

ARMY OF SELF: DANCE DEMOCRACY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the creative work that brings to life a concept that I am developing called *army of self*. This concept addresses the idea that, at any given time, we embody different versions of our past or present self. These variations emerge through daily life and creative expression. The work is also a living memorial for my Taiwanese ancestors who struggled through periods of colonization. Without their struggle, there would be no democracy in Taiwan. Through an investigation of the fifty-year period of Japanese Occupation, 1895–1945, I examine the relationship between colonizer and colonized, as well as the concepts of oppression and enagement, a term defined by Merriam-Webster as the act of enraging or state of being enraged.

Another important component of the thesis is the notion of foreignness. It examines my personal lived experience in America as an immigrant and questions whether the strangers within ourselves can honor and accept differences both for ourselves and others. According to a theory developed by Julia Kristeva (1991), the bodies of the colonized experience a sense of foreignness in many scenarios, whether they are at home or away. Similar to the colonized, foreigners are molded into ambiguities of otherness. My research scrutinizes the ideas of foreignness, oppression, and enagement through portraying historic events and characters. The essential questions of this research are: How can I create a work that allows each individual to share his or her multiple intelligences and perspectives through my creative process? What is my

identity after this research? I hope to answer these questions that have resided in me through this writing process on *army of self*.

This thesis is dedicated to my dearest parents, family, and artist friends.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While Taiwan has not generally been discussed in terms of colonialism, its history in fact presents a fascinating example of the forms of structural domination that characterize the colonial relationship. (Yip, 2004, p. 13)

Past, Present, and Future of Taiwanese Identity

In order to understand self, one must look beyond the present. In tracing back to the past, one begins to recognize the ethnological and cultural patterns in living traditions and personalities. Through one's awareness of the past, one can begin to make sense of the present self. It is that connection and essence between past and present that enlivens dreams of the future.

This thesis is inspired by the Japanese Occupation era in Taiwan from 1895–1945. The creative and written work are deeply rooted and inspired by these historic events. I am aware that I am not an expert of Taiwanese history; however, as a Taiwanese person who grew up in Taiwan hearing stories from my grandparents and parents about the tyranny that the imperial Japanese government created, I carry these innate memories and pains with me. In this thesis, I explain the Taiwanese historic past, my present moment of being an immigrant in America and writing about *army of self*, and the future of Taiwanese identity.

Background

Taiwan has endured various colonizers: the Netherlands (1624–1662), Spain (1626–1642), China (1644–1895), and Japan (1895–1945). Even now Taiwan’s sovereignty is contested, and many outside of our nation are confused about who “owns” us. The Taiwanese people want to be independent but outside forces, such as the United Nations and China, have made this impossible. China wants Taiwan to be ruled under the One China Policy despite significant political and cultural differences. China functions as a communist society; however, Taiwan functions through its democracy. In fact, we currently have had a female president since 2016. In the face of the ongoing tension with China and due to the Taiwanese colonized and immigrant nature, Taiwan has developed a generous heart for accepting and celebrating differences. Taiwan has also attracted many Southeast Asian immigrants to resettle and work in Taiwan because of its stable economy. This diverse mixture of Eastern and Western influences made it a thrilling place to grow up. Hence, as a Taiwanese, Han Chinese-descended female, I value and respect differences between cultures, races, and nationalities.

The second chapter looks at two specific historical events that happened during the Japanese Occupation era—the Wusha Incident (霧社事件) and the presence of *comfort women*. I begin to tell stories that only a Taiwanese-born woman can express. I retell my grandfather’s personal battle and relate historic events to my creative process. My grandfather, who passed away in 2015, had dementia before his passing. He was born during the later part of the Japanese occupation in Taiwan and lived through a dark period in Taiwanese history. I relate his dementia and fading mind to this tumultuous era. Witnessing his enragement before his passing inspired an unexpected curiosity about my

own roots and Taiwanese history.

In the third chapter, I explain the collected present of democracy in Taiwan and my personal experience with immersive dance theater and postmodern dance. This chapter uses theorists such as Josephine Machon to explain the experience of immersive theater works and Sally Banes to discuss the history of postmodern dance. I also discuss how these two dance forms have shaped my choreographic methods and dance career.

In the fourth chapter, I explain dance democracy and analyze my creative research. Through examination of my creative process and the performances that took place in 2016, I tackle the relationship between actual and performed identities. I also investigate the entangled notions of oppression and enagement, arguing that these emotions are vital for the healing of one's past trauma.

In the fifth chapter, I use Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) to explain the notions of strangers. By incorporating Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial theory on the *third space*, I discuss interdisciplinary scholarship, and notions of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Last but not least, by using Mary Jane Collier's (2014) concept about critical intercultural praxis and community engagement—where negotiation of intercultural relationships can be utilized for social change—my research investigates how racial and cultural identity are performative and used as ways to empathize the people and understand the world around us. By associating race, gender, and colonized personality together, I want to stress the need to discuss oppression and empower people who feel *minoritized*¹ and marginalized. Through creating and theorizing in

¹ The term, *minoritized* represents the groups that holds different religions,

unconventional settings, as well as my lived experiences as a “foreign” woman of color, I am inspired to continue diving deeper into my sense of self in order to understand the world.

Finally, I conclude my writing by defining the term *army of self* to bring awareness and respect to the unique differences in each individual. I hope to narrow the gaps among dancing bodies and people of color to recognize the special differences that reside in all of us. Through the concept of *army of self*, I hope to develop physical practices and performance research where sociological, feminist, and postcolonial theory can intersect and assist my research. My hope is to utilize these physical practices as segues to empower people who are *minoritized* and to assist dancers in dancing democracy and life.

genders, nationalities, and races that are not considered as the norm. It speaks to the people who are underrepresented or have less power in societies.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE PAST

The Impressions of Mourning Through Historical Events in Taiwan

I want to tell a story—a story that only a Taiwanese woman who carries the memories, blood, and bodies of her ancestors can tell. During the Japanese Occupation of Taiwan, overwhelming sorrow was present in my homeland. Hearing my grandparents speaking and singing in Japanese during my visits with them two years ago in Taiwan made me curious how they could still use the Japanese language even after they had endured all this brutality. Perhaps my grandparents like many Taiwanese cherished the memories of the earlier stage of the Japanese ruling, before everything went into extreme darkness.

There are two descriptive sections in this chapter. These two distinguishing impressions are important sources for my creative research. The first impression relates to Scenes 1–4 and the second impression is addressed in Scenes 5–9 in my creative research. An illustrative *Positionality/Character Chart* can be found in Chapter 3.

First Impression: The Taste of Language

This first section is about the memory of language, specifically in regards to hearing my grandparents speak Japanese and first becoming aware of the impact that

colonization had on the Taiwanese people. Simultaneously, I address the Wusha Incident (霧社事件)—the fight between Japanese authorities and the Seediq indigenous tribe (賽德克族) of Taiwan.

I explore the way these elements may have shaped a Taiwanese identity crisis. The works of four particular authors are discussed: Mark Harrison, Winifred Kai-wen Chang, June Chun Yip, and Jonathan Fenby. Their works investigate the vital relationships between language and identity in Taiwanese history during and after the Japanese Occupation.

In *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge in the Making of Taiwanese Identity*, Harrison (2006) claims that the rising powers of the European and Japanese empires in the late nineteenth century made the imperial Chinese government aware of the importance of Taiwan. However, at the end of the first Sino-Japanese War (甲午戰爭) in 1894, as the Qing empire began to collapse, China ceded Taiwan to Japan as its first colony. The colonial arrangement was not always oppressive. It was said that before the 1930s, Taiwan as a Japanese colony had more freedoms than other colonized countries under Japanese rule. However, after the 1930s, during World War II, Taiwan underwent its worst period of militaristic darkness under Japanese control (p. 1).

Winifred Kai-wen Chang (2012) in *Marshaling Culture: Strategies of Japanese Mobilization in Colonial Taiwan* summarizes that the end of the first Sino-Japanese War; from 1895–1945, Taiwan and Penghu were ceded by China to Japan as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (馬關條約). From 1895–1930, the imperial Japanese government was searching for new ways to control the colonized Taiwanese. During the first 35 years of Japanese Occupation, there were many riots and regional rebellions against the new

colonizer, Japan. The imperial Japanese government tried to assimilate by educating the Taiwanese with Japanese language and culture in order to reinforce colonial power. The Taiwanese people were forced to study and work in the Japanese language. Many of them resisted the idea of abandoning their mother language whether it was Mandarin, Taiwanese, or Austronesian² languages.

In *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural*

Imaginary Yip (2004) states:

Colonial Bilingualism is never a simple linguistic dualism in which each language is equally valued. Instead, the imperial language of the colonizer is institutionalized as the language of official public discourse, and its legitimacy and authority over the colonized population is reinforced through a simultaneous degradation and devaluation of the “mother” tongue of the colonized natives. (p. 132)

Due to the constant reinforcement, degradation, and devaluation of Taiwanese native cultures and languages from the Japanese government, many Taiwanese were enraged by the policy and the experience of being forced to speak Japanese. For instance, my grandfather felt that he had to be multilingual for survival purposes, but, in his deep roots, he was confused and upset for not being able to feel at home and speak his “home” language naturally.

Chang (2012) continues to analyze Japanese Occupation era in Taiwan. From 1930–1937, the Japanese government conducted the first Japanization³ as assimilation (同

² Austronesian languages (南島語系) based on the Council of Indigenous People in Taiwan; they are languages spoken by many inhabitants of countries such as Maritime Southeast Asia, islands of the Pacific Oceans, and Madagascar.

³ Japanization refers to Imperial Japanese government’s policy of acculturation on its colonies. It is the process that assimilates the colonized to adopt the Japanese culture and languages through policy and law reinforcement.

化) of the Taiwanese. The period of assimilation in Taiwan was supervised through cultural policies to slowly acculturate Taiwanese people to the imperial Japanese empire. The Japanese government allowed the Taiwanese people to still practice their languages, cultural traditions, and idiosyncrasies of being Taiwanese.

During the assimilation period, one of the most tragic incidents involving the Seediq indigenous people of Taiwan took place. The Wusha Incident involved the Seediq indigenous tribe that resided and dwelled in Wusha, Taiwan. The Seediq tribe was known for being oppressed by Japanese authorities for a long period of time during the Japanese Occupation. Through the built-up tension with Japanese authority, the Seediq tribe attempted a coup against the Japanese colonizers. It led a fierce rebellion against the military. This event was one of the most devastating acts of violence towards both Japanese and Seediq people during that time period.

Chang (2012) reports on the Wusha Incident and found that the Seediq tribe in Wusha (霧社) was previously understood by the Japanese authorities as a “model tribe.” Contrary to Japanese authorities’ expectations, on October 27, 1930, the Seediq tribe launched a full attack on the Japanese. They killed many Japanese authorities by employing the traditional Japanese killing method, decapitation. Despite the brutalities that Japanese authorities had performed on the Seediq tribe, in a newspaper report of the Wusha Incident, the Japanese government only reported censored news about Japanese victims exclusively to gain sympathy from the Han⁴ Chinese of Taiwan as well as the

⁴ Han Chinese are 95% of the population in Taiwan. There are three main groups of Han in Taiwan: Hoklo (閩南人), Hakka (客家人), and Mainland Chinese (外省人).

other Taiwanese indigenous tribes.⁵ The Japanese government's news was reported from a single point of view that only benefited the praising of Japanese imperial power. This caused mistrust between Han and the indigenous tribes toward the Seediq tribe.

Immediately following the incident, many of the Seediq women and children committed suicide because they were not willing to be killed by the Japanese authorities (Chang, 2012, p. 93).

After the Wusha Incident and the rising pressure of the wars with other countries in the world, the imperial Japanese government changed their policy of ruling the Taiwanese people. They conducted the second Japanization: imperialization (皇民化) from 1937–1945. During the period of imperialization and due to the rising pressure of the Pacific War and World War II, the imperial Japanese government increased the pace of the cultural assimilation to law enforcement (Chang, 2012, p. 3). For instance, the Japanese government reinforced Taiwanese people to speak only Japanese and diminished the role of Taiwanese traditions, such as forcing the Taiwanese Opera troupes to practice in the Japanese language only. If the troupes didn't follow the rules, the imperial Japanese government would shut down the troupes and prevent them from continuing their performances altogether.

Simultaneously, the imperial Japanese government regulated parts of the laws to cultivate and educate Taiwanese people to believe that they had the same rights as

⁵ According to the Council of Indigenous Peoples, there are 16 aboriginal tribes in Taiwan. Most of the tribes live by the mountain areas, such as East Coast of Taiwan, Central Mountain Range (中央山脈), and Orchid Island (蘭嶼). The indigenous tribes have preserved the ancient Austronesian languages and cultures. Their diverse cultures and ways of livings are highly respected in Taiwan.

Japanese citizens who lived in Taiwan at that time. For instance, the imperial Japanese government allowed the Taiwanese to join the Japanese army and permitted them to enroll and even sit in the same classrooms,⁶ gaining Japanese education alongside the Japanese people. The purpose of the second Japanization was to prepare the Taiwanese to be ready for World War II military purposes. The imperial Japanese government employed Taiwanese soldiers to kill their own ancestral Chinese people in China during World War II.

Fenby (2004) in *Chiang Kai Shek: China's Generalissimo and the Nation He Lost* declares, “In 1937 Japan took over parts of China and caused many damages to the Chinese people; one example of this is when a Japanese newspaper recorded a competition between two lieutenants to behead 100 Chinese with their swords. When they both passed the mark, it was not clear who finished first, so the contest was extended to 150. One of the lieutenants described the competition as ‘fun,’ though a Japanese newspaper noted that he had damaged his blade on the helmet of a Chinese he cut in half” (p. 308). This was one of the brutal killings that Japanese soldiers performed. It is eerie to imagine that Taiwanese people were forced to become Japanese soldiers, and, in turn, kill their own ancestral Chinese people. When reading this quote, it triggered so many emotions in me that I decided to use it to create one of the scenes in the dance piece.

⁶ Taiwanese were not allowed to sit in the same classroom with Japanese before the second period of Japanization.

Second Impression: The Taste of the Sour Leftovers

This second section addresses the feelings of sadness in regards to stories of former “comfort women”⁷ and reflects on the haunting sensation that many in the younger generation feel the Japanese Occupation left behind.

In *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, Yoshimi Yoshiaki (2000) wrote that the imperial Japanese government systematically destroyed all the official war documents at the end of World War II. None of the documents were traceable. Hence, it is one of the main reasons why it took nearly fifty years for the Japanese government to apologize to the former comfort women. Initiated by Kim Hak-Sun in 1991, a South Korean former comfort woman in World War II filed suit to ask for apology from the Japanese government to the Korean women who were victimized by the practice. In 1993, Korean former comfort women were officially given an apology by the Japanese government (Yoshiaki, 2000).

Thanks to the initiative of these surviving Korean comfort women, a group of remaining Taiwanese comfort women found the courage to show up and demand the right for their own apology. The *Taipei Times* (2016) reported that the Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation encouraged the remaining comfort women to speak up about the atrocities that were committed against them during the Japanese Occupation era in Taiwan.

⁷ The term “comfort women” is a synonym for sex slaves. During World War II throughout Asia, the imperial Japanese government employed the strategy of using comfort women’s bodies to comfort and uplift their imperial soldiers through forced sexual services. Ironically, the term comfort women is not so comforting for human rights generally, especially toward the women during that time.

According to the Foundation, “More than 2,000 Taiwanese women were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II.” The suffering that the comfort women endured was finally being recognized and, in turn, empowering the women who were oppressed during this dark part of Taiwanese history. The sour leftover taste lingered for 70 years and caused obvious scars. When inspired by Korean former comfort women, Taiwanese former comfort women found the courage to request an apology from the modern Japanese government. As a result, the Taiwanese former comfort women received a formal apology from the Japanese government in March 2016.

The reports of these historical events act as a bridge toward my creative process. It makes me appreciate my own roots by revisiting some of the historic facts while also diving further into parts unknown in the Taiwanese history. I use this research as an initiation for making a creative work that expresses the oppression of these women’s experiences. I want to utilize the example to empower women who are oppressed under the circumstances of social and political power.

Similar to the comfort women’s experience, my own grandfather, who suffered from dementia towards the end of his life, was born in the 1930s during the second period of Japanization. His upbringing was a series of baffling Occupation era events that may have led to some part of his posttraumatic stress. He was stuck in between multiple identities—Chinese not Chinese, Taiwanese not Taiwanese, and Japanese not Japanese. The uncertainty about who he was even to himself, must have caused some frustration. I can see how living through these perplexities could lead to his illness, memory disorders, and personality changes. Before his passing, I remember visiting him in the midst of the disease; witnessing his erratic behaviors felt like watching historic events and the

oppressions that he endured during different push and pull moments of his various identities. I applied this witness to my creative research, specifically in Scene 8.

At times, his rage would burst and he would tumble into the deepest sorrow and cries. Perhaps the anger and conflict he carried was ultimately released in his outbursts, a freedom he could not have found in his earlier life. Parts of me were grateful that he could finally let the struggles and conflicts inside him be revealed to others, even though his mind was not within his control. Through witnessing how he revealed his trauma and memories untold, it inspired me to look deeper at the period that he lived through. His enragement inspired me to do my creative research. I have never seen that much rage in my life from within my close family. Witnessing his uncontrollable authenticity encourages me to investigate emotions and how they are played out in different social characters.

Harrison (2006) states that Taiwan is always at the moment of coming into being. Taiwanese identity is never fixed (p. 6). The Taiwanese have transformed significantly and repeatedly each time their colonizer has changed. For example, most Taiwanese develop a sense of malleability when encountering different authorities and policies—but this has not stifled a Taiwanese sense of tradition. During the Japanese occupation, Taiwanese spoke the Japanese language in order to survive and continued to secretly pass on their Taiwanese traditions to the younger generations. This adaptability reflects their desire to build a better future, while at the same time, aspiring to preserve the customs and traditions of their ancestors. Harrison's observations have reaffirmed my interest in looking at my own Taiwanese history further in order to better understand my own identity.

In Yip's (2004) interview with Hou Hsiao-Hsin, who is a well-established Taiwanese filmmaker, Hou responded and asserted his belief that after centuries of invasion and colonial rule by the Spanish, Portuguese, Manchus, Japanese, and Nationalist Chinese, Taiwan is finally in the process of decolonization (p. 88). Nowadays, like my grandfather, my peers, and I in Taiwan embody the tension between coexisting impulses of exile and displacement. At times, we suffer from the loneliness and disorientation of this exile, yearning for a sense of belonging and hoping to rediscover a familiar and stable sense of self.

In *Is Taiwan Chinese?* Melissa J. Brown (2004) proclaims that identity is not only shaped by culture and ancestry, but is also constructed on the basis of common social, economic, and political experience (p. 2). My generation in Taiwan realizes that we are being reshaped by the multiplicity of cultures that now flourish in our country. We have begun to recognize the fresh possibilities that these new and diverse experiences can offer to our lived experiences.

In this thesis, I examine my grandfather's journey through Japanese Occupation. In a way, this is a tribute to him, the Taiwanese people, and people in general who have endured oppression as a result of colonization. I hope that through my thesis, both in creative and written form, I can continue decolonizing the past colonial identities, cultivating progress in the present, and creating a greater future by my own genealogy.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOCRACY: COLLECTED PRESENT

Finally, accepting not knowing is a way of acknowledging the complexity of all social history. We struggle to construct an account of ourselves, but can't fully trace just how our wishes have come to take their current forms. "Change" and "agency" are keywords, ambiguous, polyvalent, and unanchored. (Snitow, 2015, p. 309)

The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly, or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion. (Molly Ivins, as cited in Palmer, 2011, p. 11)

My thesis begins with the belief that I am in a place of not knowing, but I also have agency to be constantly in the process of wrestling with the ambiguity embodied in complex social structures. Similarly, Parker Palmer (2011) argues in *Healing the Heart of Democracy* that the heart is where everything begins, and we have to discover, rediscover, and embrace the conflicts that threaten democracy as ways of opening to our lives (p. 10). We govern our political, personal, creative democracy through embracing the ambiguity of unknown.

The journey to democracy in Taiwan in 1987 was incredibly messy and complex. After the Japanese Occupation era, Taiwan underwent thirty more years of suffering

under Chiang Kai-Shek's militaristic martial law. Events from the *White Terror*⁸ are examples of how governmental power impeded the progress of Taiwan.

Nevertheless, martial law ended in 1987 in Taiwan, ushering in a period of economic development and prosperity. This paved the way for democracy, which was well-earned, yet complex and polyvalent. Further demonstrating this rise of equality, Taiwan elected our seventh president in March 2016, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), a strong modern woman who believes that Taiwan's future should be determined by its people. She states in her 2016 inaugural address:

History will remember this courageous generation. This country's prosperity, dignity, unity, confidence and justice all bear the marks of our struggle. History will remember our courage. It will remember that in the year 2016, we took this country in a new direction. Everyone on this land can be proud of having participated in changing Taiwan. (*Focus Taiwan*, 2016)

I believe that it is through these conflicts and struggles that our community generates and recognizes the importance of the freedom and responsibility that a democratic system offers.

Now, imagine that this thesis is like Taiwanese history: messy, unsettled, and always in the process of becoming. This is one of the central ideas of my thesis—democracy is messy and chaotic. I want to create multifaceted intersections similar to the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, chaos from unshaved faces with scruffy beards, or spit flying from shouting mouths, laser focused stares, and dinosaur-

⁸ *White Terror* is a period in Taiwan when martial law was enforced from 1947–1987. The Nationalist Chinese government was in fear of the Communist Chinese government's invasion. This period caused many killing incidents—specifically the Nationalist Chinese government targeted intellectuals whom they thought held power and knowledge.

like powerful presences in democratic meetings—disorienting and yet electrifying.

Thus, using multiple lenses, I illuminate my artistic and choreographic influences and democratic working relationship by placing it alongside immersive dance theater work including theorist, Josephine Machon and the immersive theater company, Punchdrunk; and postmodern dancers, such as theorist, Sally Banes, and postmodern choreographers, Trisha Brown and Faye Driscoll. I examine how these theorists and choreographers intersect, resemble, and diverge from one another. Furthermore, I discuss the relationships between the performers' selves and performed identities on a proscenium stage which creates the invisible veil between both performers and audience and between performers and performers. Last but not least, I explain how Erving Goffman's (1959) theory on presentation of self has influenced the creative process of my dance work, *Army of Self* (2016).

Immersive Dance Theater in Site-Specific Spaces

Whether it is in a performance setting or daily life, the act of revealing oneself and being witnessed is a vulnerable one. Being open and vulnerable creates space for stories to emerge, whether the story line is linear, narrative, or abstract. These stories tell not only ours, but also those from our ancestors through our blood, bones, and memories. Telling stories is relational, and the act of listening and witnessing from audience and performers' inner selves recollects the power of memory. Together, whether we are the performers or audience, we are all creating and imagining our own journey through this experience.

Living and dancing democracy requires acts of listening, witnessing, and telling

each other's story. If the performers are true to their "act," the witness or audience will receive the information accurately through their interpretation and understand that act through kinesthetic empathy. In my definition, this active exchanging, witnessing, choice-making, and communicating through physical expression and energy between performers and audience, sometimes with or without words, composes an immersive dance theater experience. In immersive dance theater works, the audience is usually immersed in performance and performance space with the audience. For me, immersive dance theater is magic, democratic, and often, the experience is indescribable. It is a form that requires tremendous trust, listening, and instantaneous responsive feedback both from performers and audience. The performers are asked to be versatile in theater, modern dance, and contact improvisation.⁹

Josephine Machon is a theorist writing about immersive theater works. In *Immersive Theatres* (2013), she explains that the unique immersive dance theater experience is the sensual engagement and direct participation of the audience in the work. It creates a dream-like world in which audiences can immerse themselves with moments of real life scenarios being played out in front of their observing eyes. This lively and immediate experience brings the audience's physical and mental response to an imaginative environment. This creative agency helps shape, provides decisions, and honors each individual's personal interpretation and experience. It is through this unique journey of experiencing intense affect or effect at the heart that characterizes immersive

⁹ Contact improvisation skill is important in immersive theater. It is derived from postmodern dance forms that cultivates ways of touch, trust and deep tuning in partnership.

dance theater (p. 68). I relate this creative agency that immersive theater cultivates to my democratic and creative process of making *army of self*.

Personal Experience From Immersive Dance Theater

On one hand, postmodern choreographer, Trisha Brown's works have had a great impact on my movement aesthetics. On the other hand, the intimacy and humane sensation in immersive dance theater experiences have spoken to me and moved me in many ways that I did not expect. I have a great interest in questioning the identities of performers between themselves and performed ones. Through my past experience working at *Sleep No More NYC*¹⁰ (2010) as one of the original New York City cast members, I performed for three hours in every show, with matinee and evening shows on the weekends, seven days a week, for nearly two years. The immersive dance theater work has inspired and made me curious about how the immersive system makes magic. The system reminds me of the democratic system. It is about decision-making and negotiating through physicality with the community (performers and audience). The immersive experience is not only based on the visual sensation, but also the sensory experience, such as sound, touch, and smell. For instance, the performers can be performing their best duet in front of the audience. However, if one particular audience is attracted to the architectural space and neglects the performers' existence, it is completely permitted. The performers have to respect the audience's immersive experience and let

¹⁰ *Sleep No More NYC*: An immersive work premiered in New York City in 2010. It is inspired by Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth* and Roman Polanski's film, *Rosemary's Baby* by the immersive dance theater company, Punchdrunk from England.

go of the expectation of being witnessed. This system of trusting that the audience can have their own experience while having performers gently persuade and suggest through physical communication is what I view as the democratic system of the immersive theater experience—both through the lenses of performers and audience.

In *Sleep No More*, the audience has to wear masks. I recall performing with the ambiguity of being unable to read the audience's reaction. Therefore, I had to trust in my peers and gauge the energy from both my peers and a somewhat elusive audience. My peers and I developed an innate and tacit communication between each other. For instance, I can tell when the performers encounter difficulty or a rough situation with the audience based on the performers' variations of weight sharing, touch, or facial expression. Through these experiences, I am immersed in reading the energy of the performers and audience and am prepared to come up with response and solution. I associate this malleability in measuring the performance situation to what colonized people do well in daily life. The colonized are constantly gauging various situations in order to survive.

After my performing experiences with *Sleep No More NYC*, where actual building spaces are the stage, it was interesting to create a work on a proscenium stage for this thesis research. Choreographing and dancing on a proscenium stage feels somewhat new to me. At times, I miss the space occupied by bookshelves, beds, rooms full of aroma, soil in a graveyard, and all of these tiny shared spaces with the audience that the immersive design team created for the sites. Whereas, a proscenium stage for dance is a genuinely open space and is constantly occupied by different dancing bodies. Often, there is a concrete separation between the performers' actual and performed identities, referred

to the “fourth wall” between performers and audience, and the frontal presentation, which affects how performers interact with each other.

Postmodern Dances on Proscenium Stage or Site-Specific Spaces

In contrast to immersive dance theater work, postmodern dance is derived from two distinct categories (among others). One stand comes from groups such as The Living Theater, whose works involve audience participation and often dealt with human emotions. The other stand comes from the Judson Dance group, where works like those of Trisha Brown were more analytical, conceptual, and architectural and often not about human emotions. In *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, Sally Banes (1987) claims that postmodern dance is a new pluralistic establishment that tolerates invention and welcomes change (p. 19). However, after working and performing in an immersive dance theater, postmodern dance does not feel as open as what Banes addresses. Unlike immersive dance theater works, postmodern dance for me feels at the other end of the visceral experience spectrum and often takes place on a proscenium stage.

Trisha Brown is a well-known postmodern dance choreographer whose work is often presented in site-specific spaces or on proscenium stages. In one such work, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), Brown works with the architecture of buildings by having dancers walking up and down the building as if the walls are the roads. One of Brown’s proscenium stage works, *Glacial Decoy* (1979), is a collaboration with visual artist Robert Rauschenberg (who created the set designs). The piece provides strong visual aesthetics, architectural movement design, and simplicity in space through choreographic structures.

Often, Brown's works are not about emotionality or portraying stories, but about abstraction, form, and precision. Her work demonstrates less about human emotionality and sensations, focusing more on analytically choreographed structures. I argue that the postmodern dance and theater works, such as *The Living Theater* have influenced the theatrical aesthetics of immersive dance theater, and analytical postmodern works from Judson Dance Theater, such as Brown and other artists have impacted the physical aesthetics of immersive dance theater.

How Postmodern Dance Shares Elements From Immersive Dance Theater

One particular artist, Faye Driscoll, magically combines postmodern dance and immersive dance theater experiences. Faye Driscoll's (2012) dance work, *You're Me*, performed by Driscoll and Jesse Zaritt in New York City had a similar essence to my research. Driscoll (2012) claims, "*You're Me* is a moving portrait of the impossible struggle to unhinge the palindromic loop of self and other." This particular work spoke to me artistically and personally.

You're Me started with Driscoll and Zaritt standing like statues while dressed in various fabrics and holding objects that would eventually, through the course of fifteen minutes, begin falling off and apart to the ground. Their stillness while standing allowed me to make decisions on where to look and what to listen to from the performers. The piece got chaotic and intense, there were paints and fruits flying and Driscoll and Zaritt showing off themselves to each other through vigorous dance movements. Toward the end of the piece, on the heels of a messy journey, I understood their need and desire to become and understand one another while staying true to themselves. It reminded me of

the democratic system of what *Sleep No More* is trying to create within a dream-like world. That sense of deep listening and willingness to stay in their own voices while transforming into each other tells stories and allows the audience to make their own choices on what to follow. Driscoll's work inspires me to continue exploring the democratic creative process.

Dancing Through Staging Selves and Others

I truly believe that there is magic that only happens on stage—whether it is on a proscenium stage or within constructed sites. The stage calls out another beast within performers. Sometimes, I wonder if the people on stage are secret twin sisters who the performers have met previously in their imagination. I am intrigued when people transform into the “altered” personalities on stage while conversing with their actual identities. How can performers tell their truth while honoring the created structure in a performance setting?

As a performer, I want to honor the tasks from the choreographer and yet be allowed the freedom to become both myself and the performed characters. In the case of my creative research for the thesis, I am both a performer and a choreographer. I want to use this creative research as a way to honor my intuitions while listening to my collaborator, dance artist, Yebel Gallegos.

One of my primary goals for this creative research is to examine whether the proscenium stage can trigger a similar effect as immersive dance theater works. Personally, as a performer in immersive work, it is easier to negotiate, communicate, and modify with the other performers and audience when the performing space is intimate.

Often, the close distance allows the kinesthetic awareness that keeps everyone in the space sensible and accountable. However, there are exceptions. Those exceptions create tension; and tension-solving is what living and dancing democracy is all about.

In my creative research, Gallegos and I attempt to portray a literal representation of specific characters based on the imperial Japanese period in Taiwan. Different characters included Japanese soldiers and Taiwanese comfort women (Figure 1). By portraying the most “literal” and at times “stereotypical” characters, we as dancers need to go through transformations each time. When portraying some characters in particular, we must communicate with ourselves in order to portray our actual and performed identities at that moment.

The act of portraying characters is inspired by Erving Goffman, a Canadian-American sociologist who developed a theory on everyday life performances. His microsociological theory was my initial inspiration in making and examining the relationships between a performers’ self and performed identities. Sociologists before him mainly focused on large sociological scale work, such as population and social structure. However, Goffman was one of the first sociologists who examined the microsociological behaviors in human’s everyday life for his framework. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) analyzes the relationships between performance and life. One of his arguments is that we are all actors and dramaturges in real life scenarios and that there is no separation between the performed character and self—meaning we are all acting at any given moment.

According to Goffman’s (1959) theory, in our daily “performance,” there are

front stage, back stage, performers, breaking characters,¹¹ and so on. Humans are information seekers when in face-to-face interaction. The term *tactful inattention* refers to the phenomena that everyone works together to perform something in order to make the situation successful without imposing upon each other's space. For example, in *tactful inattention*, Goffman would argue that in a proscenium performance setting, the audience is performing audience-like behavior, sitting and being quiet once the house light goes to dark. However, I argue that *tactful inattention* looks much different when the act happens on stage, especially when a dance work employs the method of immersive dance theater.

Tactful inattention is useful for the performers when they are performing works, such as postmodern structural dance. It sets up an "I dance and you watch" scenario. I argue that the principle of *tactful inattention* does not work in my creative process. Due to the dynamics of the performers' self and performed identities, the performers constantly shift from one character to another. These constant shifting of identities is what Goffman (1959) called *impression management*. He argues that these stages of resetting characters are how people manage their profiles in daily life and at any given moment.

In my creative work, I utilize Goffman's principle of *impression management* as a tool to rehearse the dance. In my piece, Gallegos and I have to reset and restart our

¹¹ In Goffman's theory, when he mentions "front stage" which similarly refers when someone is on stage performing rehearsed interaction. Whereas, "back stage" which means when someone is off stage and preparing and rehearsing for the future interactions. He compares the daily interaction between people and performers in theater and argues that these two characters are the same. Hence, "breaking characters" means when someone performs things that are out of expectation, such as someone accidentally tooting during an interaction.

characters at different scenes. We are constantly managing our impressions based upon our assigned characters or personal choices at each moment on stage. In a way, we are given tasks to find the connections between the portrayed “twin” characters and themselves. For instance, in the duet about *Taiwanese former comfort women* in Scene 5, I act as a woman and Gallegos acts as a man. In order to correctly portray this historic event, I play the female role and Gallegos portrays the male role. Along with the emotions, in order to understand how the comfort women felt, I have to be vulnerable, transcending into their thoughts and tapping into the emotions that I have not been able to access when I am in an analytical postmodern dance piece.

As a result, the active participating and decision-making has helped me as a performer and choreographer to broaden and include multielements in creating. My past and current experience has given me the strength to keep immersing myself in the messiness of creating work and also honor the collision between the different dance forms and characters. The principles from postmodern dance, immersive dance theater, Taiwanese democracy, and Goffman’s (1959) theory sparked my interest in this creative research.

In my own journey, I believe that postmodern dance training is a foundation for democratic principles in voicing, whereas the immersive dance theater training is an exercise for community engagement. Taiwanese democracy is an inspiration for where the postmodern dance and immersive dance theater influences start to facilitate my creative research. Finally, Goffman’s (1959) theory is the reaffirmation of the freedom of choice to portray identities in a constructed society. Through these elements, in the next chapter, I will discuss my journey of rediscovering various characters.

Scenes	Gallegos	Bigelow	Title of the Scene
Scene 1	Slave	Occupier	Male Gaze Circling
Scene 2	Grandfather	Granddaughter	Funny
Scene 3	Owner	Occupied	Bleeding
Scene 4	Occupier	Civilian Worker	Walking
Scene 5	Men	Women	Duet (Comfort Women)
Scene 6	Japanese	Slave	Unison (Rebellion Killing)
Scene 7	Occupied	Gallegos	4 Facings & Reminiscent Phrase
Scene 8	Taiwanese	Japanese Soldier	Hugging
Scene 9	Corpus	Taiwanese	Burying

Figure 1: *Positionality and Character Chart*, by Ching-I Chang Bigelow, 2017

CHAPTER 4

DANCE DEMOCRACY: CREATIVE PROCESS

What does it mean to dance democracy? As I look at the Taiwanese history from Japanese Occupation to the present, the idea of democracy presents its importance to me. It offers a creative space where everyone is heard through diverse opinions. This creative space is for people to hold tension, honor fluid identities, and analyze multifaceted research questions. My choreographic and research interests are rooted in dance as a democratic force. These democratic ways of creating are what I call dance democracy. As a choreographer, I attempt to create a collaborative space where each individual is represented and where our identities can be fluid and transparent.

These facts, I argue, are results of being a Taiwanese artist who has the pleasure of tasting the freedom of choices while honoring the law; it is a choice I embrace every day. Hence, the idea of democratic collaboration is essential to my creative work. To facilitate the democratic system of working relationship in my creative research, I value the diverse voices and opinions both from my collaborator, Yebel Gallegos, and myself. I want to honor and democratize the inquiry of decision-making process through embodying these complex concepts.

In this creative work, I am specifically looking at the notions of enagement and oppression. What does it mean to dance through rage and oppressed emotions? What

does it take to get there without “acting” out those emotional stages? How can performers best honor their differences without forcing divisions of class, race, gender, and nationality on stage and in daily life while having the permission to access these vulnerable emotions? For instance, in *army of self*, Scene 4 investigates the relationship between occupier (Japanese authority) and civilian worker (Taiwanese civilian worker under Japanese surveillance). In that relationship, there are class, race, and nationality differences, as well as the performers’ self identities. Through portraying the different identities, Gallegos and I are constantly negotiating with ourselves and each other.

In the rehearsal process, we analyzed how embodying these characters could allow us to honor our own identities. The examination of the emotionality of enragement and oppression is reflected in my closer look at the social injustices during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, and at the same time in my present encounter with injustice as an immigrant in America. In order to move forward with any injustice, I feel the need to look back on the history, to learn and find ways to progress. The love, mistakes, rawness, and wisdom from my ancestors are constantly dancing with my present moment. Reading and encountering injustice inspires me to create work that expresses the importance of justice.

Processes

At the outset of the rehearsal process in June 2016, Yebel Gallegos, who is Mexican American, and I, Taiwanese, are the dancers of this creative work. The reason why I am in my own work is because I want to process these emotions—enragement and oppression. I believe in the power of embodiment and am interested to see, through

bodily portrayal of those feelings, what will appear as the final “product.” This work requires witnessing, experiencing, and asking the performers to go through vulnerable places in their hearts.

Simultaneously, as the choreographer of the piece, I ask and allow the creative research to keep finding its own journey and fruition. The performances are the continuation of the creative research. For instance, through each performance, we, the performers found something new each day to share. We also carried and allowed our daily emotions and memories to influence our performance quality.

The creative research is divided into two sections. The first section, Scene 1–4, focuses on oppression and my early impression of hearing my grandparents speak Japanese. The second section, Scene 5–9, highlights enragement and the haunting and leftover feelings of the Japanese Occupation era. According to these experiences in the creative process, in the following paragraphs, I dissect the creative work by analyzing these two sections through Kristeva and Schechner’s theoretical frames.

These scenes are not clearly separated, meaning each scene is overlapping and a continuation from one to the other. Some scenes’ transitions might be more direct than the others. My intention here is not to distinguish the clear line between each scene but morph them in various ways. Along with the desire to make a short and precise piece, I want to see how I can make my point in a dance work in a more efficient and effective way. I can foresee this piece being an evening length performance, but for the goal of this thesis, I want the risk of an out-of-breath experience, both for the performers and witnesses. I argue that through the act of portraying and embodying a multiplicity of identities, the performers can practice the ideas of transcendence and transformation

through an *army of self*.

Supporting this process are three vital and creative elements: prop, projection, and music. First, the prop is made out of 12 Ikea shower curtains threaded with black hair ties into a giant rectangular flag-like white cloth. The white cloth represents time, boundary, memory, last breath, and a white cloth for the dead. The black hair ties represent the threads from surgery and the leftover scars from the histories and memories. Second, historic images are projected on the cyclorama on the stage. Third, the music is composed by my husband, Jeremy Bigelow, who is a trained musician. He recorded the beginning of the sound score while riding the Taiwanese High Speed Rail, capturing field recordings of the local announcer. In fact, I contrasted the modern train sound with projections of a steam train from Taiwan's agricultural past. He also composed original music and edited the sound score based on the trajectory of the dance piece. These added elements further enhanced the piece, while allowing it to arrive in a cohesive state.

Notions of Oppression and Enragement

Oppression

The first section of the dance work, Scene 1–4, addresses the importance of utilizing oppression as a force of creative process. I am only discussing my journey through this process because I cannot truly speak for Gallegos. This first section begins by using Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theories to examine the power structure of colonizer and colonized, and by utilizing Susan Sontag's lens on pain, more specifically looking at how people can become habitually numb to witnessing others' pain. In addition, this section looks at how humor is the "way out" for the

Taiwanese people in order to survive pain during colonization. Last, through Julia Kristeva's theory on foreigner and native, I examine my own lived experience in America as an immigrant to reflect on the relationship between colonized and colonizer.

When colonized, the body is disciplined by the colonizer. Similar to a colonized body, a dancer's body is disciplined by different dance regimes. Foucault (1975) examines the power dynamics to the status of the body in *Discipline and Punish: The British of the Prison*. He explains the power dynamics in the prison systems in Britain. He writes, "The classical age discovered that body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body—to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces" (p. 136). I utilize Foucault's idea of the body as the object and the target of power to examine Scene 1: *male gaze circle* in my dance. It explores the relationship between a slave and an occupier. The slave, in this context, represents the Taiwanese people who had to work for the Japanese government as farmers and were treated as slaves. In constructing this section, we use the power of witnessing a body in a small space similar to an immersive dance theater experience. For instance, in a small square, I witness Gallegos' body in space improvising. We question what a disciplined body is and what the distribution of power between witness and witnessed is under the concentrated space and intense attention.

Scene 1 is an example of the power dynamics of the body. I am the occupier and Gallegos is the slave. I walk in circles around Gallegos, retrieving from memories, my body here indicates the power of time. My walking in a circle is the ritual of ceremony and memory of my grandfather. Circles are vital and represent the circulation of birth,

death, and reincarnation in Taiwanese culture and Taoist belief. I adopt the idea of a circle as a way to connect my presence to my grandfather's past. In a way, the circle represents the doorway to guide me to the journey of revealing. I am walking into my grandfather's memories, and my body is the medium that carries my grandfather's knowledge. As the speed of the walking increases, I transform my character into an occupier. I am an occupier executing my power by taking over the space. With my eyes actively witnessing Gallegos, I turn walking into running centripetally to decrease the distance between the occupier and the slave. The increased time and decreased space allows the feeling of intrusion to intensify the tension in between these two characters.

This intrusive feeling guided the contact between Gallegos and me. The occupier is not at a distance but inside the slave's comfort zone, oppressing, manipulating, pulling, and throwing the slave forcefully around. The violent physicality portrays dominance and the helplessness of the oppressed. Scene 1 ends with the occupier collecting the mess in order for the next story to be told.

To be honest, I have been resistant to dancing in Scene 1. Being the role of occupier is extremely hard for me due to my background as a Taiwanese. Taiwanese were constantly occupied by others. I truly believe that colonized personalities are often gentle, flexible, and indirect due to the survivor's instinct to accommodate the colonizer. Whereas, being the occupier, I have to be constantly practicing direct bombardment and conducting movements toward Gallegos that might seem aggressive to the witness. I resist the violent and harsh physicality and mentality for a while. It is not until the process is being brought to stage, that I start to take on the power and dare to yield to the ferocity of the occupier.

Similarly to Foucault's theory about the disciplined body in power structure, Spivak (2010) uses one's first learned language in *Nationalism and the Imagination* to explain the power structure between colonizer and colonized. She argues that the European's history has ingrained ideas on the division of public and private spaces that the colonized's first learned language would not have had. The colonized's first learned language helps educate their infants to negotiate the public and the private. She states, "Language has a history; it is public before our births and will continue so after our deaths. Yet every infant invents it and makes it the most private thing, touching the very interiority of the heart" (p. 84). For instance in Scenes 3 and 4, I intentionally want to portray two characters shortly one after the other to play up the performers' abilities to morph quickly from one character to the next. It represents the idea of speaking in between two languages, shifting from first native to a second learned language quickly.

In addition, I am interested in when the colonized are not allowed to speak in their native language, what emotions would one associate with the inability to feel at home. Many feelings of discomfort were revealed during these two scenes. An image of the Japanese beheading indigenous Taiwanese people often appeared in my mind during these sections. I see decapitation as a metaphor for the silencing of the Taiwanese people who have been denied access to the right of dissent and their voices of the opposition.

An example that demonstrates the power structure that causes conflicts and oppression in my dance is in Scene 3: *bleeding*, where Gallegos acts as the owner and I act as the occupied. We use inspirations, such as the beheading of Seediq indigenous people from the Wusha Incident and Fenby's (2004) quote about Japanese soldiers who were competing with each other about the numbers of beheading Chinese people (see

Chapter 2). We discuss the psychological states of both the owner and the occupied, and how through familiarity with these emotions, people can become dehumanized characters.

I argue that pain often causes oppression. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2003) claims that shock can eventually wear off and pain becomes familiar. One can become habituated to horror in real life and through viewing certain images (p. 82). For instance, Japanese soldiers' beheading actions may horrify themselves at first; but eventually, they became habituated. The process of transforming into dehumanized characters must be daunting for the Japanese soldiers. Nonetheless, in each performance during the play of the occupied character, the image of the beheaded people would occur in my mind. I cannot help but empathize with the decapitated dead.

In order to survive the pain from periods of colonization, I argue that humor helped Taiwanese people live. Even though Taiwanese people have lived through many faces of suffering, people tend to be more optimistic. As an example, Scene 2, titled *funny*, demonstrates the tender relationship between grandfather and granddaughter. It also serves as fresh breath after the intense Scene 1. For the process of Scene 2, Gallegos and I discuss what composes the characteristics of a grandfather. We come up with various ideas, such as tiredness of the body, wise thinking, caring, and loving the younger generation. We then embody the elements and go through the same process for the character of granddaughter. In the performance, I am a granddaughter in Scene 2. I recall my memories of being a tiny ballerina and a naughty granddaughter who sometimes hid my grandfather's glasses. Hence, the giddy and balletic movements are part of the representation of the memory.

In addition, I argue that the colonized's feeling of oppression corresponds to my lived experience in America as a foreigner. In Scene 4, Gallegos acts as occupier and I as civilian worker. This section is a pivotal point in the piece. It represents the transitional period from the Assimilation Period (同化) in 1930–1937 to the Imperialization Period (皇民化) in 1937–1945 in Taiwan. I am portraying the civilian worker. It is said that during the transition to the Imperialization Period, many Taiwanese people were encouraged to work in higher positions for the imperial Japanese government, such as becoming civilian workers. My image of a Taiwanese-Japanese civilian worker is all about precision and perfection. In order to please the colonizer, the colonized has to make extra effort to accomplish the task through perfection. Hence, I channel the stiff, segmented, and precise movements in my exploration. The image of a clock ticking often emerges in my mind during this section.

Through obedience and self-erasure, the colonized empower the colonizers. The colonized's situation reminds me of Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French philosopher and feminist, and her argument about the foreigner:

...the foreigner has no self. Barely an empty confidence, valueless, which focuses his possibilities of being constantly other, according to others' wishes and to circumstances. I do what they want me to, but it is not "me"—"me" is elsewhere, 'me' belongs to no one, 'me' does not belong to "me,"... does "me" exist? (Kristeva, 1991, p. 8).

I understand Kristeva's statement strongly due to my lived experience as a foreigner in the present life and civilian character in the dance. The sense of self is muted for the purpose of survival.

Enragement

The rage of the oppressed is never the same as the rage of the privileged. One group can change their lot only by changing the system; the other hopes to be rewarded within the system. (hooks, 2006, p. 30)

The second section of the dance piece focuses on the notion of enragement. I will explain how I use Richard Schechner's *Rasaboxes* methods to process the emotion of rage. In addition, I apply Anna Halprin's (2000) dance as a healing art to examine the process of enragement. Last but not least, I argue that the processing of enragement is vital for this dance piece. It helps form, transform, and transcend one's identity through the past, present, and future.

Rasaboxes

I understand the world through my physical embodiments of emotion. Yet, it is seldom that dancers are asked to process emotions through movements in physical practices. In order to get to a heightened stage, Gallegos and I improvised our rage for an hour. This improvisational structure is inspired by Richard Schechner's *Rasaboxes* exercise. In *Rasaesthetics*, Schechner (2001) explains that *rasa* is a word that originates from India. It is the sensation and emotion when one sees, touches, and tastes food. It is experiential and sensuous and fills space, whether it's our surroundings or inner space (p. 29).

In *Rasaboxes*, there are nine boxes with eight different emotions with one box left empty in the middle. It can take many hours or days to complete the regular *Rasaboxes* workshop. It is usually open-ended. The steps require the participants to tape nine rectangular grids on the floor and define each *rasa* by writing inside the boxes with chalk

or verbal expressions. It is a form of physical theater improvisation. It ends with reflection followed by silence. I adapted the *Rasaboxes* exercise and only focus on embodying the emotion of anger/rage (*raudra*). Gallegos and I imagine that the whole room is a giant *rasabox* of rage and we limited the exercise to an hour. Within this hour, we explored answers to the questions like: what is rage, what is the trigger of it, how long can we stay in rage, what can come after exploring rage for an hour, and what do we do with the leftover feeling?

After the one hour exploration of rage, I am clear about my role as a slave in Scene 6. I discover that rage can be presented in so many different ways, such as the invisible rage inside the mental thinking, the unheard roaring, and the invisible conflict in the inner self. In addition, there are repeatedly physically pulling and pushing of each other until the body can no longer resist or pretend; facial expressions that occur only when the physical body cannot take actions anymore; risk-taking to edges of the movements that might cause some damage or injury in the body.

For instance, Scene 6, asks the performers to draw from their lived experiences and tap into the raw stages of their metaphysical selves. I am interested in seeing dancers arriving at a state when the mind cannot think anymore and the body takes over the thinking—physical thinking body. I believe when people are at an extremely vulnerable state, they can express something that closer to authenticity. I witnessed my grandfather experiencing that authenticity of rage before his passing. Hence, it is important that Gallegos and I go through the raging state in this process to arrive at a closer embodiment of his authenticity.

Healing

What were the comfort women's experiences? Yoshiaki Yoshimi (2000) in *Comfort Women*, reports that in the comfort houses, each comfort woman had her own small and dirty room where the ceiling of the room was open. The purpose of the open ceiling was to let the soldiers have easy access where they could come in and out without waiting. That sense of anticipating and waiting in the comfort house's filthy room illustrated the pain of the comfort women, as well as the everlasting pain from the Japanese soldiers' repetitive bombardment on the women's bodies. Reading this makes me physically, mentally, and spiritually exhausted.

In Scene 5, Gallegos plays the role of a man, specifically an imperial Japanese soldier; and I play the role of a Taiwanese comfort woman. This moment in the dance is when all the mess from that history explodes and is revealed. This part of the dance is when the historical violence against woman, the racial conflicts, and class distinctions are reenacted. Each night during this section of the dance, I danced these women's sufferings and enragement and hoped to come closer to understanding how they felt at those moments of sexual abuse.

Scene 5 is the most challenging scene in my opinion. It asks so much of the performers' vulnerability, whether it's the victim or the accuser. In the dance, the white cloth (the prop) becomes the blurring boundary that separates the world of victimship and ownership. The fact that Gallegos can quickly step into the "comfort room" shows how easy it can be to violate human respect and rights. The push and pull of the physicality in between these two characters represents the conflict and violence that we seldom see in life or on stage.

Can one heal from traumatic experiences? What does it take to enter the healing process? I believe that dance is a healing art form. Dance cultivates resilience, community, support, and many factors that can produce positive healing energy in a person. In *Dance as a Healing Art*, Anna Halprin (2000) reflects on her teaching experiences. It was apparent to her that the movement experience is connected to feelings and generates hidden and unknown emotions and images. We dance our emotion and expression through movements. When these dances are connected to our loves, they bring dramatic and unexpected release and a desire to make changes to our lives and a reason to live (p. 13). I believe that in experiencing emotions through physicality, one begins to heal.

In reading Halprin (2000) and researching the Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation's healing services to the former Taiwanese comfort women, I can see how art can be utilized as a source of healing. For instance, the Taiwanese comfort women have access to art classes where they make masks and utilize other media to express themselves. Through making masks, they build an identity that they "dream," their identity before their traumatic experiences. Art in this way gives hope and perspective by using the present process to sift through the traumatic past and inspire to build a better future.

Halprin (2000) claims that the "Life/Art Process" is when we connect our dances to our real life stories. As we keep diving deeper into our exploration of our life experience, our art expression expands (p. 20). As I continue to bring forward my ancestral stories with me, I come closer and closer to understanding my own creative research.

Realization and Self-Reflection

The goal of the dance piece toward the end is to diminish movements and allow the performers to have time to self-reflect through simple movements and taste the leftover sensations in them. The final scenes have a feeling of deterioration where the work crumbles into past history, releases the pain, and continues to find ways of healing. For example, in Scene 7, Gallegos's role is the occupied and I act as Yebel. In some ways, we are both physically and mentally vulnerable. This scene is an act of rest and self-reflection.

Another example of self-reflection plays out in Scene 8, Gallegos acts as Taiwanese (my grandfather). I act as a Japanese soldier by portraying a Japanese soldier's trauma from fighting wars and their possible regrets. Regardless of the wars, the Japanese soldiers had no choice but to conduct brutal atrocities on the Taiwanese. I want this section to be a section where the Japanese soldiers have voices to forgive themselves and others in the wars. In the ending part of the piece, I, as a Japanese soldier, embrace Gallegos, my grandfather as a calling for peaceful rest and forgiveness from the past.

Discovery

For the preparation of the practices on stage, I had to imagine my grandparents, comfort women, Seediq people, and my Taiwanese identity. I had to go back to the memory of witnessing my grandfather's enragement when he had dementia. This is a piece that requires more mental preparation than physical warmth. As a mental preparation, I adopt my learned practice, *Psychological Kinesphere*, from Integrated Movement Studies. I imagine my surroundings are constantly altered through different

scenes. In *Making Connections* Peggy Hackney (2002) states, “Kinesphere is defined psychologically by the space the mover senses is hers or his, the space s/he effects” (p. 223). *Psychological Kinesphere* is derived from *Physical Kinesphere* in Laban Movement Analysis. It’s about the practice of mindset—the *Psychological Kinesphere* is pronounced or diminished based on the surroundings. For instance, in an elevator, most people’s immediate reaction to *Physical Kinesphere* is to shrink and not take up as much space. However, when a person in the elevator practices the *Psychological Kinesphere*, she or he amplifies her or his presence by thinking that she or he is the elephant in the jungle, grounded and taking as much space as possible in the mind. The practice of *Psychological Kinesphere* before going on stage assists me to see the stage differently and grounds my stance.

This piece also requires recuperation and reflection from the emotional outrage and physical bombardment. I make sure that I have moments of silence as I cool down to reflect and digest what happens in each practice run on stage. Also, journaling in the mornings through the creative research has helped me to clarify my voice as an artist and researcher. The act of documenting the process is important. It allows me to continue moving forward while looking back to the journal for self-reflection.

For me, the performance of this research is a continuation of the research. This piece will continue to evolve through time. It is not a finished product but a pathway for my future investigation in my dance research, such as developing accessible practices for people who are underserved, focusing on the embodying emotionality of foreignness, oppression, and enagement. This research has also made an impact on my teaching, as it helps me to have more tolerance for my students and understand that they all have their

own battles to fight. It teaches me to notice, listen, and reflect on art and life.

To sum up, it is revealing to see performers not only dance the assignment (assigned choreography) but bring their multiple selves to fruition, whether it is on stage or in daily life. It is those moments that the performers start to dance democracy through their *army of self*. This continuous transforming in a democratic working and dancing system asks the *army of self* to reflect on the past, consider the present, and ponder the future. In the next chapter, I will explain what *army of self* is and the journey to discover and define it.

CHAPTER 5

LANDSCAPES OF STRANGERS: INTO THE FUTURE

Every person belongs to a set of themes that connects each to lineages of experiences, values, beliefs, practices, and theories... Life themes shared across generations and cultures lead to landscapes and also forge friendships among teachers, students, and colleagues—living, dead, unborn. (Spirn, 1998, p. 195)

Strangers

There are many strangers that dwell in me; some strangers come in and out of my life, and some decide to follow me for an entire lifetime. For instance, when visiting Taiwan over the summers, I am a stranger who has drunk the “western ink” (喝過洋墨水的人), which is a Taiwanese saying for when someone has studied abroad and has been westernized. In America, I am that shy Asian lady who is foreign. As a dancer in an academic institution, I am the artistic one who does not fit in academia. Through my lived experience as a foreigner, I have encountered many of my strangers by portraying different ideas of foreignness. It is a strange world in which we live in and yet the world is only going to become stranger due to realities of globalization.

Julia Kristeva and Homi K. Bhabha both address otherness in their theoretical works. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva (1991) explains that performing strange roles is a way to discover the innate self that we do not often discover in our daily lives. It is when the body, energy, space, and time are pressed against each other that all the

emotions and half truths and the “authentic” self is being revealed. Similar discussion about revealing of self, In *Nation and Narrative*, Bhabha (1990) applies Kristeva’s statement, “The borders of the nation are constantly faced with a double temporality: the process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification (the performative)” (p. 304). Through the lens of history or culture these doubled or multiple identities can be constantly played out in any interactions.

Third Space Theory

Through all these strange, complex, and at times confusing lived experiences, I stumble upon Third Space theory, which refers to the acceptance of cultures clashing that occurs over generations. For instance, Homi K. Bhabha, is Indian born, studied in Oxford, England, and eventually became a British citizen. Through his development of the Third Space theory, he claims that the first space is home culture, the second space is the colonial culture that is enforced on the colonized, and third space creates the articulation and enunciation that the second space does not allow for colonized people. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) explains that Third Space theory is a postcolonial theory about the uniqueness and hybridity of each person’s identity through language or enunciation. It incorporates the shared and accumulated knowledge through intergenerational community. He states:

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. (p. 54)

This hybridity of the *third space* creates an imaginative space and transforms people's identity through human and historic memories.

In *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha (1990) also speaks to my desire to look back to the Taiwanese history to understand my current immigrant character in America. He claims that a nation is a soul and a spiritual principle. One dwells in the past, which possesses the commonality of a rich legacy of histories; and in the present, which is the present context. The past and present desire to live together (p. 19). It is when we recognize that as human beings, we are people with reason and morality; culture and race are only constructs of society but not our deep-rooted spirit of being humans.

Community Engagement: Engaging Our Strangers and Others' Strangers

I have found a similarity between Taiwanese colonized characters and my journey of redefining my own identity in America. I have discovered that the colonized character and I share the process of assimilation, imperialization (acculturated to the current dominate culture), and decolonization of one's identity.¹² This process of becoming cannot be constituted by only oneself, it involves the surrounding community to voice, adopt, surrender, and trust the transformation. Mary Jane Collier (2014) who is the advocate for intercultural praxis in *Community Engagement*, stresses that places can become a site of cultural advocacy where enacted connection and performance of ritual engagement and tradition take place (p. 9). Those places are the foundation where people find a sense of belonging—a set of themes that connects us to lineages of experiences,

¹² See Chapter 1 for Japanization through assimilation and imperialization period.

beliefs, practices, and theories.

If the world is to continue to weave together, we ought to accept the collective intelligence within oneself and others. The idea of welcoming multiple strangers to dwell at home with oneself is going to be an important process. In *At Home with Race*, Viet Thanh Nguyen (2008) claims that even after leaving a home that has shaped us for better or for worse, the home we find will provide not only chances for love and new futures, but also the opportunity to inflict pain and to repeat our forebears' mistakes (p. 1563). We all live through memories and histories that were shared with us directly or indirectly. It is through those encounters and sufferings that one starts to experience the grace and love of personal transformation.

Amy Cutler's (2003) painting, *Army of Me* inspires the painting you see as Figure 2. I modified her painting to reconstruct my thesis concept, *army of self*, where one carries an army of multiple characters and possibilities of "themselves" to be ready for any interaction. This was one of the central points of my creative piece, and also a personal life philosophy. Often when using the term "army," the immediate image that comes to mind is a unified and silent mass obeying a leader. I am deconstructing the word "army" by looking at the idea of unification in a different way. As human beings, we all have multiple selves and we are acting out our different selves based upon the situation and daily encounters. The idea of an "army of self" is to pronounce and remember that in each one of us, we have multiple possibilities in our "identity knapsack." By utilizing the concept of *army of self*, I rebuild the identity knapsack to create space for multiple selves. I redefine and reconstruct the idea of oppression, enagement and foreignness through the bodily research and the theories that emerge. I

want to see if the strangers within ourselves will start to honor and accept differences within ourselves and others. Will we start to challenge the outdated model of oppressive politics in regards to foreignness?

The result of the research is to bring awareness and respect to the unique differences in each individual. I hope to narrow the gap between dancing bodies and people of color to recognize the special differences that reside in all of us. Through this process, I hope to continue developing physical practices and performance research where postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and performance studies can interweave and assist my future research and contributions to the field of dance. My hope is to utilize these physical practices as segues to empower people of all backgrounds, such as creating spaces for people to embody resistance to oppression.

I would like to close this thesis with a quote from *Between The World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015). “You exist. You matter. You have value. You have every right to wear your hoodie, to play your music as loud as you want. You have every right to be you. And no one should deter you from being you. You have to be you. And you can never be afraid to be you” (p. 113). Through my grandfather’s dementia his fear of the colonized within him erupted in enragement. I witnessed him finding his voice, being as loud as he wanted, not allowing Japanese soldiers to deter him. He inspired me to make my *army of self* visible through actions. I hope that this thesis will inspire all people who dwell with complex identities to start unifying and empowering their *army of self* in order to progress and engage their lives in this messy world.

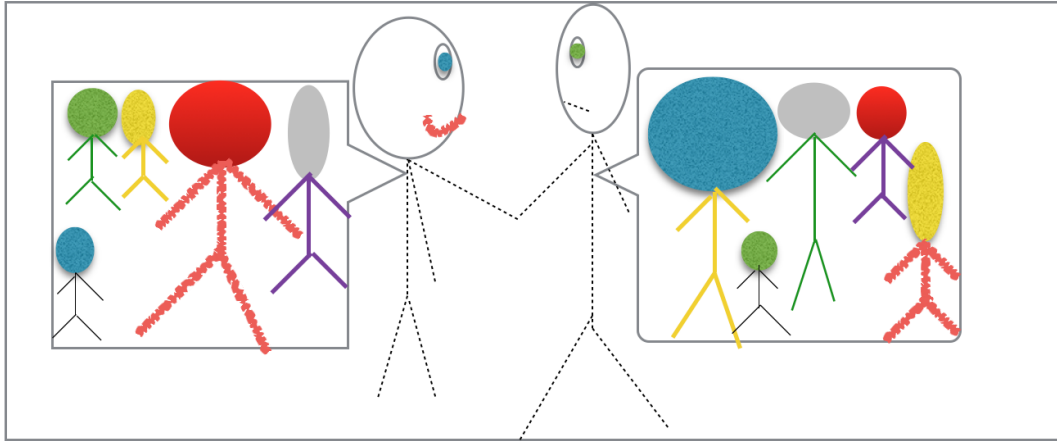


Figure 2: *Army of Self*, by Ching-I Chang Bigelow, 2017

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