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DEATH RITUALS AND
SURVIVAL ACTSHata Kanoko's "butoh action" and alternative
inter-Asian transnationalism*Chiayi Seetoo*

It was an evening in July, hot and sultry. I sat on one of the little stools scattered on the ground inside a tent, waiting for the first full dress rehearsal of *Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South's* (Ch. *Huangdie nantian*) butoh performance *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (Ch. *Zhugao zhi qi*, 2011).¹ The tent perched on the hillside of Losheng Sanatorium, a leper colony in the Xinzhuang district of New Taipei City, on the west fringe of Taipei, Taiwan. The live beating of cymbals, gongs, and drums before the curtain recalled the atmosphere of traditional temple festivities of this region.

The curtain rose, and the warm, cheerful din was swept away by a dark, deathly chill. Seven bodies powdered in white dangled upside down from a large net made of thick ropes hung over the entire stage. Their hair, also powdered white, spread out like dry grass. The sound of a wild thunderstorm came from the P.A. system, while the actual night wind continued to blow. A feeble shriek or two sounded from among the bodies, and they slowly lifted themselves up, and splayed back down, and up, and down. They wriggled through the ropes onto the stage floor, collapsed, struggled to get up, did backbends and stayed there, tripped, fell, and got up again, trembling. I later learned that this opening section is entitled "The Grand Catch of Fish" (Ch. *Da yu huo*). It imagines the lost bodies from tsunami-hit Fukushima on March 11, 2011, drifting across the ocean to the shore of the Losheng Sanatorium, to the tent stage pitched beside the memorial pagoda that houses the ashes of those who have passed away in Losheng since its founding in 1930.

Semiotic contradictions abound. Mourning and festivity coexist. These are characteristics of *Yellow Butterfly's* butoh, founded in Taiwan by Japanese butoh artist Hata Kanoko and fellow Taiwanese experimental artists in 2005. Having based her butoh activities in Taiwan since 2001, Hata Kanoko conceived her praxis as "butoh action" (Ch. *wuta xingdong*), which seeks to marry butoh and social engagement. In recent years, her "butoh action" has centered on a sustained engagement with the residents of Losheng and their protest against being forcibly moved by the city government for the construction of a new Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station and train depot. *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* was the third butoh performance at Losheng.

Body-Vessel was also the first time the performance went "abroad:" it was brought "back" to Japan, performing in Hiroshima on August 6 and 7, 2011, the anniversary of the A-bomb explosion with which the United States ended the Pacific War. Mirroring the explicit engagement

with contemporaneous issues and mourning across national borders, Yellow Butterfly attempted to bring their production physically across space and place. Although the association of butoh with Hiroshima and the A-bomb is a myth to be continually debunked,² Hata Kanoko consciously tapped into it. The fear and stigma attached to the memory of nuclear radiation in Hiroshima – and those contaminated by it – was brought alive and then anxiously dispelled in the recent crisis of nuclear radiation leakage from Fukushima’s tsunami-struck power plant. Hata Kanoko scheduled the site-specific performance in Losheng long before the tsunami happened. As the new crisis arose, she folded her later concern into the existing one by letting one filter the other, letting two groups of audiences experience this mutual filtering.

In this essay, I introduce Yellow Butterfly’s “butoh action” that fosters the potential for an alternative inter-Asian transnationalism. Carrying the legacy of Japanese postwar avant-garde performance, Hata Kanoko’s butoh politics and its critique of modernity comes up against the legacy of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan. As Losheng’s establishment and segregationist approach to patients of Hansen’s disease were the policy of the Japanese colonial government, the forced movement due to urban development is a reincarnation of state violence toward the socially marginalized and abjected internal Other. In what follows, I trace Hata Kanoko’s transnational journey and the aspects of regional history suppressed by dominant geopolitical discourse. I then discuss Hata Kanoko’s butoh aesthetics and the kind of transnationalism being generated.

Transnational journey and “butoh action”

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

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

Lin 2009c, 76

After this experience, Hata Kanoko reconceived her butoh as an “action” that sees no boundary between “art” and “life,” and since then has called her style of “butoh action.”

Hata Kanoko’s butoh has evolved from creating and performing as she had been doing in Japan, to developing themes and methods deriving from her experience in Taiwan. In 1999,

Hata Kanoko came to Taipei and taught a butoh workshop, presenting *The Dimensions of Worms* (Ch. *Chong de cun fa*) with Taiwanese workshop participants and musicians and poets from Japan. Later, she presented the classical Japanese literature-inspired *The Princess Who Loves Worms* (Ch. *Ku ai chong de gongzhu*). It was created with her butoh group El Jardin de Cuerpo and premiered in Sapporo, Hokkaido, before being presented in Kyoto and Taipei.³ She decided to stay in Taiwan in 2001, settling in the Shengkeng district of what is now New Taipei City. In 2002, she presented the work *The Pure Land of Collage* (Ch. *Pinzhuang jing tu*) in Taipei, the first piece she created after settling in Taiwan. This was the start of Hata Kanoko's exploration of the "Taiwanese body" through butoh (Lin 2009c, 76). The "Taiwanese body," as she explored in this piece, is one of *pinzhuang* or assemblage in collage, which not only reflects the hybrid nature of Taiwan's culture but also is seen in the creative and improvisational spirit of assembling materials from everyday life such as the makeshift (and often illegal) housing made by many of the less well-off. It is "like a body that keeps expanding in the same way housing built in atypical situations is assembled and linked together one after another, or, like a body that does not have a center, growing and spreading out endlessly like weeds" (Lin 2009c, 76–77). In 2003 she presented *Hell of the Eye* (Ch. *Mu zhi yu*), a performance that came out of her workshop with Body Phase Studio (Ch. Xin baodao shizhangzhe yituan), a theater troupe of blind performers formed in 2002. In 2005, she formed the first butoh troupe in Taiwan, Yellow Butterfly Flying to the South Butoh Troupe (Ch. *Huangdie nantian/ Kocyonanten wuta tuan*). Their first work, *King of Moments* (Ch. *Shunjian zhiwang*), was danced by Hata Kanoko and two Taiwanese dancers, Li Wei and Li Pei-chi, in Taipei, Tainan, and Kaohsiung (Pei-chi is a blind dancer from Hata Kanoko's previous collaborations). Yellow Butterfly maintains a fluid membership and performers vary in each production.

The legacy of Losheng Sanatorium and the protest movement

In 2005, Hata Kanoko began to participate in the Losheng movement, which lent a more distinct and sustained cause to her "butoh action." The legacy of Losheng Sanatorium traces the historical relationship between Taiwan and Japan and the lasting biopolitical violence in the name of modern hygiene, and later urban development. Because Losheng harbors this history of oppression under colonial legacy in addition to the present-day development ethos, Hata Kanoko was inspired to reflect on the ideology and effects of modernity and Japanese imperialism, which further informed her butoh praxis.

Established in 1930, Losheng yuan ("Losheng" literally means "Happy Life") was founded under Japanese colonial rule of Taiwan (1895–1945). In 1934, the Japanese government implemented a Leprosy Prevention Law in Taiwan that sanctioned the government's segregation and even arrest of those infected with the disease. The segregationist approach taken by the Japanese government followed the lead of other nations at the time. What fueled these stringent measures of quarantine and even extermination of leprosy (patients were treated with sterilization and abortion, even though the disease is not genetic) was in part the ideology of maintaining the status of a modern, civilized nation. Contemporary discourses at the time frequently deemed the existence of leprosy "uncivilized." The first director of Losheng yuan, Kamikawa Yutaka called the high number of leprosy patients in Japan (including its colonies) a "national shame," compared to other "civilized" nations where leprosy was almost nonexistent. It was all the more intolerable because Japan had made impressive progress since the Meiji Reforms of the 1860s to become one of the three most powerful nations in the world (W. Chen 2001, 30–31).

After World War II, the Chinese Nationalist government, which took over the governance of Taiwan, continued the Japanese segregation policy until 1962. Although the law regarding segregation was eventually lifted, social discrimination persisted and it was difficult for the patients

to re-assimilate into mainstream society. Many of Losheng's patients in fact had come to rely on the sanatorium for the specialized medical care it could provide and chose to stay in what they regarded as their "home." They were free to go outside for needs and errands but still endured stigmatization and discrimination. It was not until the 1990s that Losheng stopped taking new patients.⁴

While the words "segregation" and "sanatorium" conjure images of cold isolation in a closed institution, the current environment of Losheng is actually quite the opposite. The leper colony stretches up a hill to form a vast green campus where the residents can move around in the open air. Over the years, they have cultivated their own yards, grown plants, formed supportive neighborhoods, and built a sense of community in the traditional ground-level housing that combines Japanese and Taiwanese architectural styles.

Whereas Losheng was surrounded by farmland at the remote fringe of Taipei at its inception, the expansion of the Taipei metropolis has brought growing commerce and population to the area, increasing the demand for new, fast public transportation. In 1994, Losheng was chosen as the site for a new MRT station and train maintenance depot. The residents were neither formally informed nor consulted. In fact, from an engineering perspective, Losheng is poorly sited for such facilities, as the vast hill on which it was built would need to be flattened to make way for the maintenance depot. In 2002, construction began, forcing a large group of residents to be moved hastily and stay in temporary housing for over two years. The issue attracted the attention of various human rights groups, students, scholars, and architects in 2003, and they began to petition for preservation of the site or an alternative construction plan. The residents of Losheng also formed their own organization to protest against the forced relocation. Many street demonstrations took place and artists like Hata Kanoko staged performances to support the movement.⁵ In September 2005, Hata Kanoko presented a solo performance as part of the artist-initiated series of performances in Losheng Sanatorium to support its residents' protest movement.⁶ In 2006, Hata Kanoko presented her first evening-length butoh performance in Losheng, *The Beauty of Nature* (Ch. *Tianran zhi mei*), followed by *Fleur du Mal* (Ch. *E zhi hua*) in 2010, *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* in 2011, *A Ghost Festival March to the Underworld and Back* (Ch. *Losheng zhongyuan ji*) in 2013, and *Ghost Circus* (Ch. *Youling maxi tuan*) in 2014.⁷ In 2015 and 2016, Hata Kanoko and Yellow Butterfly extended their action to the Orchid Island off the southeast coast of Taiwan in support of the anti-nuclear movement by performing *Flying Fish Circus* (Ch. *Feiyu maxi tuan*).⁸

Death rituals and survival acts

Barrel Woman (Ch. *Zun nü*)

A live musician plays buoyant, jazzy tunes on the electric bass. Two men in hemp cloaks (following Taiwanese funeral customs) carry a big wooden barrel onto the stage, leave it at the center, and go offstage. One hand slowly reaches out of the barrel; the palm swims in the air, wiggling like a fish. Suddenly, the fingers curl up and freeze – the fish has turned into a claw. Then the "barrel woman" stands up from inside the barrel. First, she lifts her clothes to cover her face and shows her belly, its flesh shaking as if she were doing some kind of titillating belly dancing. Then she jumps onto the rim of the barrel, squatting and protruding her buttocks (wearing only a white thong) toward the audience. She stretches her legs sideways and switches between stretching out and folding in her legs. Then she climbs up to stand on the rim of the barrel, doing all kinds of contorted, whimsical, and often shaky moves, like balancing on one foot and making faces that look like she is laughing and crying at the same time – as if she is ridiculing the world around her but also deeply lost in her own world.



Figure 38.1 Hata Kanoko as “Barrel Woman” (Zunnü 樽女) in *Body-Vessel of the Priestess* (Zhugao zhiqi 祝告之器, 2011), photograph by You-Wei Chen.

Body-Vessel of the Priestess, the third performance Hata Kanoko staged in Losheng, importantly articulates her approach to her butoh body. Her intent is to recall the history and entities (the past lives) invisible (or forgotten) to the living, and to demonstrate the paradox of death rituals as survival acts through an absurd mixture of Japanese and Taiwanese folk practices (an interest she continues to elaborate in later works). The compound phrase *zhugao* 祝告 refers to ancient designations for “priest(ess).” *Qi* 器 means “vessel” or “container,” invoked to suggest the kind of body Hata Kanoko’s butoh is working toward. To her, the butoh dancer’s body should be empty like a vessel or even a “corpse” to allow other substances to fill it – in this case to allow “dead spirits” to “possess” the body. In particular, Hata Kanoko draws from the ancient priestess (*miko*) in the Japanese tradition in reflection on her own female corporeality (Hata Kanoko 2011; Yu 2011).⁹

This concept of body as an empty vessel for the dead also harbors a historical-political consciousness of transnational dimension. *Body-Vessel* continues the idea in her previous works in creating a temple festival that pays tribute to the dead. In *Fleur du Mal*, the dead range from all the Losheng residents who have passed away over the years and their protest movement to the long dead, unknown fighters in the historic conflict between Okinawa and Taiwan that connects to Japan’s imperialist history. In *Body-Vessel*, the “festival” pays tribute to the Losheng patients of different nationalities, Taiwanese, Chinese mainlanders, Korean, Japanese, and Okinawans who passed away during the Japanese occupation and who no one commemorates, as well as the Fukushima residents who died in the 2011 tsunami.

Actions drawn from Japanese and Taiwanese death rituals, temple festivals, and funeral practices appear throughout *Body-Vessel*. The “barrel” (a container) out of which the “Barrel Woman” (Hata Kanoko) crawls makes reference to a past practice in rural Japan where old people kept themselves in large barrels (like coffins) while they starved to death in order to enable younger villagers to survive on limited food. Moreover, some Koreans in Losheng were buried with Japanese rituals against their will (Seetoo 2011b). In the episode “Bamboo and Sparrow” (Ch. *Zhu yu que*), dancer Hsu Ya-hung performs a precarious balancing act on a thick piece of

bamboo hung in midair above the stage in the tradition of Japanese *geino* (entertainment), as seen in old-fashioned circus and temple festivals. Without a balancing rod, Hsu slowly walks back and forth between the two ends of the bamboo, trembling, performing tricks, her body powdered all white, her face dead-smiling. The background music first plays an old Taiwanese song, “Flower in a Rainy Night” (Ch. *Yu ye hua*); the sorrowful tune laments a disheartened woman who is like “a flower beaten down by the rain but that no one sees.” Later, the music changes to an old Mandarin song, “The Story of the Small Town” (Ch. *Xiaocheng gushi*); the sweet female voice praises the goodness of the small town, inviting outsiders to be its guests and make a visit.¹⁰ According to Hsu, who has long been involved in the Losheng movement, the two songs are favorites of the senior residents.

The section “Filial Daughters” (Ch. *Xiaonü*) features two female dancers performing a kind of pole dancing that draws on a Taiwanese funeral practice. In many Han Chinese funeral customs in Taiwan, people hire “filial daughters” to perform crying, often in hyperbolic fashion, as a way to display the filial piety of the children of those passed away. It has also been a custom in Taiwan to hire pole dancers to “entertain” the dead and those attending the funeral. Hata Kanoko incorporated pole dancing in her *butoh* after coming to Taiwan. She is attracted by its alignment with her persistent concern for survival, particularly the affinity to her own existence as a female performer. She makes reference to the history of some female *butoh* dancers, including Hijikata’s dancers, performing at strip clubs as a way to make a living.¹¹ Thus, Hata Kanoko is tapping into desperate means of survival as sometimes the only option for females caught within the economy of patriarchal consumption. The pole dancing Hata Kanoko adopts from Taiwanese customs embodies the tripartite terms of survival, female corporeality, and spectacle of the death ritual. It is a spectacular act particular to the melancholy and absurdity of specific female experiences at the liminal site between life and death.

Beyond Hijikata towards alternative inter-Asian transnationalism

Some of the Losheng residents stated that seeing the tightly curled hands and contorted posture that Hata Kanoko performs onstage made them think of their own infected bodies and pain (Seetoo 2011a). In conceiving his *butoh*, Hijikata Tatsumi had sought inspiration from the states of the “Other” of modernity – Japanese rural farmers, the landscape and atmosphere of Tohoku, pre-modern folk practices, the children, the women, the disabled, the aged, etc.¹² While Hata Kanoko’s *butoh* inherits the discourse, politics, and performance of *butoh*’s critique of modernity – most strongly from Hijikata – she also moves from experimenting with her own bodily states and appearances to actual engagement with the social. Her method is to directly confront the struggles in real life (Seetoo 2011b).

In *Yellow Butterfly*’s works, Japanese allusions and visual aesthetics are blended with Taiwanese references and practices, which are further refracted through the use of *butoh*’s irony, humor, darkness, contradictions, and metamorphosis. While they echo characteristics of transnational migratory practices and aesthetic expressions, what distinguishes Hata Kanoko from most European and North American based discussions of migrant transnationalism is that as a solo *butoh* artist from Japan, she represents not so much a migrant community negotiating with inclusion/exclusion in the receiving country as an individual tapping into and invigorating a regional transnational network of experimental theater artists who share her concerns for social justice. Moreover, the direct confrontation with the struggles of real life with which Hata Kanoko distinguishes herself from Hijikata’s *butoh* developed when she moved outside of Japan. This movement, too, traces a certain regional legacy while fostering new praxis. Lin Yu-Pin has pointed out that the post-Meiji interest in and movement back towards “Asia” as exemplified by postwar Japanese

avant-garde artists such as Kara Juro and Situation Theater (Jp. *Jokyo Gekijo*), and Osuka Isamu and the butoh troupe Byakkosha shares similar concerns with Hijikata's interest in "Tohoku," that is as a geographical projection as a strategy of critiquing Japanese modernity.¹³ In part, Hata Kanoko's move outside of Japan to the Philippines and then Taiwan can be understood in light of this legacy of spatial and aesthetic movement "from the center to the margin," from Tokyo to other cities of Japan, and from Japan to Asia (Lin 2009c, 74–76). However, with her decade-long residency in Taiwan and engagement with local politics, working and interacting with a network of Taiwanese experimental theater artists and presenting works to Taiwanese audiences, Hata Kanoko has forged her own trajectory of transnational engagement.

Hata Kanoko and Yellow Butterfly's involvement with the Losheng movement became a flashpoint where lines of transnational concerns intersected and sparked reflections on heretofore under-investigated historical questions and relationships. The postwar permutation of modernist biopolitical violence since Japanese colonialism was brought to the public attention with the recent protest movement incited by the present-day MRT construction schemes. Hata Kanoko's involvement heralds another self-reflexive force that penetrates Losheng's historical legacy and its accompanying postcolonial entanglements, as well as their historical and contemporary echoes and ramifications across wider geopolitical spheres. After *Body-Vessel* had physically traveled "back" to Hiroshima for two more performances, Hata Kanoko and a few fellow artists went further to join the tent theater performance led by Japanese director Sakurai Daizo in Fukushima in September that year. All these actions operate outside of state and corporate frameworks; it is a self-marginalizing position that the artists consciously inhabit in order to critique the state and capitalism.¹⁴ Significantly, far from posing herself as a "superior" foreigner who comes in to engage in political advocacy for the locals and appropriate local cultures, Hata Kanoko positions herself as a fellow grassroots street artist performing for *survival* and *exchange*. Her butoh actions are accompanied by her rigorous, self-reflexive critique of Japanese imperialism clearly articulated in her statements, as well as her humble demeanor and capability to directly communicate with her Taiwanese collaborators and audiences in Mandarin without a translator. In short, it is as much about the work and the politics as the mode of action and interaction, its felt affect. In this way, lines of contemporaneous concerns are stretched across space through a fluid linkage and expansion of "minor" transnational resistive art praxes, breeding the potentials for an alternative inter-Asian transnationalism, in quiet but persistent action.¹⁵

Notes

- 1 As Hata Kanoko worked in Taiwan, the performance titles and statements were presented in Chinese language (which share some written characters, or *kanji*, with Japanese) through assistance from Japanese-Chinese translators. In this chapter, I translate these texts from Chinese to English, with Romanization according to their Mandarin pronunciation in the parentheses. A couple of phrases, though, are spelled according to their Japanese or Taiwanese pronunciations, which readers should be able to identify in the context.
- 2 Kurihara Nanako has pointed out how butoh has been erroneously essentialized and stereotyped (as "Japanese," "Eastern;" or "Zen Buddhist"), including being associated directly with the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, particularly by American critics (Kurihara 2000). Another image that may be attributed to this association is that of Ōsuka Isamu of Byakko-sha, who talked about his mother's experience during the bombing in Hiroshima, and whose left arm is atrophic because she was pregnant with him when the atom bomb dropped. In *Navel and A-bomb* (Jp. *Heso to genbaku* 1960), an experimental film made by photographer Hosoe Eikoh, Hijikata Tatsumi and other dancers are juxtaposed with an image of an A-bomb.
- 3 The Spanish is used here to suggest a yearning for the revolutions in Latin American as in Chile, Argentina, Cuba, etc., as Hata Kanoko worked in political movements that critique the state and institutions in Japan (Hata Kanoko 2016).

- 4 The segregation policy in Japan lasted until 1996 and was halted only because of the protests of Japanese patients, who eventually won state compensation in 2001; Taiwanese patients who had been forced into segregation during the Japanese occupation won the same compensation from Japan in 2005.
- 5 The Losheng protest movement still goes on today, as the demands of the protesting residents still have not been met. After much negotiation, compromise, and a brutal police eviction of residents (many are in their eighties and unable to walk well), the Executive Yuan's Public Construction Commission finalized a plan in May 2007 that would preserve about 30 percent of the original residential area and build additional housing elsewhere on the campus after construction of the depot was completed. However, the residents face new dangers as the MRT construction continues, leveling a vast section of the hill and showing signs of possible landslide that would affect the entire residential area. At present, the MRT construction is still going on, and the remaining protesting residents and activists continue to work towards preserving the site in entirety, mainly for its historical value and significance. They continue to negotiate for an alternative construction plan and petition for officially designating Losheng as a "historical site." They are also working on collecting oral history and artifacts to create a museum.
- 6 A group of experimental theater artists who supported the protest movement of Losheng residents independently staged "Music, Life, and Under the Tree 925 Action" (Ch. *Yinyue, shengming, dashuxia 925 xingdong*) in Losheng Sanatorium in September 2005.
- 7 For a study of Hata Kanoko's dance works in Taiwan from 1998 to 2010, see Chen Yi-Chun's thesis (Y. Chen 2010).
- 8 Orchid Island has been the site for depositing nuclear waste from Taiwan's nuclear power plants since 1982. The Fukushima nuclear disaster spurred the anti-nuclear movement in Taiwan in recent years.
- 9 In her performance statement, Hata Kanoko wrote: "'Zhugao zhiqi' is a symbolic phrase. It refers to the body of the priestess and the dancer who is being possessed by the dead. The reason I search for the body of the priestess is that 'the look of the dead may not be just what we have seen. By exploring this possibility, we can not only conduct dialogues with the dead but also bring the dialogues into the future.' Let the will of the dead lodge in the body, and let the body of the living turn into the 'body/corpse' (Ch. *yiti*) of the dead. People can keep this 'body/corpse' alive, and as such, the body can become the vessel for the living and the dead to make exchanges. This is not some Tale of the Arabian Nights. Everyone carries a 'body/corpse' with them from when they were born." In fact, the discourse of *butoh* is imbued with the idea of contacting the spirits of the dead. Hijikata Tatsumi claimed his dead sister lived inside him; Ohno Kazuo made a work commemorating his mother who had passed away in *My Mother* (Jp. *Watashi no okaasan* 1981). Ohno also expounded the idea of the "dead body" into which the dancer places an emotion that can freely express itself, reveal the "form of the soul," and dances freely – intending to revert to the original memory of the body and discover the soul stifled within (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988). For Hata Kanoko, it was in reflecting upon her own female corporeality that she started thinking about the body of the priestess.
- 10 Both songs have rich and specific histories and gendered connotations in cultural and political memory that may be relevant to the reading of the dance for Taiwanese audiences. "Flower in a Rainy Night" was originally a children's song whose music was composed during the Japanese colonial era by Taiwanese song writer Deng Yuxian. The lyrics were later rewritten to portray the sorrows of a heartbroken woman based on the story of a hostess in a wine bar in Taipei, who came from the countryside and who was deserted by her boyfriend. The new song was circulated back to Japan, and during the war it was recreated to become a patriotic military song that served to encourage Taiwanese soldiers in support of Japanese military invasions. "The Story of the Small Town," sung by the famous Taiwanese popular singer Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun 1953–1995), came out in 1979 as the theme song for the film of the same title directed by Li Hsing in the tradition of Healthy Realism. In the film, a young man studies the craft of wood sculpting in the small town of San Yi (known for wood sculptures) and falls in love with the master's deaf mute daughter, who is talented and good hearted.
- 11 Hijikata's dancers also worked as cabaret dancers in the evenings as a way to finance his "art" dances. Economic needs aside, cabaret dancing is also a way of generating a sense of detachment from the body for the dancers, an experience of objectifying the body to realize the "dead body" on stage. However, Paul Roquet has questioned the possible exploitative nature in this practice (Roquet 2003, 66–70).
- 12 In his 1972 piece *Story of Smallpox* (Jp. *Hosotan*), for example, he danced in a weak body, in continuous inward contraction, by fasting and assimilating the deformed states of leprosy patients, as critic Goda Nario notes (Lin 2009a, 34).

- 13 In 1967, the Situation Theater (*Jokyo Gekijo*), led by Kara Juro, began to tour in different cities of Japan by performing in a temporarily pitched tent in public spaces; in the 1970s, they traveled abroad to perform guerilla-style in other Asian and Middle Eastern cities: Seoul, South Korea (1972), Dhaka, Bangladesh (1973), and the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan amid the wars (1974). In 1980, Osuka Isamu founded the butoh troupe Byakkosha with the aim of “exploring the relevance of Japan to South East Asia,” embarking on a series of performances in Java and Bali, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Such a “movement from the center to the margin” (from the Japanese perspective) concerns physical space as well as theater aesthetics (Lin 2009c, 74–75).
- 14 Sakurai Daizo works as a director of Tent Theater in the legacy of postwar Japanese avant-garde theater movement. He also met the same group of Taiwanese artists in the Philippines in 1994 and had worked with them since, producing Tent Theater works in Taiwan and formed a Tent Theater troupe Haibizi in Taipei in 2002. Later, it was renamed “Taiwan Haibizi” and solely run by Taiwanese artists. Hata Kanoko and members of Taiwan Haibizi are both involved in Losheng movement and each other’s projects. They collectively contribute to the labor of each production, from pitching the tent, cooking, and making costumes and sets, to performance. Ticket sales is their only source of income; for Yellow Butterfly’s performances staged in Losheng, they were reframed into a “gift economy” in which audiences put money in red envelopes, or patrons’ names were written on red strips of paper upon receipt of money and hung around the reception table as a gesture of thanks for the contributions. Hata Kanoko considers the practice in concert with the humility of folk artists who perform to make a living, to get “rice and vegetables,” also a kind of “direct” exchange that is much different from the commodification of theater nowadays. The fluid network of transnational artists mentioned in this essay mainly refers to those associated with Yellow Butterfly, Taiwan Haibizi, Sakurai Daizo’s Japanese tent theater troupe, and the tent theater associates in Beijing (as Sakurai has set foot in Beijing, working with the migrant workers there in recent years). In 2016, Taiwan Haibizi was renamed again as “Haibizi TENT 16–18” to mark a timeframe of their current project. Lin Yu-Pin traced the historical development of tent theatre in Japan (most notably Kara Juro’s Red Tent since 1967), as well as Sakurai’s involvement in and departure from it (Lin 2009b). For a reference to Taiwan Haibizi/Haibizi TENT 16–18, see <http://taiwanhaibizi.pixnet.net/blog> (Accessed August 28, 2016).
- 15 Hata Kanoko moved back to Tokyo from Taiwan in 2010. In 2013, she moved again from Tokyo to Ryukyu and has since lived there. She continues the transnational actions with the fellow artists, as discussed in this chapter.

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