, surprisingly, not a single audience member leaves—everyone, though struggling with the violence represented on the stage, stays till the end.

Premiered at Guling Street Avant-garde Theatre on December 9th 2004, Wang Mo-Lin's *A Soldier's Pay* is an intense performance based on the 1999 Taipei Armed Force Museum murder, in which a 17-year-old high school female student Chang Fu-Chen was raped and murdered by air force private Kuo Ching-Ho in the bathroom of the curator's office. Kuo Ching-Ho was executed by firing squad within two months, yet this speedy execution revealed many unresolved pieces of evidence that point to the possibility that Kuo Ching-Ho was only one of the crime's several perpetrators. Yet this case was covered up and buried within the National Army's swift judgment and was never investigated again. Instead of representing the exact case in an entirely historically accurate manner, *A Soldier's Pay* combines sound arts, visual projections and stage installations with un-realist performance to explore the complication of national myth, institutional power, gender norms, and sexual violence. The play consists of five scenes and is performed by four performers—two actors playing the soldier and two actresses playing the victim of the crime.

The haunted stage and the disciplined bodies

When entering the theater, the audience see an eight-meter long straight tunnel composed of four transparent acrylic cubes with white frames. Assembled next to one other, these same-sized cubes look like small cells or specimen boxes. Moving inside the tunnel, the half-naked performers remind one of human/animals that are to be examined from the outside. The white lights projecting from the ceiling make the stage look like a glacial clinic room. The audiences become the examiners that gaze and observe the performers inside the tunnel. Presented as a huge inhuman container that invites/forces the audience to examine the performers on stage, the installation symbolizes the violence of the ROC military system. The stage resembles not only

the Armed Forces Museum where the murder case took place, but also the notorious ROC military confinement cells in which countless Taiwanese young soldiers were tortured to death.

The structure of the tunnel changes in different scenes. Like building blocks, the cubes can be reassembled. In the second scene, the tunnel is broken in the middle—an empty space thus appears between two small tunnels standing on stage right and left. Unknown red images are projected onto the acrylic walls of the tunnels, slightly shaking and flickering. The images later echo the blood stains on the performers' costumes, creating a spooky atmosphere.

In the next scene, the straight tunnels are restructured into one curved tunnel that is composed of three cubes. At first glance, there seems to be over ten performers standing and crawling in and outside the tunnel. The audience soon realizes that the crowdedness is actually an optical illusion caused by the curving angle of the tunnel cubes. Each performer is reflected on the three cubes. The four performers thus triple and seem more than ten people. The translucent reflections make the stage seem like a haunted place.



Stage of *A Soldier's Pay* (photographed by Chen Yu-Wei)¹²

Already scary and spooky, the structure of the installation changes again in the next scene and becomes more dismal and dreary. The cubes are reassembled into an in-depth single cube—the lateral tunnel changes to one cube longitudinally layered by four cubes. The performers appearing in different layers of the cubes look like creatures put on microscopic glasses. The rare light set on the ceiling and the dim lights set on the frames of the cubes make the performers' faces dark and indistinct. The audience only sees the blurred shape of the performers. As the rear light fades out and the frame lights flicker, the audience sees no performers but only the frames glimmering. The installation is transformed back into the original set of the long tunnel in the last scene. The fluorescent tubes set in the audience area illuminate the tunnel. The acrylic transparent wall of the cubes reflects the dazzling white light and thus assails the audiences' eyes.

The callous cubes stand along with the masculine, trained live bodies moving on stage. In scene four, two performers, lying alongside one another, appear in-between the layered cubes, constantly practicing military exercises such as pushups, sit-ups, and spot running. Although doing the same exercises, the performers have different rhythms, which make their bodies look like split doppelgängers—their bodies are sometimes overlapped and sometimes staggered. At the same time, the audience hears a confession delivered in an extremely militaristic and hysterical tone:

My name is Chang Chih-Min; I am twenty-years old; I am now serving in the ROC army; I am a soldier; I repeat the same work everyday; I am attentive to my duties; I save the pictures of the ROC glory into digital files, putting them into a computer...have you ever seen a picture in which a soldier is stabbing a pregnant

¹² I deeply thank Wang Yung-Hung and Yao Jui-Chung of Guling Street Avant-garde Theatre for providing the images of *A Soldier's Pay* and *Antigone* for the research purpose in this dissertation.

woman in her belly with a bayonet; have you ever seen a picture in which a naked woman is dying on the toilet floor with her face toward the ceiling...I like the way her body lies; as if the dead woman would resurrect with my erect penis stabbing her; I was just thinking in that way; her womb makes me come.¹³

It seems that the performance implies that this cruel crime is inseparable from the criminal's daily work of dealing with brutal materials—the job traumatizes the soldier and leads to the unavoidable crime. The performers' radical confessions and exercises signify the absurdity of the behavior standards formulated by the Kuomintang.

From 1934 to 1945, the Kuomintang launched the New Life Movement, which attempted to fight against Communist ideology through a mix of ideologies that value collectivism and counter individualism. Notably, the New Life Movement is a Chinese-centrist policy. As Shu-Mei Shih points out in *Visuality and Identity*, “‘classical Chinese culture’ was one of the legitimizing mechanisms for the Kuomintang government's rule of Taiwan—the logic being that the Republic of China on Taiwan, not communist China, was the preserver of the authentic Chinese culture, and by that, the Chinese mainlanders in Taiwan were culturally superior to the local Taiwanese, the Hakka, and the aboriginal.”¹⁴ The Kuomintang government executed this New Life Movement through a series of “sterilizations,” which emphasized citizens' “nice behaviors of eating and defecation.” These government-established “cleaning rules” thus cooperated with a specific national ideology by physically and virtually constructing the citizens' identity. Even after the Kuomintang's retreat to Taiwan, similar nationalist-hygienicalist collusions determine how citizens behave as well as perceive and use their bodies: one has to be

¹³ Wang Mo-Lin, *A Soldier's Pay* (2004).

¹⁴ Shu-Mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 4.

polite and clean in order to be “a good citizen” of the ROC. And, according to the government’s promotion, to be polite and clean, one should always have a handkerchief in one’s pocket, be careful not to spit or vomit in public areas, and not defy or challenge the government through any kind of violence. The performing bodies on stage show exactly the ways they are being disciplined and educated.

In *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault historicizes the trajectory from sovereign power and corporeal punishment to networked knowledge and surveillance-based power. He focuses on power willed over the human body, asserting that this power constructs the civilized and disciplined body, which is also the force that establishes the civilized modern society. The system involved having the citizen-subjects work in a highly regimented, refined, and systematic way, in which everyone has to adhere to the larger, networked, hierarchy of space and time.¹⁵ Discipline transforms, modifies, and establishes signs, interests, and duration, which engage with the mechanics of forces to build up a steady process.¹⁶ Foucault’s notion of the disciplinary system provides a crucial lens for understanding how Taiwanese bodies are constructed and disciplined by a series of governmental strategies established to create the people’s national identity/identification.

As Wang Mo-Lin points out in *Tushih chuchang yu shenti*, Taiwanese bodies have experienced and internalized the historical trauma of the 40-year Martial law period and precisely reflect Kuomintang’s political language.¹⁷ As an ideal construct, nation is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs. The contours and movement of the

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 219-220.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 137.

¹⁷ Wang Mo-Lin, *Tushih chuchang yu shenti* (Taipei: Dawshiang Publishing, 1992), 118.

performing bodies on stage show the effect of national/governmental norms, echoing the condition of the common bodies off stage. The performing bodies therefore are familiar and unfamiliar at the same time—they seem to be recalling the audience’s collective memories of body/behavior education received when in elementary and high schools, and yet seem to be turning these memories into a strange nightmare penetrated by the cruel crime, which is purposely erased by the official and unconsciously forgotten by the citizens.

Rape as tool of state apparatus

A young woman in a bloodstained white dress appears after the soldier’s confession. Standing on the cube and facing the audience, she starts taking off her dress and introduces herself: “My name is Huang Jung-Min; I was eighteen when the crime happened; I was a third-year high school student; The history teacher told us that, history is the memory of a nation and that; the memory shall be our identity; but what is that after all; do I own the right to not love my country?”¹⁸ In her thin underwear, the woman fiercely slaps the cube wall and finally collapses on the floor. It seems that the woman struggles regarding whether to love the country that she is taught to love and her struggles are intertwined with the rape she later suffers. The performance thus connects the discussions of national identification and of sexual violence, making the rape a crucial issue.

In the Huang Fu-Jen case, the victim went to the Taipei Armed Force Museum for research for homework for her military training class and was raped and murdered inside the museum. In Taiwan, military training class was exclusive to male students till the 1990s. Ever since, female students are also given military class in which they study ROC history and practice

¹⁸ Wang Mo-Lin, *A Soldier’s Pay* (2004).

basic military skills. Often taught by government-assigned drillmasters, the military class was originally designed to train the youths into soldiers able to contribute to the national project of “Re-conquering Mainland.” However, the military class provides the female students access to military information and skills, which is traditionally considered a territory of men, and thus threatens the patriarchal normativity. In this sense, a woman being raped and murdered signifies a revenge and a warning that attempts to reaffirm the patriarchy and militarism that excludes femininity. As any female student who dares to be interested in the military field risks being raped and murdered, they are implicitly encouraged to stay away from the field and let the males be in charge of it. The performance reveals this problematic logic by having the woman state her identical confusion that challenges the authority of the nation and then collapse on the floor inside the cubes. It seems that however hard the woman tries to tear down the cube wall, she can never succeed—her final posture of collapse renders her seemingly locked inside the cubes. The scene forecasts the woman’s later horrible suffering.

In their article “A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change,” Patricia L. N. Donat and John D’Emilio articulate the way in which the meaning of sexual assault and women’s sexuality have altered since the colonial era and investigate the feminist response to these alterations. They point out that, “with the feminist movement of the 1960s, rape was reconceptualized as a mechanism for maintaining male control and domination, a violent means of inducing fear in women and reinforcing their subordination to men.”¹⁹ Similarly, Maria Mevacqua, in her book *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*, discusses how the issue of rape moved to the broader public agenda and examines the diverse tactics of anti-rape politics. When examining the national

¹⁹ Patricia L. N. Donat and John D’Emilio, “A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change” (1992), 9.

political context of the U.S. in which the issue of rape occurred, Mevacqua points out that “the historical connection between rape and the construction of race in the United States has been a decisive element in the framing of the rape issue.”²⁰ The construction of the African American man as the stereotypical rapist and the African American woman as sexually available tightly associate with the national identity enacted and sustained by the white American. The policies responding to white fears of black criminality reveal the state apparatus of the U.S., in which the idea of rape plays a fundamental role. Rape not only refers simply to sexuality but also functions as a trope of political penetration: the white man’s normatized rape of an African American woman proves the white’s absolute, legitimized dominance over the non-white. The feminist reconceptualization of rape, although not a universal theorization that can be applied generally, helps one see how rape functions as an axis of the state apparatus in the Taiwanese context.

In *Niso Puchihtao te Taiwan*, Kuan Jen-Chien points out the absurdity of military law and judgment. He examines rape-murder cases from 1949 to the present and discusses how the constructed national glory (in)directly led to these cases.²¹ When retreating to Taiwan, the Kuomintang soldiers, who are all male, not only faced the issue of uneven gender proportion on the island but also were not entirely free to marry. Many cases were reported of soldiers raping and murdering local women. However most of these cases were roughly concluded—either the victim(s) were forced make a settlement with the criminal or the suspect(s) were quickly judged guilty and executed. Rape was implicitly accepted under these circumstances, as these cases implied that the government and the military did not significantly probe into them. Supporting the Kuomintang’s “Re-conquering Mainland” project, national glory, on one hand, serves as the

²⁰ Maria Mevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (2000), 11.

²¹ Kuan Jen-Chien, *Niso Puchihtao te Taiwan* (Taipei: Cosmax Publishing Co., 2011).

ROC military's best excuse to waive investigations by external organizations and, on the other hand, compels the cases rapid conclusions. In this case, it is not surprising that most of these swiftly-concluded cases are still pending and that the national glory is ironically overshadowed by them. In this scene in *A Soldier's Pay*, the intertwining the woman's national identical monologue with her sufferings of being raped and murdered illuminates the complex relationship between politics and sexuality, revealing how rape has been legitimized to serve the imagined nationality.



A performer in *A Soldier's Pay* (photographed by Chen Yu-Wei)

As sexually violating as the second scene seems to be, it is not the most controversial one in the play. Sexual violence is presented in a much more direct way in scenes 2 and 4, in which the audience sees the soldier almost raping the woman on stage. In scene two, a woman lies on the floor between the two small tunnels standing on stage. Seemingly in a coma, the woman never wakes up while the soldier touches, rubs, kisses, and strips her. The soldier becomes a

necrophilic figure quietly playing with her dead body. Without words, the only sound is the noise produced by the sound designer and the breath of the performers. The darkness on the stage makes this violent scene seem like an unforgettable nightmare recalling the actual crime that just happened.

Although not directly displaying the crime through a realist approach, the production received intense, and critical, feedback, especially from the victim's friends and families. According to a news report by *The Taiwan LihPao* on October 29th 2004,²² a friend of the victim posted a comment on Assign Theatre's official website, accusing the production of violently adding insult to injury. The commenter questions the possibility that the production can really arouse a reconsideration of the national identity issue and a readjustment of gender/sexual education. Certainly, as this negative comment warns, assimilating a violent crime into a performance can be risky. The question is whether the performance stimulates meaningful discussion that helps improve society or simply functions to serve the audiences and mass media with blood and sex on stage? If violence is used as material in the performance in order to be combated, how can it not become something to be, ironically, desired by the audiences and incorporated by mass entertainment? How can the visuals and sounds of violence and pain presented on stage not, as Susan Sontag points out in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, transform themselves into entertainment of "prurient interest," which risks making the viewers bored, inured and apathetic?²³

Sontag argues that "it is passivity that dulls feeling." I aim to argue that experimental theaters can possibly work as a more effective mode of performing citizen rebellion than most

²² The news can be found at the following link:

<http://www.lihpao.com/?action-viewnews-itemid-93694> (access April, 16, 2014).

²³ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Pacador, 2003), 95.

mass media, commercial theaters, and high arts. First, unlike photography and video that imply inbuilt credentials of objectivity, theater does not record but represents through a specific aesthetic strategy.²⁴ The representation of violence does not satisfy a voyeurism that craves real pain. Second, unlike commercial theater, which usually aims to entertain the audience by offering a relatively relaxing and comfortable experience of watching performance, pulling the audience temporarily away from reality, the audience of experimental theater has to confront and contend with the mess and chaos that might appear on stage.

These sexually violent scenes in *A Soldier's Pay* do not provide any voyeuristic pleasure. The painful noises and horrifying staging render the act of rape unpleasant and unbearable and therefore avoids the violence being consumed as innocuous entertainment. The violence and nakedness performed produce an anxious atmosphere. The grotesqueness of the performing bodies however produces much more anxiety. The pale bodies under the white lights move slowly and awkwardly as if they are somehow malfunctioning—crawling with twisted arms and legs, standing with neck awry, walking hunchbacked, curling on the floor like a dead insect. These postures and movements contrast with the disciplined military exercises, violating the officially-set bodily norms. The two sets of performing bodies—the violating bodies and the disciplined bodies—thus signify the two sides of the common body that is controlled and tortured by the national/political hegemony.

Noises that cover and destroy

The uncanny, almost inhuman resonances remind one of sounds resulting from some broken high-tech apparatus that would bring unknown disasters. When the soldier and the

²⁴ Ibid, 26.

woman perform their monologues that possibly reveal details of the crime, the loud sounds cover the talking and produce an extremely uncomfortable, anxious atmosphere in the theater space. The performers first murmur to themselves, yet start speaking louder as the annoying sounds almost cover their words. They eventually have to shout, almost screaming toward the audiences as if calling for help. Their voices are completely drowned by the sharp, loud, complicated sounds produced through a digital processor.

Designed by the digital sound artist Lin Chi-Wei, the sounds spreading on stage continue throughout the performance, yet vary on different days. Through a specially designed sound processor, the artist transforms the live sounds received from the theater space into amplified ones and plays them back to the audience. Although received, processed, and played by the artist on purpose, the sounds vary according to the live scenario of the performance. Indeed, the artist participates the process of processing the sounds, yet he does not have complete authorship over the sounds he plays. There is no sole author to this sound project. The sounds, which are a metamorphosis of the live environmental resonances, are unpredictable, improvisational, and unintentional. The subtle sounds of the audiences' breath and the air conditioner can be influential to the sounds the artist performs. The artist can never predict what live sounds he will receive. In this sense, it is the unpredictability and unintentionality of the sounds that signify their noisiness. As Paul Hegarty argues in *Noise/Music: A History*, noise is an excess that is beyond control and phenomenological judgment that exceeds the level of comfort. The sounds in the performance threaten both the artist and the audiences by becoming part of the other against which these perceivers define themselves.²⁵ The unwanted, uncontrollable sounds contrast to the

²⁵ Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 4.

performers' linguistic expressions, demonstrating their position as abjection and their role as destroyer.

Obscuring the monologues and conversations stated by the performers, these unpredictable sounds block the possibility of linguistic communication between the performers and the audience and thus define themselves as noises. Since the Mandarin title of the performance—*Chunshihkuan shajen shihchien*, which literally means the Armed Force Museum murder case—indicates the theme of the performance, it is not surprising that the audience expects to see a piece that represents or, at least, works on the actual crime. However, the noises that the artist intentionally plays make the audience unable to listen to the performers' utterance. After the curtain rises, the noises change into sounds resembling the white noise one would hear when listening to or watching an empty channel. The noises sometimes stop for seconds or minutes and the audience can then briefly hear the performers. Like fresh air, the sounds of the performers' talking, breathing, walking, touching, and murmuring become expected and desired. The audience seems to be able to hear some fragmented and blurred speeches from the performers, yet they can never clearly hear what the performers actually say on stage. The monologues and conversations, scripted by Wang Mo-Lin in exquisite Mandarin, thus become gibberish that loses part of its capacity to reveal the rape and murder covered up by the government. The noises, which are traditionally considered the disturbing element in theater, become the leading element that signifies the governmental power that covers the crime.

The noises thus signify a kind of autocratic violence that hinders and mutes the performers. The noises are too loud to be ignored and the audience can only hear the performers when the noises pause. Neither the audience nor the performers can really get rid of the noise—they can only try to coexist with it. Notably, in this way, the performance transforms the passive

audience into active players. Watching this performance becomes participation in a battle—upon leaving the theater, most of the audience is exhausted from trying to understand what the performers were saying on stage. There are several times when all the lights fade out and the entire theater is simply in darkness for several minutes. The loud noises, however, continue and increase, making the situation more desperate and unbearable. Audience members who want to acknowledge the situation must endure the uncomfortable environment and concentrate extremely hard on the stage, resisting the violent noises that resound in the theater. The audiences' active participation thus points to the radical, activist attribute of the noises that Lin Chi-Wei performs in this piece.

As the founder and a member of activist group, “Zero and Sound Liberation Organization” (1992-2000), Lin Chi-Wei has a long history of participating in social movements through his left-wing, avant-garde sound/noise productions. In a review by Cheng Hui-Hua and Lo Yueh-Chuan, “If nothing new, the old will disappear: Lin Chi-Wei on the life and death of Taiwanese noise movement,” Lin Chi-Wei mentions that his traumatic experience of ideological violence while serving at Chengkungling, a ROC military base in Taichung city, urged him to start his career in sound/noise movements that attack the normative and legitimate ideology produced by the government.²⁶ The noises performed in *A Soldier's Pay* also reflect this activist viewpoint. The irritating noises make the entire theatre gloomy and creepy, thus smashing any feelings of joy or peace that the audience might have or expect.

Violently blocking the audience from hearing the performers' sounds, the noises render the performance on stage an underground production—chaotic, blurred, and often blocked and/or

²⁶ The interview can be found at the following link:

<http://praxis.tw/archive/interview-with-lin.php> (access April, 16, 2014).

banned. The performance cannot be perceived by a relaxed, comfortable, joyful mind. As suggested by Paul R. Kohl's definition of noise as a resistance against the dominant ideals of music and of the larger society, in his article "Reading Between the Lines: Music and Noise in Hegemony and Resistance," the idea of noise here points to an uncontrollable power that destroys the peace and comfort of the theater space.²⁷ Compared to the elegant and gentle music commonly used by commercial theaters such as Cloud Gate Dance Theater, Contemporary Legend Theater, Ping-Fong Acting Troupe, Greenray Theatre Company etc., the noises used by *A Soldier's Pay* in this tiny experimental theater reveal disillusionment with bourgeois happiness.

While Greg Hainge, in *Noise Matters: Toward an Ontology of Noise*, argues for recognizing noise as a form of resistance that is not merely political, as Kohl emphasizes, but rather material in that it "reconfigures matter in expression," I see this material resistance as a political manifesto that aims at challenging the way in which the audience is trained or forced to perceive sounds.²⁸ In *A Soldier's Pay*, this resistance leads to disillusionment with political constructions, including bourgeois happiness, ROC glory, and various national myths.

Staging Disillusionment with Bourgeois Happiness

Watching this performance is never a pleasure but a series of torture, suffering, resisting, and thinking. These seemingly unpleasant experiences, however, disturb the normative patterns of everyday life that have been sustained and reinforced by the local cultural industry. In their famous article "Chengpin shih tzupen paoli te miehynchih," Chiu Yung-Ting and Chen Chih-Kai criticize the illusion of bourgeois taste that has been produced by Eslite, the local corporation

²⁷ Paul R. Kofman, "Reading Between the Lines: Music and Noise in Hegemony and Resistance." *Popular Music and Society* Vol. 21, Issue 3 (1997).

²⁸ Greg Hainge, *Noise Matters: Toward an Ontology of Noise* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 16.

that dominates art and cultural production in Taiwan.²⁹ They argue that the Eslite Mall, although designed and claimed as an artistic and creative space that represents the success of the local cultural industry, is actually the accomplice of capitalist violence. The violence is well hidden by seemingly peaceful and exquisite aesthetics. Arguing for his famous model of “epic theatre” achieved through the “alienation effect,” Bertolt Brecht points out that “the bourgeois theatre’s performances always aim at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization.”³⁰ For Brecht, the “false harmony” blocks any possible critical thinking on and debating over the social issues that are embedded in theater works.

In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord develops the notion of “spectacle,” which refers to the mass media that significantly participates in official culture’s “rigged game” of forbidding and sterilizing subversive ideas.³¹ In this society of spectacle, commodities dominate the workers and the consumers instead of being dominated by them. The official culture is constructed and sustained by erasing or incorporating the sterilized subversive ideas. Following Debord’s notion, it seems to be fair to fashion here a model of bourgeois theater spectacle that reveals the way in which commercial performances work with dominant politics through complex cultural and identificatory trading.

Although not Chinese Revolutionary opera directly produced by and serving a specific political ideology, commercial theaters in Taiwan still work deeply within the identity advanced

²⁹ See Chiu Yung-Ting and Chen Chih-Kai’s essay “Chengpin shih tzupen paoli te miehyinchi (Eslite Mall is the muter of capitalism violence, 誠品是資本暴力的滅音器) at the following link:

<http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/opinion/paper/712253> (access April, 16, 2014).

³⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 277.

³¹ See Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1983) and Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations,” *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1957), 2, 10. The article can be found at the following link:

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/report.htm>.

by the ruling power due to their needs for sponsorship and funding. Undeniably, government funding has been, if not the most crucial, an important recourse for the theater companies to survive the nascent performance market. For example, the National Theater, generally considered one of the top performance spaces in Taiwan administrated by the National Chang Kai-Shek Cultural Center seems to prefer a certain kind of performance that either embeds no local political issues or promotes the Chinese familial-national normativity—transnational pieces such as Robert Wilson’s *Orlando* or Suzuki Tadashi’s *La Dame aux Camélias* or local pieces such as Cloud Gate’s *Rice* or Contemporary Legend Theatre’s *Metamorphosis* not only leave the sensitive debates of political conflicts in Taiwan alone, but also critically contribute to an elegant bourgeois aesthetic of good-taste.

Many local commercial theaters, as opposed to experimental theaters, tend to emphasize traditional Chinese national-familial values by connecting local citizens’ family stories to the complex issue of national identity. A great example would be Performance Workshop’s 2008 production, *Paotao yi tsun*, a typical *chuantsun* drama made by Lai Sheng-Chuan and Wang Wei-Chung.³² The play describes how the Government’s identity policies influence the ROC military dependents’ lives, commemorating Chinese national-familial values with a strong nostalgia toward the lost Mainland. Certainly, there is no way to generalize or homogenize the diverse theaters. Yet, it should be noted that the commercial theaters, which receive most of their sponsorship from the Government and various private organizations, constantly construct and reinforce a specific definition of artistic good taste that emphasizes extravagant staging, fancy brochures, popular-star actors/actresses, a world-famous producer or director, and a few cross-

³² *Chuan tsun* means the military dependents’ villages in Chinese. The military dependents’ villages are communities in Taiwan built in the late 1940s and the 1950s whose original purpose was to serve as provisional housing for soldiers of ROC armies and their dependents from Mainland China after the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan.

cultural elements. It seems that this kind of performance has become a nation-wide carnival at which the audience can prove to have good-taste. The problem is, by delivering these univocal national-familial values through the lens of publicly accepted good taste, this kind of performance unconsciously risks being the spokesperson of the Kuomintang Government and completely erases any direct discussion of issues of governmental violence and national identity. The coalition of bourgeois good taste and national myth reinforces both, producing pro-Chinese cultural hegemony that rarely takes into account current local issues.

As I analyzed in the first chapter, the centennial celebration musical *Dreamers* exemplifies the national melancholia rooted in the complex history of Kuomintang's retreat to Taiwan. Indeed, many critics and scholars have harshly targeted the problematic political interpretation indoctrinated by the performance. Yet, the issue of aesthetics has been relatively ignored. Actually, the aesthetic staging of *Dreamers* precisely embodies that at which I am going to aim: the Taiwanese bourgeois norms that collude with the national myth. The extravagant staging—the dazzling golden sculpture, gigantic figurine-lanterns, hundreds of LED moving lights, dry ice, huge electric stage with colossal scenery, Qing dynasty settings, and the countless ROC flags waving in the audience—points to a boastful bourgeois aesthetic that values massiveness, fanciness and Chineseness. Presenting extravagance—even hidden under the minimalist staging—seems to be the best way for Taiwanese commercial theaters to prove a legitimized identity that emphasizes the generosity of the nation. Indeed, the extravagance sometimes seems to provide diverse elements that echo trendy cross-culturalism. However, trickily, cross-culturalism often becomes a powerful strategy used to privilege a single cultural value. This is also part of the reason that productions such as *1433-The Grand Voyage* and

Orlando, both collaborations by Robert Wilson and Taiwanese performance artists, receive diverse criticisms.

This explains the importance of experimental theaters in troubling the ROC identity through their alternative aesthetics that do not aim for entertainment, pleasure, and relaxation but resort rather to labor, pain, and concentration. As watching experimental theater has been commonly considered a shortcut to gain some “artistic breadth,” it is not surprising that (most of) the audience that comes to *A Soldier’s Pay* expressed their disappointment in the show. The unpleasant noises in the performance not only disrupt the expected aesthetics but also mock the audience who come to the theater for pleasure or “art tasting.” Working as an underground tactic that destroys harmony in the theater space, the noises force the audience to face the constructedness and fragility of the local bourgeois norms.

Simultaneously demonstrating their double attributes of covering and destroying, the noises in the performance not only reveal the governmental power that has been covering (up) all that does not glorify the official national identity but, more significantly, signify a potential tactic that destroys the local bourgeois norms that closely work with this identity. Its double significations prove itself an effective theatrical element of a political performance.

The National Uncanny

The painful noises, the eerie cubes, the sexual violence, along with the stifling atmosphere occupy the stage throughout the performance, making the theater a haunted place. Different from entertaining haunted houses, this haunted stage provides extremely uncomfortable feelings and experiences that absolutely exceed what an audience can stand if coming just for pleasure and fun. On the surface, the uncomfortable feeling seemingly stems from the noises, the

darkness, and the chaos of the performance. The mess on the stage indeed upsets the audience. However, it is actually the “uncanny” aspect of the staging that, I argue, conjures up the uncomfortable feeling that compels the audience to rethink the repressed national trauma.

In *The Uncanny*, Freud weds psychoanalysis and aesthetics to develop the notion of the uncanny, which he defines as the class of frightening things that leads back to what is known and familiar. The uncanny is the mark of the return of the repressed and the forgotten infantile material.³³ Freud first points out that general aesthetics has hitherto neglected the aberrant and the repulsive. To be clear, aesthetics prefers feelings of a positive kind—feelings of the sublime, the beautiful, the grandiose and the attractive instead of the dreadful, fearful and frightening. The uncanny is one such aesthetic to which little attention has been paid. The one exception that Freud notes is Ernst Jentsch’s study of the uncanny in his article “On the Psychology of the Uncanny,” which was published in 1906.

In the article, Jentsch argues that the uncanny arises from a certain experience of the uncertain; the emergence of a sense of the uncanny depends on “intellectual uncertainty.” Freud, however, is not entirely satisfied with Jentsch’s definition that basically relates the uncanny to the novel and the unfamiliar. Elaborating on Jentsch’s notion of the uncanny, Freud examines the complex semantics of the German terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, noting the dialectic of the meaning of the terms. In German, *heim* means home and *heimlich* means homey. However, as Freud notes with his investigation of Daniel Sanders’ *Worterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* of 1860, the term *heimlich* refers to two sets of ideas—“the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden.” These two sets of ideas are not mutually contradictory but are very different from each other. The term *heimlich* thus has a

³³ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 123-161.

meaning that overlaps with its opposite, *unheimlich*. As Freud highlights, “among the various shades of meaning recorded for the word *heimlich* there is one in which it merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*.”³⁴ Phrased differently, the semantics of the term circle. Since the nearest semantic equivalent of the word *unheimlich* is “uncanny,” in English, the uncanny therefore works as a frightening, strange, and uncomfortable reminder of one’s psychic past, reminding one of the superseded in one’s mental life. As Freud concludes, “the uncanny [the ‘unhomely’] is what was once familiar [‘homely’, ‘homey’]...the negative prefix *un-* is the indicator of repression.”³⁵

Nicholas Royle, in *The Uncanny*, however argues that Freud’s essay is problematic for its self-assured position that presumes a psychoanalyst who is believed by the reader.³⁶ Royle admits that Freud’s account of the uncanny provides novel ways of considering ethics and politics and yet argues for the necessity of “providing a broader cultural and historical context for thinking about the uncanny in general.”³⁷ As Sarah Kofman states in *Freud and Fiction*, “The Uncanny is a text dominated by an investigation which is not, at any moment, complete without being immediately invalidated.”³⁸ Both Royle and Kofman ask for a deeper study on the connection between the notion of the uncanny and its social context.

As Royle points out by showing how the uncanny is inseparably associated with the history of the Enlightenment and with European and North American Romanticism, the theory

³⁴ Ibid, 132.

³⁵ Ibid, 151.

³⁶ Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 6, 7.

³⁷ Ibid, 8.

³⁸ Sarah Kofman, *Freud and Fiction* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 121.

stems from history and discourses of the West.³⁹ It is, however, my aim to see how this theory might enrich a reconsideration of the political potential of experimental performance in Taiwan. In Taiwan, the translation of the uncanny is never settled. Words such as *kungpu* (恐怖), *kueiyi* (詭異), and *kuaitan* (怪誕) appear in many critical works that deal with the theory. It seems to be less possible to legitimize a single Mandarin translation as the concept of the term is developed within the western contexts. Yet the local common phrase *Hsimengjensheng* (戲夢人生) points to the uncanny, thrilling experience of recognizing the forgotten yet familiar things on theater stage. The phrase literally means “the dream on stage and the life off stage.” Here, I contend that theater, as a produced space, provides performances that conjure up or recall those repressed and unspeakable traumas caused by the government’s various kinds of oppression of their citizenry. Providing stage performance distinct from off-stage society, theater becomes a foreign space as opposed to the familiar space outside of theater. As Freud experiences the uncanny while getting lost in a foreign town, the audience faces the uncanny on stage in this produced space, confronting the familiar off-stage through those unfamiliar on stage.

On the stage, the horrible noises being played so loudly that they almost sound eerie to the audience are the environmental sounds received from the theater space. If one listens carefully, some of the audience may recognize the noises and feel surprised at actually being surrounded by the live noises from off stage. The callous installation, on the one hand, resembles the display rooms of the Armed Forces Museum, and, on the other hand, reminds one of an unknown species box or clinical appliance. In Taiwan, the Armed Forces Museum is a well-known place for most high school students. Kuomintang’s mission of “Reconquering the Mainland” urges that “military training class” be mandatory in education. In the Chang Fu-Chen

³⁹ Royle, *The Uncanny* (2003), 8.

murder case, the victim was in the museum to do homework for this class. The sexual violence, although performed in a ritualistic manner blended with a Butoh aesthetic, making itself a strange theatrical action on stage, recalls the collective fear toward rapes committed with the connivance of the government since 1949. The noises, the installation, and the sexual violence on stage are in-between familiar things and imaginary ones—they simultaneously feel familiar and strange to the audiences.

The violence and horror performed on stage signify the common emotion and affect shared by the people living on the island: the ROC citizens, the foreigners, the new migrants, and the illegal foreign workers. Indeed, as an important transnational cultural and economic pivot, Taiwan provides rich resources and opportunities that attract more and more people to settle on this island. Yet, within the present intense and intimate Cross-Strait relationship resulting from the Three Links, the recent Kuomintang's Pro-Beijing policies including the controversial Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), as well as the media monopoly of Want Want China Times Group, the violence and horror resulting from Taiwan's unstable political situation exacerbate and spread. The warning of "the second White Horror" sent out anonymously by Internet surfers on PPT, the biggest Bulletin Board System in Taiwan, embodies this collective anxiety. While specifically inspired by the Armed Force Museum murder case, *A Soldier's Pay* broadens the discussion by replacing a realistic representation of the case with a stylistic performance that involves other national identity issues.

A Soldier's Pay is a performance of the national uncanny. By representing the disremembered murder case covered up by the ROC Army, the performance asks the audience to face the national traumas shared by Taiwanese citizens. The staging and performance remind us of the identity and behavior educations inculcated by the Kuomintang that are familiar to most of

the citizens, yet they are performed in a grotesque way that makes them strange, uncomfortable, and almost horrifying. The performance signifies a return of the repressed trauma of Taiwan. This trauma is not any universal psychological state, such as Freud refers to, but is directly intertwined with the contemporary cultural and historical contexts of the island. Although adapted for theater performance in 2009, the Chang Fu-Jen murder case is still an unsettling case in 2013, in which a series of events—the Hung Chung-Chiu case, the Dapu Incident, the Meilii Wan Incident, the Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant case, and the September Scandal—have led to colossal protests organized and achieved by non-official citizens during September and October.

Part II. *Antigone*

Intro

Around the same time the *Shihyueh Shihjih Tienhsiaweikung* (十月十日天下為公), a protest held by Citizen 1985, was taking place in front of the Legislative Yuan, some Asian artists were also performing within and against their traumas caused by political violence. Premiered at the Guling Street Avant-garde Theater in 2013, Space Theater, Theater Playground Shiim, and Body Phase Studio collaborated on *Antigone*, an experimental theater piece also directed by Wang Mo-Lin, who had been struggling with cancer for several years. Developed out of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the performance is intertwined with political traumas produced in different countries in Asia. The traumas include: the 228 Incident in 1947 in Taiwan, the Gwangju massacre in 1980 in Republic of Korea, and the Tiananmen Square protest of 1989 in People's Republic of China. All these traumas are integrated into the Greek tragedy, recalling the painful national memories of contemporary East Asia.

Antigone was paired with the Hong Song-Dam Woodcuts Exhibition: Gwangju May Protest and Taiwanese martyr Huang Jung-Tsan, which was held on the second level of Guling Street Avant-garde Theater. Hong Song-Dam is a South Korean woodcut artist raised in Gwangju, where he participated in the 1980 uprising against Chun Doo-Hwan's military dictatorship. A politically active artist, Hong Song-Dam was arrested for allegedly breaking the National Security Act by, along with other South Korean artists, sending slides of a mural to North Korea. Hong Song-Dam was later adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International and was released in the early 1990s. Similarly, Huang Jung-Tsan is a Taiwanese woodcut artist that also works on political issues. Steeped in Chinese socialism when in art school, Huang Jung-Tsan participated in political discussions through his radical arts. His most famous work *The Horrifying Examination* has been considered the most important work that commemorates the 228 Incident. He was executed during the White Horror for rebellion.

As compared to the colorful and fancy playbills of large productions such as *Dreamers*, *Mazu's Bodyguards*, and *Pirates and Formosa* that I discussed in previous chapters, the playbill for *Antigone* only contains a sheet of A4 paper printed double-sided with black ink. On this sheet, the director briefly states his artistic manifesto, which asks for grieving for the political victims and a rebellion against the violence of national normativity. As plain as the production playbill, the theater, located on the ten-square-meter ground floor, does not offer any food or drinks but simply provides three benches for persons with disabilities. Rather than relaxing while waiting for the entertainment, most of the audience either stands or walks around, checking out the woodcut exhibition and discussing current political issues. The entire production seems to be serious and solemn from the very beginning.

Composed of seven scenes, Wang Mo-Lin's *Antigone* reorganizes Sophocles' original play *Antigone* through the lens of national memories of Taiwan, Korea, and China. By focusing on the similar structure of the political traumas within different national contexts, *Antigone* highlights the possibility of transnational dialogue that urges a grieving for the un-mourned victims of the past, a reconsideration of the political status quo, and a vision for the future relationship among countries in Asia. Since domestic political chaos is often (in)directly related to the nation's relation to other countries, the transnational dialogue is surely necessary. In this section, by employing Susan Foster's and Randy Martin's theories of performance and choreography as political acts and the model of minor-transnationalism developed by Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet, I aim to illuminate a possible citizen rebellion that is achieved by the collaboration of experimental performance artists from different countries.

Minor-transnationalizing *Antigone*

In Wang Mo-Lin's version of *Antigone*, the Greek tragedy is transformed into a contemporary allegory of political violence and state apparatus. The characters include Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Polyneices. These four characters sometimes become the citizens and the protestors who suffered from the 228 Incident, the Gwangju massacre, and the Tiananmen Square Protest of 1989, either reporting the historical events or singing as chorus. These characters are played by four performers: Hong Seung-Yi and Baek Dae-Hyun from Korea, Cheng Yin-Jen from Taiwan, and Ho Yu-Fan from China. The lines of the play are therefore performed in Korean and Mandarin with Taiwanese and Beijing accents. Performers use their own native languages when performing, creating a polyglot performance that denotes the political nightmares shared by Taiwan, Korea, and China. Although using different languages,

the characters seem to communicate as if there is no difference between their languages. The smooth conversation reveals the similarity and connection between the traumas of the different countries and highlights a possible transnational dialogue on the issue.

The characters on stage are all in contemporary, neutral costumes. Antigone is in a baggy black dress and an over-sized thick, black jacket; Ismene wears a tight black dress that reveals her body shape clearly; Creon's grey Mao suit recalls Sun Yat-Sen's well-known attire; Polyneices' olive green ragged jacket and army boots make him look like a socialist revolutionist such as Che Guevara. Even when performing other characters such as the citizens of Taiwan, Korea, and China, the performers basically keep the same costumes. The contemporary, neutral costumes make the performance applicable to different cultural contexts.

Sophocles' *Antigone*, written in or before 441 BC, is a Greek tragedy that focuses on the conflict between individuals and the state apparatus. Before the beginning of the play, two brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, leading opposite sides in Thebes' civil war, died battling each other for the throne. The new ruler, Creon, declares he will bury Eteocles' body with honor and leave Polyneices' to rot for his rebellion, the harshest punishment of the time. Polyneices is considered a traitor because he enlists Adrastus' help in attacking Thebes. In the opening of the play, Antigone, the sister of Eteocles' and Polyneices, decides to bury Polyneices' body, in defiance of the ruler's proclamation. Fearing the death penalty, Ismene, their other sister, refuses to help and is thus disowned by Antigone. Accused of illegally burying Polyneices, Antigone is sent to Creon. She argues unflinchingly with Creon about the morality and justice of her actions. In Wang Mo-Lin's *Antigone*, it is this debate and conflict between Antigone and Creon that signifies the ceaseless debate over various forms of national identifications and political violence that happened in contemporary East Asia.

The debate and conflict reach the climax in scene three, when Antigone and Creon fight for their distinct political standpoints. In their conversation, Creon praises the god for dispelling the coward and weak, asking people to obey the god who authorizes his rule. For Creon, Polyneices' guilt lies at his rebellion against the nation, whatever reason stands behind act of the treason. Since Polyneices is found guilty by the state, he ought to be punished by the law in order to sustain the order of the society. Arguing against Creon's opinion, Antigone asserts that the power and the law controlled by Creon do not come from a god, nor does any citizen approve it. Rather they are produced for private benefits. For Antigone, Creon's demand to have fully armed soldiers enter the plaza and gun down the protestors proves the absurdity of authorizing the state law/norms.⁴⁰ The fierce conflicts between Antigone and Creon signify the serious debates over the national identifications and their resulting political violence in contemporary Taiwan, Korea, and China. In Wang Mo-Lin's *Antigone*, collective memories of the 228 Incident, the Gwangju massacre, and the Tiananmen Square protest are intertwined into the lines via words such as confinement cell, democracy, socialism, fascism, martial law, tank, tear gas, napalm bomb, and student activism. In addition, works such as Hwang Sok-Yong's *The Ancient Garden* and Yokochi T.'s *A Rainbow over the Southern Country: The Man who Published the 228 Incident*, both Asian texts working on surviving experiences of political violence, are inserted into the lines of the play to historicize the conflict between Antigone and Creon. The conflicts are later enhanced in scene five, in which Creon, Antigone, Ismene, and Polyneices become four reporters describing the historical events in detail to the audiences. Ismene even becomes the mother of one of the young protestors, describing her son's terrifying death and expressing her desperation toward the tyrannical government. She states, "I am Park Dae-hwan's mother/ he was only

⁴⁰ This does not happen in Sophocles' original play.

twenty and a university freshman when killed/ his body was stripped, nose cut, eyeball digged out when found/ my son is such a gentle and polite person and how could it be possible that he was claimed a ruffian?”⁴¹

The reporters’ descriptions of the events are extended throughout the following scenes. In scene six, Antigone mourns for Polyneices, asking what kind of socialist new world did he imagine and pursue before sacrificing himself. Antigone then recalls the scene, stating “ the youths had iron tubes, wood sticks, firebombs, sickles, hack irons in their hands/ they attacked with taxis defending them/ however the martial armies used teargas and pepper guns to stifle all the protestors/ the martial armies were fully armed/ the citizen eventually could not take down the city hall.”⁴² In the final scene, with a series of Huang Jung-Tsan’s woodcut works projected onto the backdrop in behind, Ismene sits on a platform in the middle of the stage, singing in *nanguan* (南管) technique: “stop the blood storms/ hate the injustice/ scare the martial massacre/ fear the violence/ complain the white horror/ end the national violence.”⁴³ During her singing, the reporters enter the stage again, reporting in chronological order the events with exact records of time and space. The original Greek debate between Antigone and Creon is thus fully transformed into a broader, transnational discussion and narrative of national identification and political violence. Antigone and Polyneices seem to become the protestors/victims of the historical events, Ismene the family of the sacrificed, Creon the autocrat/ruling power.

Since Wang Mo-Lin has always been a leftist artist attacking the state apparatus, it is not surprising that one might easily see *Antigone* as a play that resonates with contemporary political

⁴¹ Wang Mo-Lin, *Antigone* (2013).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. *Nanguan*, literally “southern pipes,” is a style of Chinese classical music originating in the southern Chinese province of Fujian. It is now popular in Taiwan.

issues in Taiwan. However the performance actually proposes a novel tactic of networking various “political minorities” among different countries in East Asia. By “political minorities,” I refer to the politically oppressed, erased, and traumatized who resort to non-violent tactics to survive. In the performance, the countries—Taiwan, Korea, and China—are not randomly selected but are put together to highlight the transnational scenario that, to a certain degree, connects the domestic issues of each country. The conflicts between Taiwan and Korea stem from South Korea’s deterioration of relations with Taiwan in 1992, in which South Korea transferred diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to PRC and confiscated the property of the Taiwanese embassy, transferring it to the PRC. This act led to hostile sentiments of the Taiwanese toward the Koreans up to the present. The relationship between Korea and China can be traced back to the tribute system of East Asia thousands of years ago. In the recent century, the Korean War and the Cold War have complicated the Korea-China relationship. The complex between China and Taiwan, as I have discussed throughout the dissertation, comes from the battle between the Communist party and the Kuomintang since the 1920s. Within these contexts, *Antigone* provides an opportunity to probe into the domestic political debates through the lens of transnationalism.

Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet’s model of minor transnationalism offers an innovative way of articulating the mutually constitutive powers among margins. In *Minor Transnationalism*, Shih and Lionnet point out that “there is a clear lack of proliferation of relational discourses among different minority groups...the minor *appears* always mediated by the major in both its social and its psychic means of identification.”⁴⁴ They suggest focusing on the connections among different margins, rather than emphasizing the oppositional relationships

⁴⁴ Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet, *Minor-Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 2.

between the major and the minor. They suggest that poststructuralist theories such as Derridean deconstruction, although critiquing the center, seem only to enhance the center when it functions as an end in itself and therefore prevent the reification of the margin.⁴⁵ By arguing for the epistemological theory of minor transnationalism, which operates laterally rather than vertically, Shih and Lionnet hope to trouble the prevalent view of transnationalism as a homogenizing force and therefore avoid recentering the major. According to Shih and Lionnet, transnationalism “designates spaces and practices acted upon by border-crossing agents, be they dominant or marginal;” it can be conceived of as “a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center.”⁴⁶ Yet, this concept of transnationalism is associated with utopic views of globalization and is rarely connected to the theories of local resistances discussed by Gayatri Spivak, Michel de Certeau or James Scott. Shih and Lionnet therefore offer the concept of minor transnationalism, which works transversally and focuses on “the creative interventions that networks of minoritized cultures produce within and across national borders.”⁴⁷ They claim the model of minor transnationalism as exercising a “politics of recognition” related to the global reach of the media and the intensified migration of peoples.⁴⁸ This “politics of recognition” produces “new forms of identification,” allowing for minority complexity and multiplicity. The “nation-state-based” model of minor transnationalism points toward the relationships between the national and the transnational.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 8, 10.

In articulating Shih and Lionnet's model of minor-transnationalism, I aim to highlight the way in which *Antigone* networks the politically-oppressed across Taiwan, Korea, and China and furthermore produces a novel dialogue between the national and the transnational. By intertwining the 228 Incident, the Gwangju massacre, and the Tiananmen Square protest of 1989 with Sophocles' *Antigone*, the performance minor-transnationalizes protesting forces that were traditionally scattered. Instead of directly adopting any already translated script of *Antigone*, the performance modifies the play, transforming the lines into much more refined words in both Mandarin and Korean. Every performer participates in the presentations of all four contexts, presenting each event through both the lens of self-culture and cultures of others.

The Falling, Inward, Traumatized Bodies

By minor-transnationalizing *Antigone*, the performance also proposes a way to rethink the Asian body that is inscribed with and disciplined by specific national norms. By "Asian body," I do not refer to any single type of body that essentializes, generalizes and homogenizes all different bodies in Asia; nor do I try to propose an Asian body as opposed to a Western body. I rather argue for a strong focus on the way in which the intra-relationships among Asian countries shape and propose an idea of tactical Asian bodies that is fashioned in this performance.

Antigone uses its staging and performance techniques, blended with Butoh techniques, to produce four falling, inward, and traumatized bodies on stage. When entering the theater, the audience sees three wooden inclined rakes placed in a fan-shape on the dark stage illuminated by a weak red light. The mud and dirt around the rakes make the stage appear messy. The audience members sitting in the first row can almost touch and smell the mess. The inclination of the rakes has been functional throughout the performance. The annoying sound and the dreadful image of objects such as mud and stones rolling down the rakes makes the audience extremely

uncomfortable, as if they might get hurt by the objects rolling down on the rakes. Yet the images of the performers rolling on the rakes from the highest place to the floor like dead bodies falling down produce a thrilling ambience.



A scene in *Antigone* (photographed by Hsu Pin)

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the dead body never physically appears on stage, but is rather presented through descriptions. However, in Wang Mo-Lin's version, the falling dead bodies work as an important trope for the desperate political atmosphere in Taiwan, Korea, and China. In scene 2, while Antigone melancholically mourns Polyneices, the audience sees Polyneices lying in a prone position on the rake, turning his head in an extremely slow motion. His position—head close to the floor and foot toward the highest point of the rake—makes him seem like a dead corpse. However, the audience, if looking carefully, soon realizes that this “corpse” is not actually completely dead. The slow motion and freaky position render it

something in-between the living and the dead, an atrocious creature that might resurrect and enact revenge anytime. Pale and stricken, like a ghost, Polyneices stands up with his back hunched, denouncing the government that monopolizes the adjudicative power and arguing that the only way to survive is to “face the traumas.” His curly and fossilized body represents its labor.

While dry ice invades the stage, Antigone and Ismene fall onto the rakes, holding and protecting each other from the falling stones. Lying down on the floor, their bodies curl like fetuses, resting on the debris of dirt and mud. Interestingly, at first glance, it seems that Ismene’s body is purposely presented as “sexual.” The way she turns on the floor seems to replicate the poses of some female models in the fashion industry—her hips held up, legs curled, feet on tiptoe, mouth opened, arms relaxed, fingers choreographed as elegantly as a ballerina does on stage. However, as the scene processes, her body twists awkwardly and freakishly in a way that wipes out the previous image of sex and beauty. Ismene almost resembles a victim who has just suffered a rape. Her tight black dress lifts and shows her upper thighs. In looking at her, the audiences might feel guilty as if they are sexually peeping and consuming a victim and thus participating in the act of violence. As opposed to Ismene, Antigone is characterized as a gender-neutral figure. Although in a long black skirt, Antigone appears anti-sexual. The heavy, oversized black coat hides her body shape; the tousled ponytail and rough makeup make her look almost like a homeless person of unknown sex. Antigone always moves stiffly and slowly as if her body has lost its nimbleness due to long-term inactivity. Her awkward body contrasts with her strong will, which dares to fight against the norms and the laws. Ismene recalls sexual exploitation and Antigone, general miserable lives, but both signify the labor that occurs with a patriarchal national identity.

In scene three, Antigone and Creon appear on stage, the former holding a basket and the latter, a white towel. Creon orders his soldiers to gun down anyone who participates in the protest. Antigone censures Creon for his cruel and unjust act of violence, at the same time applying the mud in the basket onto her body and swearing to fight to the end. The mud falls onto the floor, making the rakes messy and dirty. Creon starts to clean up—he hysterically wipes everything he sees with the white towel in his hands. As an autocrat, he curses those who disobey the law and the norms, insisting on defending the state. When the two fight, both bodies act so tensely and radically that they tremble and shake on stage. They ultimately collapse with their bodies curling inward, slowly crawling on the rakes as if feeling stifled. In the next scene, the four characters all lie on the rakes, slowly rolling down while expressing their desperation. These four falling, inward, and traumatized bodies underscore the shared traumas that Wang Mo-Lin intends to emphasize through his exploration of the idea of Asian bodies.

A novel aesthetic of Asian bodies has been an issue at stake for many contemporary artists in Asia. Suzuki Tadashi's acting training, Lin Hwai Min's eastern body philosophy, Ong Keng Sen's pan-Asian method, and Akram Khan's intercultural choreography all demonstrate this constant trend, which is stimulated by a collective anxiety around confronting the overwhelming cultural and economic colonial forces of the West. In many of his recent performance pieces such as *My Body, My Country, Body 2015*, Wang Mo-Lin has discussed whether and how a Taiwanese body can be performed and choreographed on stage. When analyzing Golden Bough Theater's *Stillness* (1994), performance scholar Wang Mo-Lin claims that the theater has fashioned a possible discourse and description of the Taiwanese body by combining local rituals and theater conventions in Taiwan with Chinese Taoist practices

and techniques of contact improvisation imported from the west.⁵⁰ As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Wang Mo-Lin never aims at discoursing an essentialized Taiwanese-ness onto the body but rather at emphasizing the Taiwanese specific historical traumas and memories that are deeply inscribed onto the body. These inscriptions reserve those officially-un-speakable and officially-unmournable due to the totalitarianism of the Kuomintang and the possible political revenge of the PRC. For Wang Mo-Lin, a great goal of theater and of performance is how the performativity on stage works for the politically oppressed fighting against the ruling dominance.

The Taiwanese body, according to Wang, is thus a traumatized body that is aware of its historical upsets and current impasses. Even more, this body is a strafed body—a body that is addicted to penetration by Chinese cultures such as Taoist *Taichi* and Confucian philosophy, and by western-imported fashions. I employ the word “strafed” to emphasize the simultaneity of multiple cultural penetrations on bodies eager for a national identity. Since 2000, many Taiwanese artists, such as Wang Rong-Yu, Watan Uma, and Yeh Tzu-Chi, have put forth efforts to choreograph and orchestrate tactical forms of resistance working within and against national/governmental constructions and Chinese centrist policies designated by the Kuomintang party. These artists have explored what performance and choreography can do with and for the productions of Taiwanese-ness. Their pieces have suggested, as Randy Martin claims in his book *Performance as Political Act*, “an alternative measure of the worth of politics.”⁵¹ According to Martin, studies of political consciousness are inadequate when developing theories of action. Neglect of the corporeal body keeps people in the role of spectator, without the possibility of

⁵⁰ Yeh Tzu-Hua, in *Nanwang te hsinai te jen: chinchihyenshe te hupietzu meihshueh* (Taipei: Preaudience Press, 2003), 98.

⁵¹ Randy Martin, *Performance as Political Act* (New York: Bergins & Garvey Publishers, 1990), xi.

being a political actor. Although he notes that the body is not free, Martin argues that the control of the mind makes the body a site of resistance and a source of political activity. The body's means of expression are distinct from those of the mind and the body, and are always central to social experience. Martin emphasizes the politics implicit in a social kinesthesia and notes that desire functions as the kinetics of action for the body. In addition, the metaphor of performance becomes a way of enacting and embodying political activity. Performance can be used to trace the markings of social practices left by the body. By focusing on the prospects of and obstacles to political action in places where domination is constructed through the organization of consent, Martin points to the specific condition under which the political body is possible.

In her book *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Susan Leigh Foster's argument resonates with Martin's, claiming that choreography celebrates the simultaneity of perception and action that provide the basis for creating social existence. However, differing from a traditional theorization of performance that focuses on the idiosyncratic interpretation of cultural values, Foster's notion of choreography presents "a structuring of deep and enduring cultural values that replicates similar sets of values elaborated in other cultural practices."⁵² For Foster, choreography can be conceptualized as "a theorization of identity—corporeal, individual, and social."⁵³ Foster first articulates the social constructedness of the term "empathy." The term, she notes, was invented not to express a new capacity for fellow feeling, but to register a changing sense of physicality that, in turn, influenced how one felt another's feelings. Posing a new relation of power that highlights social inequalities, Foster points out that the choreographer affirms the local, partial, and contingent construction of

⁵² Susan Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

empathy as they try out/on various scenarios for moving. In this sense, empathy is imbricated within every action and each action is simultaneously an act of perception and an act of knowledge production. For Foster, choreographing empathy “entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling.”⁵⁴ Similarly, in “Choreographies of Protest,” Foster argues for a model of the “body as capable of both persuasion and obstinate recalcitrance.”⁵⁵ She asserts that “physicality plays in constructing both individual agency and sociality.”⁵⁶ Foster again emphasizes the political potential of corporeality by using protest as an example. Foster qualifies the “body as a vast reservoir of signs and symbols” so that there is no distinction between symbolic action and physical intervention.⁵⁷ There is an interdependence and relationship between the body and politics—the body is valued because it serves as a tactic to change society.

Martin’s and Foster’s theories of the moving/acting/choreographing body provide models for examining the intersection of performance and politics in Taiwan that signify the historical dynamics of desire and its suppression as an explicit index of culture. They aim to argue for the idea of corporeal epistemes that participate in the production of cultural memory and the structuring of social power. Martin’s argument re-embodies the political subject, which can destabilize the dominating social norms embedded in capitalism, whereas Foster’s notion emphasizes the simultaneity of perception and action in the choreographing body. Both Martin and Foster point out that the power of social relations lies ultimately in

⁵⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁵ Susan Foster, “Choreographies of Protest,” *Theatre Journal* Vol. 55, No. 3, Dance (Oct., 2003), 395.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

performance/choreography, that performing/choreographing bodies are capable of simultaneously reflecting and producing identities/identifications.

Accordingly, in the case of Taiwan, the performed/choreographed movements ceaselessly perceive, transform, and produce Sinophone norms and Taiwanese local culture. These practices thus hold the potential to stimulate and fluctuate the society, keeping the social structures flexible and alterable. Employing Martin and Foster's ideas, I hope to highlight the political potential of Taiwanese bodies, which now stand at the historical watershed of a sensitive national status. In this light, *Antigone* represents shared traumas and a protest of tactical fighting and surviving through its staging of bodies in various national pains. By addressing how performing bodies mirror traumas and demonstrate politics, *Antigone* fashions a minor-transnational way to reconsider the notion of the Asian Body.

The Incest

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, it is the familial love between Antigone and Polyneices that urges the former to bury the latter and thus violate the state law. In Wang Mo-Lin's version, however, it is the incestuous love between Antigone and Polyneices that mobilizes the entire action. Antigone does not seem to be Haemon's fiancée anymore but Polyneices' lover. In the second scene, Antigone states, "Your body/ when my fingers caress your skin/ I deeply touch your pulse/ as a flooding river/ ceaselessly flowing day and night/ the breath of living."⁵⁸ This ambivalent statement becomes much clearer in the fifth scene, when Antigone witnesses her brother's suffering and expresses her love. In this scene, Polyneices, performed by Ho Yu-Fan,

⁵⁸ Wang, *Antigone* (2013).

collapses on the inclined rake with his body almost naked. Creon, performed by Baek Dae-hyun, enters with a metal chain in his hand. Creon starts whipping the rakes, making a loud noise that scares the audience. Polyneices' body twitches with the whipping, making the scene almost (sexually) violent. Antigone then enters, holding a white kettle in her hands. She gently moistens Polyneices' skin with water from the kettle, caressing him with her arms, hands, fingers, and face. She kisses Polyneices on his back and hugs him tightly with deep sorrow on her face. She then states, "my brother, this is a tragedy cursed by the god of destiny/ we can only resist by sacrificing and making our bodies an offering/ this is the proof of our love."⁵⁹ Antigone's act and statement obviously exceed common sibling behavior. As does Jade Y. Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards*, *Antigone* challenges traditional marriage-family norms by performing incestuous love. Differing from *Mazu's Bodyguards* that connotes the incest by having the mother and daughter actresses playing a (almost) lesbian couple, *Antigone* directly and boldly stages a woman crazily in love with her brother.

⁵⁹ Ibid.



A scene in *Antigone* (photographed by Hsu Pin)

The incest seems to be passed down from their father Oedipus, who killed his father and married his mother. As compared to Oedipus's incestuous act due to his ignorance, Antigone's love for Polyneices appears to be much more direct and rebellious as she is aware that Polyneices is her brother by blood. By adding the incestuous love between Antigone and Polyneices into the play, the performance highlights the marginalized and forbidden, challenging the conventional way the audience perceives the play. Usually the audience tends to sympathize with Antigone who loves Polyneices as a brother and her passion for social justice. This performance, however, complicates the obvious choice as incest is still considered an extreme violation of social norms. The audience therefore is forced to confront the dilemma between inhuman state laws and transgressive incest.

In Taiwan, “incest” is commonly translated as *luanlun* (亂倫), which literally means “disordered norms.” In this case, *lun* (倫) refers to the “five *lun*,” which is one of the Confucian principles that argues for an “ideal” and “proper” interpersonal relationship between “father and son, husband and wife, emperor and minister, siblings, and friends.” According to Confucius, it is the *lun* that regularizes, disciplines, and sustains the society. In addition, the idea of *luanlun* has often been mistakenly equated with a kind of rape that must be avoided and banned.⁶⁰ It not only “offends against sexual autonomy” but also, according to contemporary eugenics, increases the risk of congenital disorders, death and disability at least in part due to genetic diseases caused by inbreeding. Incest thus becomes a demonized taboo and an illegal act that destroys the norms that sustain the society. Within this gender/sexual context, no wonder *Antigone* put the audience in such an arduous dilemma. It is, however, this dilemma that reveals the way in which gender/sexual norms, in cooperation with Chinese tradition and government’s promotion, dominate Taiwanese society.

In *Antigone's Claim*, Judith Butler reconsiders Antigone's activist significance, considering it a progressive feminism and sexual politics.⁶¹ Antigone, although long a feminist icon of defiance, is at risk of becoming trapped in the forms of power against which she fights, as the form of defiance she demonstrates leads to her death. Butler therefore points out that the feminist and sexual agency that she performs is actually a more ambivalent feminism than has been acknowledged. Furthermore, the character demonstrates how heterosexual norms hinder one’s ability to achieve sexual freedom and political agency. In other words, Butler asks to highlight those whose relations are still not honored as those of normative kinship.

⁶⁰ The Modern Women’s Foundation considers *luanlun* as a kind of rape, as stated in its official website.

⁶¹ Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Of course Butler has never seen Wang Mo-Lin's *Antigone*, in which Antigone performs a more outrageous love with her brother and thus becomes an even more radical figure of the sexual margins. Representing the non-normative family and embodying non-normative sexuality, Antigone models a rebellion that interrogates and resists the state apparatus. In his review "Yung luanlun tikang kuochia paoli: *Antigone*," critic Hung-Hung argues that Wang Mo-Lin's adaptation highlights the theme of incest and those socially-unacceptable who stand at the ethical margins.⁶² Hung-Hung's analysis directly reveals the most surprising part of the adaptation that is not stated on brochures and playbills. It is unclear whether it is because the theme of sibling incest is too "atrocious" to be manifested or it is the performance's attempt to shock the audience by directly showing the incestuous act without any advance notice. Either way, *Antigone* arouses debates over the issues of national identification, gender/sexual norms, and government violence. It proposes a shocking, almost offensive resisting tactic that disintegrates the state apparatus through performing sexual rebellion, which disobeys the heteronormative marriage-family rules that have been dominating the ROC identity construction since 1912, when the nation was founded.

However, Antigone's incestuous love with Polyneices, while rebelling against gender-national norms, seems to sexualize Antigone's political claim. The performance puts great efforts into describing Antigone's love with Polyneices by having both characters pour out their love toward each other through speech and actions. Throughout the performance, the couple passionately states their love, sentimentally gazing at and touching each other with no intention of hiding their love. By juxtaposing the affettuoso interaction between Antigone and Creon and

⁶² See Hung Hung's review at the following link:

<http://pareviews.ncafroc.org.tw/?p=7780> (access April, 16, 2014).

the cruel and ruthless historical events, the performance seems to see the incestuous love as a significant, if not main, reason for Antigone's resistance of Creon. Indeed, the tragic, unusual love perfectly explains and proves the urgency and necessity of Antigone's resistance. However, by sexualizing Antigone's resistance, the performance risks drawing a problematic equation between feminist politics and sexual desires. In the performance, it seems that it is Antigone's passionate love and sexual desire toward Polyneices that mobilize her rebellion. The large number of descriptions of love and sex, while successfully receiving great attention from audience reception, flatten the original debate between Antigone and Creon and possibly reduce the power of her political resistance.

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Protesting Flowing Tactics: Walter Meierjohann's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, Occupy Wall Street, and White Shirt Movement

The August snow falls into my heart.¹

Chen Ming-Chang, *August Snow*

In this chapter, I examine three events: British director Walter Meierjohann's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (2009), the Occupy Wall Street movement (2011-), and the White Shirt Movement (2013), in order to examine how they perform what I call the performative practice of protesting, an ongoing political project that ceaselessly reacts and responds to the complex networking between the political/economic apparatus and the media/technology spectacle. While Meierjohann's adaption of the Brecht play is a performance staged in a theater in the "traditional" sense, the latter two demonstrate acts taking place in streets and soon spreading across the borders of state and of nation. Whether inside or outside of traditional theaters, all three performatives propose possible tactics to work within and against the current intricate power structures, yet through different lenses and approaches.

*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*² stages the violence of excessive surveillance that often supports, what I call, a decentralized totalitarianism through the use of political parodies and various visual installations, including marquees and projections. By decentralized totalitarianism I refer to the present state dominance that is no longer situated at any specific institution or recognizable law but is sustained through and distributed among the gigantic power apparatus

¹ The lyrics of Chen Min-Chang's *August Snow*: 茫茫的八月雪，落在阮心頭。

² I deeply thank Louis Price and Walter Meierjohann for providing me the copy of the *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.

composed of the economic system, political mechanism and various medias. The play highlights the precariousness of merely witnessing but not challenging social and economic injustices, especially those hidden under the dazzling spectacle of contemporary media and within a society of surveillance by staging the rise of a political leader who resembles, if not figures, Adolf Hitler. Resonating with the theme of totalitarianism in Brecht's play, Occupy Wall Street stages protests against the social/economic inequalities and political corruption Brecht represents through the strategy of occupying parks, banks, corporate headquarters, board meetings, and campuses, among other places. This occupation not only manifests how strategic and tactical powers work and are worked through the complex networking of social media and political/economic apparatus but also shows how protest transforms from a one-time live event into an ongoing, never-ending project. It is from these continual survival projects that political responsiveness might emerge and blossom. Deeply inspired and influenced by protest events abroad, especially Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, the White Shirt Movement highlights how citizens of an unrecognized state can fight for political recognition through networking transnational resources online and offline. Organized online by anonymous Internet surfers, the movement advocates for a political reformation in Taiwan that would purge the stale military system, the remnant of Kuomintang's anachronistic "Reconquering Mainland" project, through a series of small outdoor performances that intertwine well-known local tales with the contemporary tragedy of the Chung-Chiu's death. By juxtaposing these three different orders of performance, I aim not only to see how European-based performances provide resources and ideas for actual political movements, but also how but also to ask how the Taiwan-based White Shirts could contribute to broader discussions on and discourses of contemporary structures of political, economic, and cultural powers.

In her forthcoming article “Bedding the Horizontal: Entertaining Pleasure in the Permanent Present,” Sue-Ellen Case coins the notion of a “horizontal practice of politics and the performative,” borrowed from various sources including Liz Lehrman’s notion of “Hiking the Horizontal” and the anarchist wing of the occupy movement.³ In Case’s use of the term, it represents a particular anarchist act of bringing diverse issues and materials together through a lens that “emphasizes inclusion over aim and is co-produced alongside a certain sense of an impasse.”⁴ The idea of “impasse,” which breaks from any utopian sense of time moving toward a future, signifies the scenario of what Case calls “the era of horizontalism.”⁵ As Case and Lauren Berlant point out, within the disillusion of the optimism of the 1960s and 1970s, an impasse emerged in the 1990s when the state’s withdrawal from addressing uneven power distribution confronted the call for the reformation of that injustice. Destroying utopian fantasies, the idea of impasse targets totalitarianism in a more flexible way. As current totalitarianism dwells in the rhizomic power apparatus, the mobility of a single, specific direction becomes less useful. Grounding my arguments in Case’s theorization of horizontalism, I aim to point out that the horizontal practices of contemporary protesting and performative events underscore a ceaseless and tactical mobility that highlights the complexity of the political/economic milieu. The horizontal practices recognize and demonstrate themselves as long-term, or even never-ending, projects that flexibly and subtly work within and against changing societies. Indeed, they signify an impasse in the sense that they do not point to an imagined future of idealized progression; rather, they highlight the capabilities of accommodating the changing scenarios and launching

³ Sue-Ellen Case, “Bedding the Horizontal: Entertaining Pleasure in the Permanent Present” (Forthcoming article), 7.

⁴ Ibid, 7, 9.

⁵ Ibid, 10, 12.

corresponding tactics. It is this flexibility, continuity, and horizontality that promises a possibly novel way for the politically disempowered and dispossessed subject to fight for social justice.

That said, the performative practice of protest still contains problematic operations of gender codes that risk unconsciously reinforcing the political dominance that they aim to attack. All of these three performances show a certain degree of sexist practices that achieve political rebellion at the cost of either ignoring the embedded gender issues or seeing the female body as consumable and exploitable. These problematic operations of gender codes not only weaken the uprising power but also, more dangerously, hide the critical social injustice by their seemingly democratic, liberal, and activist appearance. By pointing out the gender problems in these performances, I aim to trouble the utopic imagination of political protest and, more importantly, trigger further discussions that ask for introspection about political movement.

Part I. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*

Nottingham Playhouse's 2009 production, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, addresses political issues through parodic, subversive dark humor, combining the style of 1930s Hollywood gangster films with the form of a Shakespearean history play. A play originally written by Bertolt Brecht in 1941, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* connotes the economic and psychological apparatus of fascism and society's submission to it by allegorizing the rise of Arturo Ui, a demagogue gangster based in the US.

In the Depression-era, the Chicago Cauliflower Trust, fearful of falling prey to the economic slump, hopelessly accepts the protection of rising mob leader Ui and his gang of hooligans. Ui and his minions dispossess the docks by blackmailing Dogsborough, an old politician who despises Ui as an uncivilized upstart. Ui soon extends his power through violent

intimidation and murder, eventually breaking with his lieutenant Ernest Roma and setting sights on the adjacent city Cicero.

Translated by Stephen Sharkey, lines of the play contain colloquial and idiomatic gangster slang. Walter Meierjohann directs the play in the style of Brecht's Epic Theater, using Brechtian forms of the alienation effect to urge the audiences to rethink the political scenario of impasse, spectacle, and surveillance in which they are situated. Rather than offering an overwhelming atmosphere that scares and shocks the audiences, as *A Soldier's Pay* does, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* instead keeps the audience distanced from emotional affect and thus sober enough to think and to argue by removing any element that might produce a realistic illusion on stage. The audience never has to guess or imagine the plot as the play starts with a prologue in which the characters and events are introduced. The audiences thus forego empathy in order to observe the staging from a distance and avoid being immersed in dramatic illusion.

Political parody has been a familiar style of TV show in Taiwan. The most well-known example is the Golden Bell Award nominated *Everybody Speaks Nonsenses II – Hot Pot*, a sketch TV show mainly focusing on topics related to Taiwanese politics. Strangely however, political parody rarely appears in local theaters and performance practices. The only example would be *SMAP X SMAP* (2013), a theater piece produced by Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group, in which the director Wang Chia-Min has an actor play Ma Ying-Jeou in a slightly parodic tone. Yet, even so, the role seems to be characterized as a commiserable, sentimental, and innocent politician who has no evil intentions. Whatever reason is behind this lack of political parody on the theatrical stage, it is urgent for performers and practitioners to rethink the radical political potential of theater and performance. Therefore, it is my intention to see what and how the

British production *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* can offer generative ways to mobilize political parody on the theater stage in a way that works for Taiwanese politics.

In the following, I first highlight how the performance fashions a political parody by the characterization of the role Ui. I argue that the political parody on stage could be able to inspire and mobilize a citizen rebellion off stage that plays within and against various kinds of dominant powers at the present moment. I then focus on the visual design, investigating how the performance produces a theatrical spectacle that illustrates the violence of excessive surveillance that often colludes with dominant state powers. The performance demonstrates the precariousness of merely witnessing without interrupting the injustice happening in front of us. It further reminds that such injustice can be rendered invisible and ambivalent within the digital context, in which medias and politics intimately and complicatedly work together.

Disrupting A Control Society Through Parody

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui depicts a control state that governs and is governed by, as Gilles Deleuze terms it, varying “society businesses” whose language is “digital.”⁶ In his article “Postscript on control societies,” Deleuze notes that the disciplinary societies modeled by Michel Foucault have withered and been replaced with what he phrases, “the control societies.”⁷ According to Deleuze, Foucault already recognizes the short-livedness of the disciplinary model. With the breakdown of all sites of confinement, “control” is spreading everywhere and is no longer operated only in the delimited space of disciplinary power. Power has become

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on control societies” October, Vol. 59 (Winter, 1992), 318.

⁷ Ibid, 317.

decentralized and spread out in ever more complex structures and networks where it is difficult to excavate or locate the origin of power.

As Deleuze states, “markets are won by taking control rather than by establishing a discipline, by fixing rates rather than by reducing costs, by transforming products rather than by specializing production.”⁸ He then further points out, that it (capitalism in its present form) seeks to sell “services” and to buy “activities.”⁹ In the performance, Ui’s ultimate rise is not achieved simply through the horrifying armed force. As he claims in scene seven, “[a]nd because it is and always will be, me and the boys here have decided to offer you protection.”¹⁰ Ui uses propaganda to promote the protection services that he and his gangs would offer, while at the same time threatening their “customers” to accept the offer by killing the one who declines the offer. In scene four, Ui asks Dogsborough to “put in a good word” for him, claiming the Cauliflower Trust needs protection. In this sense, what Ui and his gangs trade are exactly services and activities that structure and network the controls over the market/state. The stock market data shown on the marquee hung on the ceiling of the stage throughout the performance connotes how Ui and his gangs control the society by operating rates and information. It is the changed stock market that moves through the digital—through computers and is not centralized. The power of Ui is spread everywhere, connecting physical forces with metaphysical violence and creating an atrocious control society on stage that signifies the social scenario off stage. As

⁸ Ibid, 320.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bertolt Brecht, Jennifer Wise trans., *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), 43.

Deleuze states, “corruption here takes on a new power,” the performance thus theatricalizes the urgent issues for the audience to rethink.¹¹

As the title claims, the rise of Ui shall be resistible. The show on stage is never serious and sentimental but full of black humor that alienates the audience from indulging in any realistic illusion, thus offering the audience the opportunity to observe the whole scenario on stage. The performance parodies the violence by staging the character in three different ways. First, without a doubt, Ui horrifies the audience—his extremely violent slaughtering, pillaging, threatening, and lying all render him a horrifying figure. Even as a fictional character, Ui shocks the audiences with his savage acts, which include murdering people with machine guns. The loud bursts and flashy lights of gunfire brutalize the stage, vividly presenting a scene of cruel crime.

Second, the performance characterizes Ui as a hysterical, narcissistic, and hilarious figure who amuses the audience. The dark grey suit, the burgundy red tie, and flannel hat on Ui indicate his wealth. Resembling Adolf Hitler, Ui has the little moustache, the slicked hairstyle, and the special makeup that almost makes the actor look exactly like the historical figure. Yet the white foundation on his face also makes him seem like a clown. As the performance progresses, the mix of sweat, makeup, and hairspray drips down along the face, making the actor seem messy and dirty. The audience soon witnesses how Ui, behind the people, awkwardly learns from an actor to perform in “the grand style” that resembles the style of “Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Romeo.”¹² By practicing talking and walking as a Shakespeare hero, the character reveals the absurdity and performativity of ruling power. Ui is absolutely not characterized as a charismatic

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *ibid*, 37.

figure: his awkward imitations of the “grand” figures simply make him a psychological paranoid that reminds one of the famous sitcom character, Mr. Bean.

Third, Ui seems to be a recognizable figure that is everywhere in today’s world. The seemingly positive and friendly claims that Ui and his gangs make to the people seem to be familiar with the political/commercial slogans often seen/heard from various institutions, companies, organizations, politicians/parties, and celebrities, among others. Throughout the performance, these claims include: “offering protection;” “let me save you;” “I am a peaceful man;” “faith makes me successful;” “you must believe that I want the best for you.”¹³ Ui’s claims seem ironic especially when he makes these promises and kills people at the same time. Yet these claims are indeed so familiar that they even make the audience laugh.

By characterizing Ui as a horrifying, hilarious, and familiar thug, all at the same time, the performance effectively parodies the totalitarianist powers that exist outside the theater, arguing for the necessity of reconsidering and questioning various kinds of political/ economic violence. The political parody that the performance enacts thus points to a possible citizen rebellion that is able to fight against the dominant ruling powers, whether of governments, financial groups, or any controlling institutions.

“Oh my poor husband!”¹⁴

Ui works as such a parodic character in the play, effectively asking for political rethinking. However, problematic gender operations seem to be an important issue, which is hidden by the activist standpoint of the play. First, it should be noted that very few female

¹³ Ibid, entire script.

¹⁴ This is a common line of Dockdaisy, Woman, and Betty Dullfeet in the play.

performers participate in the entire production. Indeed, the original Brecht play does not contain many female characters, yet cross-gender characterization does not work as a theatrical option either. The only two female roles in the play either function as a narrator in the prologue outside of the story or as a helpless victim that does not participate in any decision-making processes in the story.

At the beginning of the play, against the white curtain printed “safety curtain” and “no smoking,” a woman in an over-sized male suit enters. Not only do her male suit, leather shoes, and slicked hairstyle resemble a stereotypical type of male elite, but also her way of moving on the stage masculinizes this character. Striding on the stage, the character seems to perform a military style of walking. She stops and stares at the audience with a provoking facial expression. After a few seconds, she lights the cigarette in her hands, smoking aggressively as if violating the “no smoking” sign on purpose. She then starts dancing—the dance she performs seems to be in the style of 1920s male jazz dance. These performative gestures, including her movements of walking, staring, smoking, and dancing, demonstrate a sense of transgression that connotes the political manifesto of the play. Yet, by masculinizing the female character, the play dangerously renders the transgressive power as exclusive to masculinity.

Besides, the female characters in the story, including Dockdaisy, woman, and Betty Dullfeet, function either to support male characters or to emphasize the cruelty of Ui and his gangsters. In scene seven, Dockdaisy, the wife of the murdered accountant Bowl, expresses her appreciation to Ui for the flowers he sends. She touchingly thanks Ui for supporting her and her little 5-year-old daughter. In the next scene, Dockdaisy even provides Prosecutor with a problematic statement that misleads the investigation into her husband Bowl’s death. Dockdaisy’s words make herself a victim that either yields to Ui or does not even recognize the

murderer. After the series of farcical judgments, a blood-splattered woman shows up, crying for help in desperate tones and accusing Ui of murdering her husband. As Dockdaisy and the Woman, Betty Dullfeet also mourns for her murdered husband, witnessing Ui's savage acts. By characterizing these three women as emotional, hysterical widows who are extremely vulnerable to violence, the performance seems to exacerbate the sexist norms of the political dominant.

Second, the role of Ui, which directly connects to Adolf Hitler, reinforces the patriarchal norms of the political dominant. Obviously both Brecht and Meierjohann do not consider crafting Ui on any similar female figure, such as Margaret Thatcher or Hilary Clinton, but rather on Adolf Hitler, the representative figure of the patriarchal Nazi identity. The historicity of the figure thus thickens the patriarchal attribute of Ui. Furthermore, the presentation of Ui enhances the strong connection between masculinity and political dominance. The luxurious attire, the noble male hobbies, the way of behaving, and the speech content with which this character is endowed all gesture toward the idea of a stereotypical male elite that benefits from patriarchal norms. By characterizing Ui in this way, the performance problematically assumes a masculine figure that enhances the sexist ideology, which supports the political dominance that the performance supposedly attacks.

Theatrical spectacles

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui contains three different kinds of looking: seeing the force actively, being forced to see, and being seen by force.

Throughout the performance, the screens and marquee play important roles on the commercialized stage. The marquee not only betokens the plot but also functions as a stock board, constantly showing stock market data. In between every scene, the marquee indicates the

location of next scene and briefly recalls the historical events related to Hitler, juxtaposing the performance with the history. The screens are used in various ways in different scenes. In scene three, ten small screens attached to the back wall show a horse racing from different angles. The way the screens display and are displayed resembles the way security monitors work and thus makes the “Bookie’s office on 122nd Street” on stage actually a monitor room. The audiences seem to be also in this monitor room, participating the act of surveilling. In the next scene, which is set in Dogsborough’s country house, a black-and-white video of a gloomy and foggy landscape is projected on a huge screen that covers the entire back wall. A long take, the video constantly shows the same view, as in an ecology documentary. This projected visual reminds one of the artificial landscapes often seen in zoos that are designed to provide the atmosphere of nature. When Ui and his armed bodyguards enter with guns, this atmosphere dissipates—the homey house suddenly becomes an invaded space that reveals its artificiality and vulnerability. Dogsborough and his son signify the defenseless ones who suffer from the violence.

The big screen turns into seventy-seven small screens that show different videos of news reporting in the following scene set in City Hall. In this scene, Gaffles enters and brings in the shocking news that Sheet, the dockyard owner, has been found dead in his hotel room. Everyone on stage starts to debate over the “truth” of this crime—O’Casey claims it a murder, Clark, Flake, and Mulberry hesitate to come to a conclusion, Dogsborough is scared to speak. With the multiple screens on the back wall showing different news reports, the case becomes an unsettled mystery that can be interpreted in different ways. The performance thus highlights how political violence could possibly work with contemporary media—the various versions of the story reveal the absurdity and constructiveness of the “fact” that the court later concludes. As Hung Chung-

Chiu, Sheet in this play becomes a flexible signifier that serves different versions of the “fact” that cooperates with political benefits.

The performance uses the screens and marquee installations to provide much visual information—the current stock market data, the high-tech surveillance monitor, the documentaries, the news reporting, the historical narration and images. The audience thus experiences many almost exploding visuals. The accumulating visuals distract the audience from focusing on the main characters on stage, rendering the stage a messy space that signifies the common anxiety toward the exploding visuals in everyday lives. As the screen has become a ubiquitous element in today’s culture and has become a place of transaction and communication, the visual is able to become a contemporary spectacle, as stressed by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*. This anxiety is further exacerbated and complicated in scene eleven, as the audience is forced to witness an act of murder on stage.

Set in extremely weak light, the performers’ faces are hard to see. The only visible things are the iron wall illuminated by the gloomy blue wash light and the shadows of human figures moving on stage. As the performers move, the shadows on the iron wall swell and deflate dramatically, producing a thrilling atmosphere. On stage, Roma, Young Inna, and a gunman wait for Ui, discussing how to save Ui from Giri and Givola’s trap. When armed police approach, Roma shows that he would sacrifice himself for Ui, a “friend” he has been with for eighteen years. Suddenly, a shutter embedded in the iron wall opens, Ui, Givola and bodyguards enter the stage with a scary laugh. Roma expresses his concern for Ui and Ui returns Roma with his embracing arm. However, when accepting Ui’s embrace, Roma is suddenly shot down by Givola. Givola then commands the gunning down of Roma’s men by moving them down along the iron wall. Dazzling lights flash on the wall; the deafening sound of machine gun fire explodes. Within

Givola's horrifying claim that "traitors needed to be executed," Roma and his men are dragged into a dark corner on stage. This four-minute scene progresses speedily, leaving the audience no time to react. Witnessing the entire extremely violent act, the audience becomes accomplices who watch with folded arms.

At the end of the last scene, Ui appears on the very top of the platform, propagating his ultimate goal of dominating the world. Set at the middle of the stage, the four-meter-high platform stands loftily, rendering Ui a symbol of authority and superiority. Beneath Ui, all other characters, along with the audience sitting in the theater, have to look up to Ui. Ui thus becomes a supervisor of the Freudian panopticon, accessing the absolute power to observe and examine everyone in this space. The image of the Nazi Eagle projected onto the screen behind Ui further signifies the connection between Ui and Hitler, enhancing the overwhelming force and violence of this scene. The performance ends at Ui's "superior" speech and surveillance, which puts the audiences in a lower, oppressed, and uncomfortable position.

However powerful and oppressive this panopticon is on stage, it ultimately seems to weaken and even disappear while the dozens of spectacular screens and marquees show multiple visuals to the audiences. As Jean Baudrillard claims when discussing television: it is the "end of the panoptic system."¹⁵ Ui's actual oppressing gaze is thus transformed into virtual surveillance systems that supervise the audiences through an even more omnipresent power. The idea of challenging public surveillance is not however a novel idea in performance. Since 1996, the Surveillance Camera Players (SCP) have adapted or written and performed anti-surveillance plays in various public places. In *We Know You Are Watching*, SCP states that the book "captures a certain 'objective' reality: the dark, paranoid mood of New York City when Rudolph

¹⁵ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995), 29.

Giuliani was its mayor (1994-2002).”¹⁶ The group interestingly parodies surveillance systems by tactically using and appropriating these systems as part of their performances. Their performances demonstrate a rebellious agency that intends to not merely witness but actively interrupt what they consider a variant of social injustice and political violence. This main idea of political interruption exactly resonates with that for which *The Resistible Rise of Arturo* aims to advocate. Yet, different from SCP’s performances that present a relatively relaxing, humorous atmosphere that evokes a knowing smile from the audiences, Brecht’s play stages the absurdity and cruelty of political injustice that simultaneously amuses and scares the audiences.

These three kinds of looking—seeing, witnessing, and being supervised—raise the question of how one can work within and against the excessive looking that has been used by various dominant powers. However, by layering these three kinds of looking, the performance not only reveals the violent attributes of contemporary looking but also implies that it is possible for one to question and resist the looking—the victory of Ui can be prevented by one’s acting up to fight against the violence on stage. Certainly, it is understandable that even the audience feels offended by what the stage presents: they would not interrupt the performance as it is not an actual event but a performance. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo* uses this corollary—the audience would not interrupt the performance—to highlight the precariousness of “witnessing but not interrupting.”

The rise of Arturo Ui can be resistible! *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* highlights the need and the urgency of a demonstration that recognizes and challenges the alliances between governmental institutions and capitalist dominances. Although the theatrical play offers no expected demonstration, a fierce one happens outside of theaters and conjures up a transnational

¹⁶ Surveillance Camera Players, *We Know You Are Watching* (New York: Factory School, 2006), 17.

political act that effectively and physically catalyzes the tactical power of the traditionally disempowered—Occupy Wall Street is a perfect embodiment of political performance that actualizes, and also virtualizes, what *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* is fighting for.

Part II. Occupy Wall Street

Begun on September 17th 2011 in Zuccotti Park located in New York City's Wall Street financial district, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is a series of ongoing protests against American financial institutions and various social injustices. The original protest was initiated by Kalle Lasn and Micah White of Adbusters, a Canadian anti-consumerist, pro-environment activist publication. Earlier, on June 9th, Lasn registered *OccupyWallStreet.org* and emailed the website's subscribers announcing, "America needs its own Tahrir." In the next month, in a blog with an image featuring a female dancer standing in arabesque atop Wall Street's iconic Charging Bull statue, Adbusters claimed to peacefully protest against social and economic inequality resulting from the corruption and excessive effect of corporation on government. Shortly thereafter, performative events such as *Oclarpation* and *Bloombergrville* further ignited a fire of demonstration against corporate structures. Activists and anarchists, including Adbusters, Anonymous, New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYAB), and various individuals used various social media outlets, including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blog, podcast, plurk, Google+ and many others, to not only promote their political manifestos but also to continue (re)organizing new forms/groups of protesting forces. The protest events they held are performative in that the events simultaneously search for and produce alternatives yet (re)present their limitation as being mediated through the economic and political structures they aim to attack. The ensuing events not only occupied physical spaces on streets but also virtual spaces in digital media, ultimately

leading to Occupy demonstrations and movements around the world. In the following section, I will discuss four performances that happened around the same time period. Whether included in or indirectly related to the core protests of Occupy Wall Street, these performances signify a nomadic deterritorialization that ceaselessly tears down the control, order, and norms from territories established by rhizomic structures of politics and economy. The nomadic deterritorialization never ends, as the protesting events always continue in different forms and presentations. It is the endless interplays between territorialization and deterritorialization that map out the contemporary spectacle of capitalist societies.

Oclarpation: Wall Street

In the early morning on August 1st, a site-specific work of performance, *Oclarpation: Wall Street*, “strips” the usually “dressed-up” Wall Street. Organized and directed by activist artist Zefrey Throwell, the performance first takes a survey on what professions people work on the street and, according to the survey result, assigns fifty performers to enact these various professions, including stockbrokers, bankers, financial analysts, retail sales, prostitutes, FedEx workers, museum workers, restaurant employees, cops, and dog walkers, among others. During the five minutes, the performers perform the assigned professions while slowly and casually taking off their clothes. For example, a man in a janitor’s outfit strips while cleaning the wall of a building. Three performers, dressed as a stock trader, a janitor, and a dog-walker, are arrested and sent to a nearby precinct for “disorderly conduct” and are released later on that day. Protesting social and economic injustice exacerbated by the financial crisis of 2008, the radical performance troubles the established order and norms of Wall Street through the use of public nudity and fluxus happening performance strategies.

Public nudity was used as a protest tactic in the early 20th century and has been widely adopted since the 1960s. The nudity in this performance, however, not only functions to harass the hierarchy and the order of the financial apparatus, as Throwell and other participants claim, but also cleverly and effectively works to drag the attention of domestic and international media to the stage of Wall Street. The performance itself does not immediately achieve its goal of forcing the government to reform the economic system, but it does accomplish the task of promoting the use of media as new weapons of protest. The visuals and videos of the performance, which are full of nudity that undeniably attracts some degree of voyeurism, are soon published to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo and other online platforms, successfully spreading the idea and information of the piece by pointing to an ongoing political act. The media, while usually serving the dominant, become perfect carriers for anti-dominant forces. While short, the performance works as a triggering and inspiring prologue that forecasts the ensuing stormy protests organized and operated through the complex interplays among various medias. In this light, the performance actually highlights a spectacle of contemporary protest that points out the way in which economic and political powers have been widely distributed to the extent that they are no longer easily locatable and targetable. Since media has become the dominant access to political (re)presentation, it is only through media that the disempowered majority can possibly work within and against the power of media.

In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai coins the term “mediascapes,” by which he describes how electronic and print media operate in the fluid and irregular global cultural flows.¹⁷ According to Appadurai, “mediascapes refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 35.

production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media.”¹⁸ He further points out that the mediascapes provide “complex repertoires of images” that blur the boundaries between realistic and fictional landscapes (Ibid). It is these blurred boundaries between the realistic and fictional landscape that I argue are providing the protest possibility of *Oclarption*. The emerging visuals published online ceaselessly replay the performance, thus extending the time of the original five-minute performance. The actual small performance is thus transformed by the online replay into a virtual large one that produces and mobilizes the ensuing, stronger protests. Appadurai’s model thus not only reveals the distribution of the electronic capabilities of information production and dissemination but also denotes the possibility of the mediascapes working as a protesting assemblage.

That is to say that the tactical networking and the disappearing boundaries between the actual protests and the virtual protests characterize Occupy Wall Street, which manifests the way in which protest itself becomes a simulacra that is capable of working within and against the present mediascapes. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard coins the notion of simulacrum and simulation to address the issue of mass production and reproducibility that characterizes the contemporary electronic media scenario. According to Baudrillard, different from representation, simulation “stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as he reversion and death sentence of every reference.”¹⁹ As he claims, “it is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995), 6.

hyperreal.”²⁰ This hyperreal is “produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.”²¹ The protest, blurring the actual and the virtual and appropriating all kinds of signs and references, reveals its attribute of operationality: it is no longer merely a one-time live event, but is rather an ongoing circulation and variation of information. Even when the protest ends, it does not really end. The protest works as a continual process of consummation, recycling, and expenditure of the floating signifiers. Instead of (re)producing new signifiers, the process transforms and mutates the established ones, thus mobilizing novel meanings. Indeed, Baudrillard’s model emphasizes the negativity of (re)production—meanings emerge from the inter-consuming association of existing signs and references. However, it is this negativity that endows its tacticality and flexibility, making the protesting process equally powerful to the hegemonic apparatus. Further, the negativity indicates the operational nature of official construction, performing the agenda of the deterrence machine and manifesting the mechanism of the concealing system. The negativity shows, as Baudrillard phrases it, “the hallucination of power” and “the scenario of power.”²²

Unfortunately however, the protesting power of this ongoing effective protest is severely weakened by its problematic use of the performative movement of stripping. On the surface, the public nudity indeed helps promote the protest’s manifesto—the countless words, images, and clips circulating online serve as the best trailer of the following show. Furthermore, the performance seems to render the protest an avant-garde production in which sexist operations can be precariously omitted for the art’s sake. Dressed as a sex worker, a woman, in black lace lingerie peeking out from beneath a pink sweatshirt, strips while soliciting for possible clients on

²⁰ Ibid, 1.

²¹ Ibid, 2.

²² Ibid, 23, 27.

the street. Although this female performer is supposed to represent the working class exploited by the financial system that benefits the vested interests, this performance merely serves as a sexual pleasure in the most dangerous disguise of activist art that supposedly speak for the political dispossessed. Staging an imagined “sex worker” by having the performer put on those props and costumes and then strip herself in the public space, the piece ironically underpins the sexist norms that it contradicts in its democratic and anti-hegemonic attempt. It seems that, for the sake of experimental art and activist politics, the female body shall be consumable and exploitable—it can be used to accomplish political art. The naked body thus performs the legitimized desired object that used to be publically unspeakable. In this sense, the performance sadly exacerbates the problematic gender/sexual ideology.

Zombie March

On October 3rd, after a series of protests that exhausted most of the protesters, the NYPD, and nearby residents, a big group of protesters, dressed in ragged and shabby clothes and with fake blood and fake rotten flesh dripping from the corners of their mouths, began marching along Wall Street and inside Zuccotti Park. *Wall Street Zombie March*, performed by hundreds of protesters, signifies what I argue here is the contemporary scape of a wasteland of excess, which describes how electronic production and dissemination across global and local boundaries lead to extreme disparity between the 1% rich and 99% poor and the emptiness of things produced by what Baudrillard calls “information implosion.”

As a liminal space between the living and the dead, the zombie signifies the anxiety toward the uncanny, alienated creature/creation that demonstrates both human-like attributes and inhuman-like features. Zombies commonly reserve some human skills such as walking on two

legs and operating basic tools and machines, but they also show their inhuman nature, as they always cannibalize whoever is in its sight. The cannibalization by zombies connotes anxiety toward a lack of food and resources. Zombies therefore seem to embody the idea of the uncanny and of alienation, as they mirror the horror of the repressed familiar and the fantasized unfamiliar. In addition, as a syndrome, the zombie demonstrates the fear of being infected, which points to the horizontal, unlimited contagion that becomes a trope of the wasteland of excess. The excessive virus/germs lead to the desolation of the world, a land wasted because of the excess. The uncontrollable infection here becomes a metaphor for the excessive information circulating through mass and social medias. Besides, as a syndrome that results in desolation, the zombie forces the uninfected to build up an encapsulated base in which to store and hide valuable resources collected from the outside. With the zombies parading on Wall Street, the nearby banks and other financial institutions seem to resemble the encapsulated base of zombie land. It is the special attribute of this creature/creation that appropriately embodies what the *Wall Street Zombie March* works to reveal: how unfair wealth distribution and overwhelming media transmission result in extreme social and economic injustice.

This is a march that goes nowhere. Although parading along Wall Street, the march does not set a specific destination. The protesting zombies seem to be holding mobile parties on streets instead of heading toward a specific direction. The zombies do various things while parading: play in live bands, dance and sing, gesture toward the observing crowds, meditate, shout out the slogans, or literally perform zombie moves commonly seen on commercial series or films. Part of the protesters dress as “corporate zombies”—in decent business casual outfits and with cash packed in their mouths—suggests that both the empowered corporate and the disempowered employees are transformed into zombies due to, as protester Lizzi Dierken states,

the “soullessness” of the current financial apparatus. Indeed, the zombie works as a perfect trope for an alienated creature/creation that embodies the inhumanity of the financial apparatus.

However, here I aim to emphasize how the idea of the zombie march not only, on the surface, reflects the alienated scenario of the apparatus but also, more significantly, signifies a tactical flow that keeps traveling yet is heading nowhere.

The protesting zombies do not parade as one tight, uniformed force; they rather move and act as small guerrillas, invading random buildings, performing and camping at random spots in the financial district. Some of them temporarily stop protesting due to being arrested by the NYPD; some of them gather together and become a stronger group of zombies; some of them disband into individuals and continue marching. They produce a flow of protest tactics that is creative yet in despair. This flow is tactical, flexible, changeable, and always movable. However it does not head in any specific destination, nor does it point to a confirmed resolution that would ideally and utopianally fix the dominant apparatus, which this flow works within and against. The flow reveals its contradictory nature: it always travels to fit in the established social structure; however its travel never arrives at an endpoint but rather continues or ends at its own lack of resources to move on. In other words, the flow itself is a form of mobility/desire that never ends.

While heading nowhere, this flow manifests what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari term “rhizome.” In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari point out the arborescence of traditional Western philosophy, which sprouts from a single seed, produces a trunk, ceaselessly branches out yet always points to a supposed origin. In order to keep apart from this arborescent philosophy, they model a theory of manifold, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation; a concept for which they coin the term “rhizome,” which they consider the ultimate symbol of the multiple. A rhizome works with planar and trans-species connections

“ceaselessly establishing connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.”²³ An organism that spreads and grows horizontally underground, a rhizome has no center. As they describe, “it is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion.”²⁴ They further describe the rhizome as “made of plateaus.”²⁵ According to them, the plateau is “any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome.”²⁶ The rhizome thus becomes a trope for one to apprehend tactical, ongoing protest events as they demonstrate mobilities and multiplicities that have no beginning or end and are “always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo.”²⁷ While Shu-Mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet note that Deleuze and Guattari, although focusing on the rhizome-structured terrain on which minority subjects creatively act and move, fall back into a recentered model of minor literature because the model implies that a minority constructs within a major language; I contend that Deleuze and Guattari’s model can be used to importantly highlight the way in which politically-oppressed subjects work within and against the oppressing power(s).²⁸ Without a specific beginning or ending, the protest is akin to the rhizome, operating “by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoot.”²⁹ There is no leading zombie, all the zombies parade freely and flexibly—strolling around, sitting on the park benches whenever they want, protesting

²³ Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7.

²⁴ Ibid, 21.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ ibid, 22.

²⁷ Ibid, 25.

²⁸ Shih and Lionnet, *Minor-Transnationalism* (2005), 2.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), 21.

passionately, all of a sudden disbanding, being arrested, going home and probably returning shortly. The protest goes on both physically and virtually. It not only manifests a tactical, never-ending power of submission and resistance but also reveals how the power is ceaselessly (re)produced, (re)organized, and (re)narrated through the complex networking of social media and the political and economic apparatuses standing behind them.

Tom Morello's Guitar Concert

Ten days after the launching of the zombie protest, Tom Morello, a leftist American guitarist/activist, showed his support for the protesting crowd on Wall Street by performing *The Fabled City*, *Save the Hammer for the Man*, *World Wide Rebel Songs*, and *The Land Is Your Land*. Before a series of performances, Morello first stands in the middle of the crowd, delivering a speech: "If Barack Obama doesn't have the courage to shut down Guantanamo Bay, then perhaps he can fill some of those animal cages with the Wall Street criminals who torpedoed our economy; and if Barack Obama doesn't have the courage to do that, we may have to drag those son of bitches off to jail ourselves...my first song is for people who lost everything."³⁰ Since Occupy Wall Street did not have a permit to use amplified sound, the protestors fashioned the "human microphone" in which the speaker pauses while the nearby audience repeats the sentence or phrase in unison. Morello's speech, with each of its sentences repeated by the crowd, received warm applause in the cold weather. The turnout became larger as more and more protestors, fans, and random pedestrians gathered around Morello. While Morello sang, the

³⁰Morello's speech can be found at the following link:

<http://loudwire.com/tom-morello-occupy-wall-street-performance-captured-on-video/>.

audience passionately clapped, sang, jumped and danced to the melody and rhythm, making Wall Street the stage of a live concert.

Morello is well known for his tenure with bands including Rage Against the Machine, Audioslance, The Nightwatchman, and Street Sweeper Social Club. A co-founder of the non-profit political activist organization Axis of Justice, Morello has been working on political issues through his creation of music that incorporates feedback noise, unconventional picking and tapping, and heavy use of guitar effects. In his performance on Wall Street, the sounds of the crowd, the sirens of ambulances and squad cars, and the noises that come from the NYPD's wireless intercoms all become part of the performance, signifying the conflicts and dissonance of the present scene. The songs Morello plays, although already known by most of the audience, reveal their specific political meaning only when they are played within this context. Morello's live concert thus becomes a site-specific performance that uses the environment of the protest site as well as the audiences' shared memory of the folk songs. While he plays *This Land Is Your Land*, one of the United States' most well-known folk songs written by Woody Guthrie in the 1940s, the audience stands around all singing out loud and dancing with Morello, expressing their passion over the song. As many political activists used the song in the 1960s, Morello's use of it resonates with the fierce social movements in that decade.

Yet, different from the 60s social movements that had concrete, usually unitary and locatable targets, such as Jim Crow Laws, the Tactical Patrol Force at the Stonewall Riots, and the Vietnam War, against which to fight, Morello's protest performance reveals its lack of such clear and recognizable target(s). With the slogan, *We are the 99%*, the demonstrators highlight the wealth distribution in the U.S. between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population, arguing for political and economic reformations. Indeed, this request for reformation points to

several specific anti-capitalist plans such as a reduction in the influence of corporations on politics, balanced distribution of income, bank reformation, and forgiveness of student loan debt. However, these plans do not share a single, visible target but involve a colossus, invisible power apparatus, in which complex political and economic forces operate ceaselessly along with the omnipresent colonialism of technologies and social media. In this sense, the reformation at the moment is implicated with a much more varying, oscillating, and expanding milieu instead of any stable environment. The form of Morello's performance also reveals this milieu: being recorded by the numerous mobile devices, including mobile cellphones, cameras, laptops, tablet computers, and other kinds of recorders, the performance is immediately uploaded onto various social media; the uploaded materials (videos, sounds, images and words) soon spread out, networking with information from other protesting events or being incorporated by commercial events. The performance thus ceaselessly branches out, continually mobilizing and producing new forms of meaning, whether contributing to or contradicting the original aim of the event. The baroque-ness of images, videos, words, and sounds circulating online and offline signifies both the form and the content of the movement—it is the endless circulation and variation of these performative materials that embody the tactics of the protest event.

Zuccotti Park Encampment

With performances such as the *Oclarpation*, *Wall Street Zombie March* and Morello's guitar concert presented throughout the financial district, there are simultaneously numerous tents, sleeping bags, and blankets occupying Zuccotti Park and making the site almost a theme park of a war game. The park resembles a self-sufficient territory. According to the maps made by Andrew Weigand and Grant D. Foster in their article "Mapping Liberty Plaza," Zuccotti Park

is divided into several areas to accommodate the protestors' needs: sacred space, info area, social area, comfort area, art area, medical area, sleeping area, kitchen area, sanitation area, media outreach area, assembly area.³¹ The park even contains "The People's Library" that was begun by a pile of books left in a cardboard box at the park and an information area that contains laptops and wireless routers mobilized by protestors using bicycles rigged with electricity-generating devices. Such a self-sufficient park seems to enact a utopian community mashing up street protest, social media, and direct democracy to better advance its manifesto of political reformation. Accordingly, this community is supposed to be distinct from the society outside of the park. It should probably be anti-capitalist and anti-corrupted. It should symbolize or at least present some sense of the society for which the protestors are arguing and looking. Interestingly however, the park is actually a miniature or a simulation of the outside society: it works and is worked through capitalist forms of powers. Its subtle area designations embody urbanism; the promotions and propaganda resemble the brochures and flyers of commercial, entertainment events; the tools/weapons/props used for the encampment such as the tents, books, and groceries present accumulated capitalist products. The media outreach area even directly signifies the umbilical cord between the outside and the park. The encampment thus functions as an epitome of the capitalist society, which the protest considers something that ought to be reconsidered and problematized. In this light, Zuccotti Park becomes a performative space that simultaneously claims to challenge and ironically to reiterate corrupted capitalism.

Although overnight use of the park is allowed for weeks, the protestors were asked several times to remove the tents and leave the park for the park to be cleaned. On October 13th,

³¹ Andrew Weigand and Grant D. Foster's article can be found at the following link:
<http://places.designobserver.com/feature/mapping-liberty-plaza-zuccotti-park/35948/>.

Mayor Bloomberg and the NYPD issued a statement declaring that the protestors would no longer be allowed to use sleeping equipment in the park. When the protestors returned, they threatened and beat back the NYPD, yet were not entirely successful. As guerillas, they fight and play against the NYPD, trying to stand as long as possible. In this seesaw battle between the official and the protestors, the encampment performs a significant symbol of political occupation. As an outdoor place acting as temporary accommodation in tents, the camp signifies a temporary occupation, a flexible territorialization that transforms the present function of the space by enacting a habitat and dwelling. This act itself becomes political when it takes place where it is not allowed. Located in the financial district in lower Manhattan, Zuccotti Park (formerly called Liberty Plaza Park) is a public recreational area owned and controlled by Brookfield Properties. A 33,000-square-foot space, the park supposedly serves as a supplemental area that fulfills the function of the financial district. With the wide variety of trees, granite sidewalks, tables, seats, the lights built into the ground, and even two pieces of art (Mark di Suvero's sculpture *Joie de Vivre* and John Seward Johnson II's sculpture *Double Check*), the park presents an ambience of elegant taste that appropriately decorates and completes the district. However, the encampment destroys this elegant ambience by messing up the place: the unclean tents, waste food, noises, excessive smells, and various kinds of trash render the park a filthy and unstable area that can be dangerous to its neighborhood. It manifests a disruptive threat that is capable of breaking the illusion of the capital ideal. In this light, although revealing its reiteration of the capitalist norms, the encampment thus effectively troubles the norms by disarraying the park.

In *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou work on the concept of dispossession, which according to them produces a performative politics of being both affected by injustice and provoked to act. As they claim, "as much as we prize the

forms of responsibility and resistance that emerge from a ‘dispossessed’ subject...we also were keenly aware that dispossession constitutes a form of suffering for those who displaced and colonized and so could not remain an unambivalent political ideal.”³² Butler and Athanasiou underscore the duality of the dispossession, noting that the protesting subject can hardly lift from that from which it is constructed. That said, the protesting subject can still produce ethical and political responsibilities that prompt for reformation and reconsideration of the status quo. The *Oclarption*, *Zombie March*, Morello’s concert, and the Zuccotti encampment of the Occupy Wall Street movement all demonstrate this dual attribute of a performative politic that resists and reiterates the injustice at the same time. This dual attribute is further enhanced by the contemporary mediascape that tangles together the oppressing strategy and the resistant tactic making them almost untraceable, lost in the (dis)illusion and simulacra of the imaginaries.

In the following, I will ultimately turn the focus back to present-day Taiwan, interrogating how protest events abroad inspire and influence the current demonstration, the White Shirt Movement, which is commonly deemed the first and largest political movement launched by unofficial anonymous citizens through the tactical use of social media and parodic techniques. This local example also serves to reflect on how the evolving notion of protest tactics horizontally spreads over the world, providing Taiwan, a United Nation-excluded country of postcolonial Third World, artistic and political recourse for fighting for a more just and egalitarian society.

Part III. White Shirt Movement

³² Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession* (2013), ix.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Chung-Chiu's death, which triggered the White Shirt Movement, an extraordinarily grand activist movement that took place in the center of Taipei City in 2013. The movement, up to now, consists of three demonstrations: the Citizen Act Up that took place in front of the National Defense and at the Chang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall on July 20th, The Farewell to Chung-Chiu/ August Snow Movement that took place at Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Office of the President on August 3rd, and The World is For All that took place right outside of the Legislative Yuan on October 10th, which is the national birthday of ROC. The participators and the organizers of the three demonstrations are commonly called "the White Shirt Army" as most of them follow the dress code of the movement: wearing a white shirt. On the one hand, since the color white does not represent any political party in Taiwan, it avoids bedding the political standpoints of either the Kuomintang or the Minjintang and maintains its focus on the request and petition for political reformations. On the other hand, the color white, which is commonly used in Taiwanese funeral, signifies a grieving for the officially-ungrievable victims suffered from unjust political violence.

Successfully appealing to more than a quarter of a million "White Shirt Soldiers" in barely two weeks, the White Shirt Movement is organized and led by Citizen 1985, an unofficial organization founded by thirty-nine Internet surfers who did not know each other before Chung-Chiu's death. Except Hsiao and Chen, who only give their surnames as identifiable information, members of Citizen 1985 remain anonymous to prevent being arrested by the government, even after organizing three strikingly well-attended rallies. A source released by an anonymous activist reveals that the members— on average 30 years of age—include "white-collar workers, students, housewives, doctors, teachers, lawyers, designers and former legislative assistants."³³

³³ The source can be found at the following link:

These members use Internet platforms, especially Facebook and PTT Bulletin Board System, to hold group meetings and to transmit related information that has been purposely censored in particular medias such as China Times and Chung Tien News (CTi News), both commonly deemed pan-blue medias. The information has been widely spread through what local Internet surfers call “lazy people package,” usually an assemblage of information, news, documents, images, texts, and other materials related to a certain event or topic. This kind of assemblage is usually produced anonymously to protect himself/herself/themselves from any possible political retaliation. In addition, Internet surfers usually help cover each other if there is any identical information that can be leaked from the packages. Because of its protection mechanism, the packages become a flexible, helpful, and powerful tool for disempowered citizens to work together to highlight the officially erased. Organized through Internet networking, the White Shirt Movement is also called by *Apple Daily*, a local newspaper, the Taiwanese version of Tunisian Revolution, which also uses Internet resources such as Twitter and WikiLeaks.³⁴

According to Citizen 1985, the name of the organization comes from the Ministry of National Defense's hotline number for filing complaints in the military. Using the hotline, however, requires the caller to report his or her identity, which Citizen 1985 thinks results in military torture and murder. Inspired by the British novelist George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, anonymous organizers designed the slogan of the movement, which is an image of a bleeding eye with a slogan pairing with it—“The Big Citizen is Watching You.” Orwell's novel presents an imagined superstate of totalitarianism in a world of omnipresent government surveillance and public mind control. Orwellian dominance here becomes a trope of the

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2013/08/05/385577/Citizen-1985.htm>.

³⁴ The article can be found at the following link:

<http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20130721/35165187>.

oppressing Kuomintang regime against which Citizen 1985 demonstrates. Citizen 1985 is said to signify, as Hsiao states, “the epitome of a civilized society.” It is purposely designed to operate only online with no physical office or identifiable staff. By maintaining itself an online organization, Citizen 1985 denotes that the offline Taiwanese society has been supervised, controlled, and constructed by an official government of a singular political standpoint.

The White Shirt Movement contains a theme song *Lí Kám Ū Thiann-tioh Lán Ê Kua*, which is a Taiwanese dialect song adapted from the famous song *Do You Hear the People Sing?* from the Western musical *Les Misérables*. The song was adapted by Taiwanese composer Wang Hsih-Wen with lyrics by Taiwanese doctor Wu Yi-Cheng.³⁵ Released on the Internet, the song immediately became a hit single. Not only was the original Western version of the song already very popular in Taiwan, but also the Taiwanese version of the lyrics fairly describes contemporary social issues and the common resentment toward the government. The song states,

Do you dare hear us sing/ singing the pain of those who suffered/ this is our wish
not to be slaves throughout our lives/ our hearts keeps beating/ as if the beating of
the brave drums/ expecting for one day we will have new lives/ do you dare invest
all you have/ uniting our powers together/ whether sacrificed or survived/ this is
the will and courage of being a woman and a man/ your blood and my sweat/
dripping on this island Formosa.³⁶

Catchy and simple, the song has been performed many times at major demonstrations and also at other small protests.

³⁵ The song can be heard at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmmXB4RLc-M>.

³⁶ The lyrics of *Lí Kám Ū Thiann-tioh Lán Ê Kua*.

In The Farewell to Chung-Chiu/ August Snow Movement on August 3rd, anonymous vocalists led the two hundred and fifty thousand demonstrators singing the song together. Two “props” were used throughout this performance: a poster printed with a bleeding eye and mobile devices with their flashlights turned on. Printed on small posters distributed to all the demonstrators, the image signifies an imagined, virtual, horizontalist citizen power that targets the government. With the posters and the luminous mobile devices in their hands, the singing demonstrators weep and mourn for Chung-Chiu and other unknown victims.

The Citizen Act Up

Dead of organ failure on July 4th, 2013, two days before he was to be discharged from the military, Chung-Chiu serves as a reminder of those unknown military victims who were systematically interrogated and whose and swift conclusions cover up, at least in part, the truth. While the National Defense Ministry released initial findings that indicate Chung-Chiu should have only been given slight administrative punishment, questions were raised about the medical and psychological report on him that was approved unusually fast before he was sent for detention at 269th Brigade.³⁷ More questions were raised due to the delays in emergency transport, the lost of Chung-Chiu’s military diary, and the missing closed-circuit television evidence.³⁸ Although they promised to recover the missing data, the military investigators later declared that the segments contain only black screens. All of these factors led to the first demonstration on the morning of July 20th, in which approximately thirty thousand demonstrators packed the National Defense Ministry located at the intersection of Aiguo West Road and Bo’ai Road.

³⁷ Normally it would take a week to process the paperwork.

³⁸ According to a report on The China Times, July 24 2013, fragmented CCTV recordings show that the ambulance was traveling at a slow speed and its sirens was turned off.

All dressed in white, the participants asked for the “truth” of Chung-Chiu’s death—in the common Chinese phrase *chenhsiangtapai* (真相大白), *pai*, which literally means “white” and works as a metonym for “revealing;” the phrase thus refers to “revealing the truth,” according to Citizen 1985. In addition, the staff of the demonstration were all in red shirts to indicate the brutality and ruthlessness of the military institution. The demonstration officially started at nine thirty with a silent tribute to Chung-Chiu’s death. The tribute was followed by a series of outdoor performances that parodied the military totalitarianism and the stale Kuomintang ideology. Scripted and performed by anonymous activists, the performance, *Citizen Act Up*, presents the ROC military culture. At the plaza in front of the National Defense Ministry, approximately a hundred young men sit with their legs crossed on the tarmac floor. All dressed in white shirts, casual pants with their faces covered by medical gauze masks, the performers show dull and lifeless expressions on their faces. The camouflage pants on some of the performers signify the military setting of the play. A man, in a red shirt, khaki trousers, and a pair of aviator sunglasses, stands in front of the sitting young men with a microphone in his hand, staring at the people with a teasing smile on his face. In an authoritative and provoking tone of voice, the man commands all the people to put down the water bottle and stand up. He then commands the people to perform a series of military exercises, including marking time, pushing-ups, singing military songs, and hooraying for the ROC.

Standing in the horrible heat, usually over 101-Fahrenheit degrees during the daytime in July, the people try hard to perform accurately what the red-shirt-man commands. Their painful expressions show their hard work in this harsh environment. When performing push-ups, the standing crowd (also performers) starts to yell and curse in an extremely provoked tone: “do it, damn stupid soldiers/ fuck ya, you son of a bitch/ do it, you fucking pussy/ are you here for

pleasure, you mother fucker.” Various swear words spread over the plaza, making the scene violent and oppressing. The red-shirt man then announces his sincere concerns for the people and commands them to drink 250cc of water immediately. No one dares to disobey the command—everyone drinks the water. After the exercises, the people perform together the song *Fat Cat and Gangsters in a Team* adapted from the famous military song *Nine Heroes in a Team*. The lyrics state, “fuck and beat as you wish/ who cares about the law and the judge.” Performing the song, the people ask the Minister of the National Defense Kao Hua-Chu to “wake up” and “act up.” Since conscription works as the main military system in Taiwan, it is usually the military officers convening/commanding the citizens to act up for the country/ROC. The performance, however, subverts the power relationship between the military officers and the common citizens, rendering the officers as convened and commanded by the citizens. In this sense, the citizens challenge the national authority through the use of political parody. The entire performance is ended by Chung-Chiu’s uncle and sister delivering speeches regarding the corrupted military institutions shielded by the Kuomintang. The Vice Minister of National Defense finally showed up after the performance, apologizing to all the citizens of Taiwan. Although accepting the petition made by Citizen 1985, the Ministry of National Defense, in the evening of the same day, declared that only Military investigators would investigate Chung-Chiu’s death, a group distrusted by most of the citizens. This result led to the second demonstration, even larger and angrier.

The Farewell to Chung-Chiu/August Snow Movement

In an image of the second demonstration photographed by Jake Sun, it is easy to see the White Shirt Army occupying the intersection of Ketagalan Boulevard and Zhongshan South Road. The white-dressed demonstrators make the intersection look like a colossal white, shiny

cross.³⁹ This image has been widely distributed, arousing attention from not only domestic, but also international medias. Yet, what the image does not capture is the fluidity of the colossal cross, which is embodied by a quarter of a million demonstrators moving around the intersection. These demonstrators do not move toward a specific direction; instead they occupy the spot, as if painting the intersection with the white color of their shirts.

However, it should be noted that this act of occupation is not a still impasse but a flowing movement. The food trucks, polices, celebrities, performances among the crowd make the demonstrators keep moving back and forth instead of stand/sit at the same spot. The demonstrators have to tactically and flexibly move all the time to respond to the changing scenario of the entire event. The cross thus seems like a white river that keeps flowing and spreading along the roads. The “banks” of the “river” drastically dissipate and reassemble, making the “river” even contain a “tide” and “waves.” Although indeed inadvertently resembling the Christian cross, this “river” reveals a fluidity that more importantly signifies the ceaseless negotiation, battling, and playing between the government and the citizens of the White Shirt Movement. Indeed, during the period of the movement, the Kuomintang promised, in an infamously unclear manner, to reinvestigate Chung-Chiu’s death and reform the ROC military systems due to the force of public opinion. However, these seemingly wishful promises are soon drowned by the ruling power’s indifferent attitude and the citizens’ strong dissatisfaction resulting from it. The flowing, spreading “river” thus connotes the oscillations of the power relationship between the government and the citizens. The “river” does not point in a specific, single direction, but rather runs through any accessible alleys, streets, and ways, trying out and searching for possible alternatives to achieve its destination.

³⁹ See the image on page 237.



Photo of White Shirt Movement (photographed by Jake Sun)⁴⁰

The white-dressed demonstrators keep gathering at the intersection, rendering the river as if covered by snow. This “heavy snowfall” is where the name of the second demonstration—August Snow—comes from. The name echoes the renowned Taiwanese dialect song *August Snow* produced by the celebrated Taiwanese composer Chen Ming-Chang. Originally written for the Golden Bough Theater’s 2010 musical *Sayonara 1945*, *August Snow* expresses a common shared melancholy toward the broken home and country by describing an uncanny snowfall in August. In the celebrated Chinese play *Dou E yuan* (竇娥冤), written by Guan Hanqing during the Yuan Dynasty, the innocent woman Dou E, when sent to her execution, swears that her innocence will be proven by the heavy snowfall in June and the thick snow will cover her dead

⁴⁰ Jake Sun has generously claimed this picture as belonging to everyone who participated the protest. The related news can be found at the following link:

<http://www.ettoday.net/news/20130805/251313.htm> (access April 17, 2014).

body. “June snow” thus usually refers to grievance and injustice caused from corrupted politics. The song combines local elements—such as the dialect and the lyrics describing the Taiwanese landscape—with the idea borrowed from *Dou E yuan*, producing a new meaning that serves the indigenous political scenario. A huge Chinese character “yuan” (冤) is also projected through green light⁴¹ onto the building of the Office of the President, illuminating Chung-Chiu’s grievance. Used as the theme of the demonstration, the idea of summer snow not only signifies Chung-Chiu’s grievance but also points to a broader debate over the tug-of-war between the totalitarianist government and the tactical citizens. This seesaw battle is also denoted by a performance called *Yes, Sir*, whose name is exactly identical to the title of the ROC military film known by most of the people live in Taiwan.

In the performance, the demonstrators first perform a song together. They sing, “the injurious insect on the island/ the murderer of the crime/ who covers up the proof with the military investigators/ expert of falsification/ dark history and beautified story/ the fact is hidden and the truth is destroyed/ are you fooling around the citizens/ the one without power is sacrificed/ the spirit of Huang-pu withers in the hell.” While the song is performed, two performers mark times within the rhythm of the song on a stage set in the crowd. The background of the stage is a huge poster printed with the image of the “bleeding eye” and the slogan, “Citizen Woken Up.” One of the performers wears a general uniform with a mask of Tsao Chin-Sheng, the Major General of the National Defense, on his face. Another one wears a camouflage soldier uniform with a big fake monitor installation entirely covering his/her head and a sign stating “there is absolutely no image recorded” in his/her hands. When the host asks for the “general’s” opinion on Chung Chiu’s death, he fades out for a while and then hysterically

⁴¹ Green is traditionally the color of hell in the Chinese context.

repeats “I promise that the ROC army is not that dark;” “No comment;” “there is absolutely no image recorded by the monitor and I do not know why.” These sentences represent what Tsao Chin-Sheng said to the journalists in July and August. Parodying Tsao Chin-Sheng’s saying, the performer’s hysterical repeating claims highlight the absurdity of the whole situation. The performance ends with a demonstrator cursing the injustice of the ROC Military investigators.

Set up as the farewell party for Chung-Chiu, August Snow argues for the abolishment of corrupt military investigators, who fail to reveal any proof of crime. Mourning for the dead, many of the demonstrators wear black eye masks with the words *Kuofangpu* (國防布, national defense cloth) printed on them. The Chinese pronunciation of the word “ministry” is the same as that for the word “cloth:” both pronounced *pu* (部, 布) in Chinese. This cloth implies that the monitor that should have recorded Chung-Chiu’s last minutes has been covered on purpose. Paired with the image of the bleeding eye, the *Kuofangpu* illuminates the constructedness of what one sees in the contemporary world. As the most critical evidence in Chung-Chiu’s case, the monitor only provides an “image of darkness” that cannot explain anything (or actually explains everything). The “cloth” thus reveals the way the ruling powers, including the government, institutions, laws, and social norms, construct, dominate, and sustain what the citizens see.

The demonstrators in the *Kuofangpu* could not see; their eyes are entirely covered up by the cloth that signifies political corruption and the Kuomintang identity that stands behind it. However, the demonstrators see through the mobile devices held in their hands, which constantly records all the details of the demonstration that is more or less erased from the pan-blue medias. The mobile devices, including cell phones, cameras, tablet computers, laptops, walkie-talkie, video recorders, voice recorders, and among other various recorders, become digital eyes that

support the bleeding “Citizen’s eye,” gazing at the government through tactical forms of technology. Numerous images, sounds, videos, and other forms of recorded files are circulated and distributed on online forums/platforms such as Facebook and PTT, transmitting and revealing information and news of the officially oppressed demonstration.

In this light, the Farewell to Chung-Chiu/August Snow Movement fashions citizen eyes that are decorporealized, digitalized, and deterritorialized. First, the covering *Kuofangpu* claims the malfunction of the corporeal eyes. Since what the citizens see through their corporeal eyes is controlled by the ruling powers, there is no need to entirely rely on these deceived eyes. The functioning mobile devices, effulging among the crowd as dashboard lights of an unknown, huge technologic assemblage, illuminate the overwhelming power of themselves working as digital eyes that replace the corporeal ones. It is the collage of these fragmented recorded files that produces a citizen power, which is ultimately capable of challenging the official dominance and hegemony by revealing that which is covered up.

However effectively the second demonstration aroused discussions on and debates over the urgent social issues in Taiwan, the movement has yet not successfully achieved its goals of forcing the government to accept a public investigation into Chung-Chiu’s pending case and to launch related political reformation. In fact, a series of social events, including the Referendum of Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant, Parliament Tap Scandal, Dapu Incident, and the signing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement exacerbated the citizens’ opinion toward the governments and ultimately catalyzed the third demonstration, which has broadened the discussion from Chung-Chiu’s mysterious death to various political disempowered subjects suffered and oppressed by unjust ruling powers.

The World is For All

Starting at 10:10 in the morning of October 10th, the national birthday of ROC, the third demonstration asks to “Protect the Constitution” that has been destroyed by the truculent ruling of the Kuomintang and the incompetence of the Minjintang, especially in the past five years during the regime of Ma Ying-Jeou. Asking to “Return Power to the Citizens” and “Practice Democracy,” the third demonstration consisted of a series of activities: the flag-raising ceremony, the performance, the lesson of citizen rights, the vow of Citizen Awakening Association, and the silent demonstration at Chang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, all organized by Citizen 1985.

The demonstration began with an anti-government ceremony of flag-raising that, rather than honoring and celebrating the national birthday as the government always does, performs a parodic teasing of the official version of the ceremony. The official ceremony, traditionally held at the Office of President in a seemingly serious and solemn atmosphere, is proclaimed by the national birthday committee to be “not open to the public citizens.” By contrast, the unofficial one, held at the front door of the Legislative Yuan, not only welcomed every interested citizen but also invited many underground artists, musicians, activists, and performers⁴² to collaborate on the event, producing a carnivalesque ceremony. In the ceremony, white flags of the Citizens’ bleeding eye wave everywhere. Attached to the right and left sides of the stage, two white vertical banners state, “Rethink The Black-box Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement” and “Citizens Protect The Constitution And Fight Back The State Power,” with the words printed in black. The portrait of Sun Yat-Sen is set at the center of the stage, with his well-known saying “The World is For All” printed on a horizontal banner hung above it.

⁴² These performers include the local bands May Day and Kou Chou Ching.

A woman on stage shouts through bullhorn, “We are not allowed to attend the official flag-rising ceremony held through the tax we pay/ the ceremony is simply a party for those empowered/ we have to express our appreciation to the emperor Ma if we are lucky enough to watch the fireworks broadcast on television.” Another woman then states, “Hell the national flag/ please see your way out if you are expecting for the rising of the ROC flag/ we are here to see the rising of the Citizen’s flag.” The two women then ask the demonstrators to stand up, wave the “Citizen’s eye” flags in their hands, and sing together May Day’s *Juchen chu* (入陣曲),⁴³ a local popular rock and roll hit single mocking the government’s unjust ruling and oppressive power. During the song, ten people in orange shirts and black pants parade through the excited crowd, holding seven huge flag of the “Citizen’s eye.” When rising the flag, instead of using the ROC national song, the ceremony plays *Lí Kám Ū Thiann-tioh Lán Ê Kua* and welcomes the demonstrator to join singing. At the end of the song, the flag is raised onto the top of the pole. The woman on stage then claims to fly both the flags of Kuomintang and Minjintang at half-mast to mourn the island’s calamity due to the corruption of both parties.

The ceremony is followed by a short play. After a short piece of music of tinkling sound and a sentimental piano melody, four performers show up on stage, starting a conversation. The performers, three women and a man, are characterized by four stereotypes: “housewife,” “businesswoman,” “student,” and “farmer.” The “housewife” wears a kitchen headscarf and holds a huge polystyrene-made screwdriver; the “businessman” wears a woman’s suit and grabs a huge polystyrene-made abacus; the “student” is in casual jeans and has a huge polystyrene-made guitar in her hand; the “farmer” has a local farmer’s hat on his head. The farmer and housewife complain about the rising unemployment rate due to the “sneakily assigned” Cross-

⁴³ This name literally means “song of uprising.”

Strait Service Trade Agreement; the student argues that people should think “positively” and that “owning nothing is at least better than witnessing your house pulled down by the government because of the urban renewal project”; the businesswoman blames the fraudulent bankruptcy of some capitalist zaibatsu that cooperates with the governments; the four finally express strong disapproval for the current government’s deceitful ruling that results in the miserable lives on the island. Notably, while these four characters are chatting, a group of people in historical costumes enters the stage, standing on a high platform and staring silently behind the chatting people. One wears a Chinese emperor costume with his face painted white and the other ones are in eunuch costumes with their faces painted blue. When the four start protesting on the stage, the emperor stretches his arms into an embrace and the eunuchs start throwing fake candies to the demonstrators off stage. The play ends with the demonstrators throwing back the candies and asking for the impeachment of “the Emperor Ma.”⁴⁴

The demonstrators then move to Chang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, occupying the stairways of the main building. With the applause, three huge white banners—approximately thirty meters—are let down onto the inclined plaza between the stairways. These three banners repeat the same demands, “Rethink The Black-box Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement,” “Citizens Protect The Constitution And Fight Back The State Power,” and “The World is For All.” Instead of getting the banners ready before the demonstration starts, the organizers have all the demonstrators witness the banners being slowly let down as three white rivers flowing from the top to the bottom. The process of the letting down takes more than three minutes. When the banners get stuck on the bumpy surface of the plaza, a few staff members climb up to help

⁴⁴ The Chinese character *huang* (驢), which originally means horse with yellow and white fur, has become popular in Taiwan since 2012. This character is composed of two radicals, *ma* (馬) and *huang* (皇). *Ma* refers to Ma Ying-Jeou and *huang* means “emperor.” This character has been appropriated parodically in diverse ways to satirize Ma Ying-Jeou.

unfold the banners with their hands. The entire slow action of spreading the banners once again signifies the fluidity and the horizontality of the demonstration—the White Shirt Movement is never a speedy action but a long-term political process full of guerrilla and negotiation. The local philosophy of anti-dominance produced here is not an impassivity that refuses the forward-moving temporality but an ongoingness that challenges the stagnant political system advanced by the Kuomintang more than half of a century ago. The banners ultimately spread over the plaza, covering the *Danbi* (丹陛), which was originally designed on the plaza to signify the imperial sovereignty of Chang Kai-Shek. Stepping on the *Danbi*, the demonstrators trample the equation between the Kuomintang identity and the identification of the island. The protest ends with all the demonstrators hooraying for the citizen and singing again *Lí Kám Ū Thiann-tioh Lán Ê Kua*.

Certainly, the protest not only efficiently forces the official to reform military law and to revise hegemonic identity but also fashions a novel approach to political uprising that better fits the mediascape of the postcolonial context. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that traditional gender norms still haunt the entire process of the movement. It seems that the demonstrators are trying to substitute a sense of fraternity for the Kuomintang ideology. However this sense of fraternity excludes any feminist discussion. Throughout the movement, the male casualty emerges with further investigation, yet the female victims who suffered from military violence are strangely never mentioned. The movement thus becomes a closed game exclusive to males. Besides, the short plays offered by the Citizen 1985 also reinforce the sexist gender norms by problematically presenting stereotypical figures of “housewife” and “businesswoman.” These questionable gender operations and characterizations reveal the invisible weakness of the movement.

Now, at the beginning of 2014, the White Shirt Movement has yet not ended. Citizen 1985 continues forming various protesting events through social media. They have been touring

high schools and universities in Taiwan, giving lectures, interviews, performances and workshops to remind of the incompleteness of the amendment to Taiwanese military laws. It should be noted that these the events have deeply relied on a special local force in Taiwan: *hsiangmin* (鄉民), which usually refers to the power formed by the local Internet surfers, usually a population aged between 15 to 40. The term originates from *Book of the Later Han* written by Fan Ye in the 5th century during the Liu Song Dynasty, meaning village people who lead idle lives and enjoy watching scene of bustle.⁴⁵ The term is borrowed and appropriated to describe the BBS surfers and can sometimes be negative as it criticizes those who do not think critically but enjoy participating in the discussion by messing around. However, the term is later transformed into a neutral concept referring to the unofficial, tactical power organized by anonymous BBS surfers fighting against the official one/government. Since the government has been generally distrusted by many citizens of the young generations due to recent controversial incidents such as the Referendum of Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant, Parliament Tap Scandal, Dapu Incident, and the signing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement, BBS has become an accessible forum for the surfers to deliver, share, exchange, and communicate information that is banned, hidden, or ignored by the government and the vested interests. The information does not simply circulate online but also produces political movement offline, transforming virtual power into physical protest. These ensuing incidents contribute to the development of the tactical force of the unofficial, rendering *hsiangmin* a significant power capable of organizing power influential to the political status quo on the island.

Hsiangmin works as an activist political mob. They are a mob in the sense that they are always not satisfied with the political status quo and are always boldly trying various ways to

⁴⁵ See “PTT Chijenlu” (批踢踢奇人錄) included in Pushdoll forum on PTT (推娃版).

uncover the covered, empower the disempowered, and judge the officially unjudgeable. As there is neither leader nor any decided, specific unitary goal shared by this mob, the mob works as sets of ongoing tactics that can flexibly transform into different models to cope with and respond to the changing milieu. That said, this is not to say that hsiangmin can work as an ideal group of Internet surfers who sort out all cases without bias or benefit. Because of the uncontrollability of hsiangmin, it sometimes becomes an extremely violent force that hysterically targets at a specific suspect. While this violence can effectively urge the official to investigate the case and judge without black-box operation, it sometimes violates the suspect's right to privacy by digging out, revealing, and circulating the suspect's personal information inappropriately, even illegally.⁴⁶ Indeed, this violation achieved through powerful social media needs another discussion on privacy, yet it cannot be denied that this violent mob is a necessary product and a needed producer in the Taiwanese context, in which the Kuomintang totalitarianism keeps ghosting the island. The mob signifies the protest flow that I have developed in this chapter: a flow that is heading nowhere yet is so tactical and omnipresent that it ceaselessly deterritorializes the official norms. The White Shirt Movement is exactly such a performative event that embodies this survival flow.

Conclusion

In *Dispossession: The Performative In the Political*, Butler stresses the fundamental intervulnerability, interrelationality, and interdependence among individuals, groups, states, and other units. She states, "we can only be dispossessed because we are already dispossessed...our interdependency establishes our vulnerability to social forms of deprivation" (5). Butler's words

⁴⁶ The local film *Silent Code* (Lin Shih-Yung, 2012) has interestingly discusses the precariousness of the hsiangmin violence.

highlight the double valence of the uprising subject who is always bravely struggling with and fighting against the colossal apparatus, which is produced, sustained, and enlarged by the complex networking between the omnipresent mediascape and political/economic apparatus. By exploring the political potential of these three performative events—*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Occupy Wall Street*, and the *White Shirt Movement*—I not only intend to highlight the various protest tactics of each event but also, more significantly, to draw forth a possible (minor-) transnational networking between these events. It is the intervulnerability and interdependence between these struggles in different cultural contexts that I argue is the critical component of contemporary (dis)identifications. It is only through recognizing this relationality that one can possibly get a glimpse of the complexity of identity formation.

This relationality is never an impasse. It is rather always in movement. In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logic of Transnationality*, Aihwa Ong uses transnationalism to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes and focuses on the multiplicity of uses and conceptions of culture. Ong states, “Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the transversal, the transactional, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism.”⁴⁷ For Ong, transnationalism implies the unfixed, flexible, and always moving power relationship that acts upon and across borders. Ong’s emphasis of a movable and changeable relationality resonates with my discussion of a (minor)transnational networking among various tactical practices of political protesting. It is this activist networking that promises and embodies the unfixed and

⁴⁷ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 4.

flexible relationality. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Occupy Wall Street*, and the *White Shirt Movement* exactly manifest this tactical networking and the intervulnerable relationship between political subjectivities upon and across borders. More importantly, they highlight the way in which these activist networks produce and are produced by, incorporate and are incorporated by, transform and are transformed by the complex interplay between political/economic apparatus and media/technology spectacles of the contemporary era. An unambivalent political ideal may not be possible; however a brave, humorous, critical, and perseverant one is possible. I believe it is these political protestors who critically work within and against both the power apparatus and the media/technology scenarios that effectively expedite a world of justice and egalitarianism.

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