# Introduction

Gretchen Jude and Lynette Hunter

Based on approaches developed by the research group (Re)sounding Bodies East and West at the University of California, Davis, this journal issue brings together a variety of contributions to transcultural and intermodal ways of knowing by scholar-practitioners, primarily located in the United States, who actively engage with Japanese performance. The book explores performance practice beyond the common categories of period, genre, tradition, or lineage. In the research group, we found productive cross-pollinations for examining a broad swath of Japanese aesthetic culture—from theatre, music, and dance (both traditional and modern) to film, electronic music, and anime—through approaches that open up the body as a site of profound importance for enacting transcultural understanding. These approaches engage critical perspectives informed by embodiment, affect, and performance theories and through ethnographic, anthropological, and historical methodologies.

In collecting the work of practitioners as well as scholars, this issue addresses the need in performance studies to include more diverse voices. The collection illustrates how transcultural creative practices lead to changes that are particular to each performer's practice and therefore to the audience's practices experiencing the work performed. At the same time, the articles point to the complexities generated by a somatic focus on transcultural exchange, complexities that often lie outside existing critical vocabularies. Whether grappling with how to engage with traditional work in new contexts or with how contemporary work reverberates with, rubs against, and expands traditional aesthetic categories, the critics and artmakers in this collection trace the profound shifts in "Western" performance practices, which occur when engagement with works from "the East" breaks down previous distinctions and generates new priorities and frameworks for understanding.

Studies in culture and society have now firmly demonstrated that knowledge is not fixed but rather context specific; understanding emerges as a person experiences historically contingent phenomena. More recent studies in artmaking—including both physical artifacts and ephemeral, time-based performance work, with the latter as the focus of this issue—demonstrate that ways of knowing also emerge from peoples' experiences of creative, collaborative, and relational activities. With the arts becoming more accessible over the course of the twentieth century, creative endeavours have become valued for providing strategies that offer different approaches to ways of living. Accordingly, the emerging field of practice as research (PAR) reflects and responds to the need for new vocabularies with which to describe the particular processes of artmaking and their modes for engaging diverse audiences. In our increasingly globalized, hypermediated world, artmakers face transcultural issues head-on. Alongside many artistic strategies for transcultural contact, PAR[1] has consistently generated vocabularies for communication that focus on embodied affect.[2] The writers

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in this collection exemplify some of this range of discursive style, from formal academic register to exploratory and experimental writing, such as autoethnography (Hernández), interviews (Halebsky; Bolles et al.), pedagogical reflection (drum), and performance scores (Fraleigh; Maeshiba). The range of this writing attempts to involve the body in processes that remain unique to practice as research and somatic studies of performativity.

In many ways, the writers here have been inspired by the concept of transcorporeal vibrational practice, a term coined by transcultural singer and musicologist Nina Eidsheim (2015), which foregrounds the understanding of bodies in particular contexts, rather than a singular, abstracted "universal body" (3). Transcorporeal vibrational practice, as such, highlights interactive and shared activities as processes that continue to develop in flux, always open to change. Accordingly, this issue aims to treat performances in ways that recognize and encourage the uniqueness of each instantiation and the particularity of each person's experience of it, while also "tak[ing] into account its nonfixity and recogniz[ing] that it always comes into being through unfolding and dynamic material sets of relations" (Eidsheim 2015, 10). The performative processes of embodiment, while historically contingent, also vibrate alongside cultures in unexpected ways, resonating across a myriad of differences. The somatically sensitive approaches provided by PAR foreground how people's bodies can move and sound together. Furthermore, through the vocabularies developed in this issue, transcultural communication can be accessed in new and different ways. A felt sense of resonance is not about unidirectional stimulus and reaction but about moving together in ways that sometimes seem to defy linear logic altogether.

Engaging with embodied transcultural experience in artmaking and in audiencing, you find yourself forever changed by the journey, in whatever medium it occurred. Since you find yourself a different person returning from the journey, the experience opens you to different ways of knowing the world. The articles in this issue examine what happens in transit. How can artistic engagement with a "foreign" practice be something other than an imitation—or an appropriation? The articles here apply Eidsheim's concept beyond the practice of music and propose that we explore what a transcultural transcorporeal vibrational practice might be across a range of performance modalities. Even at the level of vibration, the embodied communication of what people do with voice, motion, gesture, and relational interaction is not only generated by culture but also generates the particular feelings of situated affect from which culture emerges. This issue tells the stories of embodied resonance at a finer resolution of somatic detail than conventional ethnography or cultural criticism by focusing on particular instances of artistic engagement with a form, artist, or performance piece.

Transcultural performance requires a deep level of responsibility and reciprocity, dedicated engagement over time, and a personal investment that is open to recognizing misunderstanding, to being changed, and to finding oneself "other." The artists and scholars collected together here all attend to performative particularities with respect, connecting conceptual and intellectual understanding with embodied and experiential reflection. The articles push beyond the boundaries of academic discipline and codified performance genres in ways that reflect on Japanese notions of body-mind such as *kokoro* and music-dance-theatre, as a literal reading of the word *kabuki* suggests. At the same time, they also engage with the intermedia impulse of transnational postwar experimental groups, which brought together artists and musicians from Europe and the Americas with Japan and Korea—if not for the first time, then in uniquely transformative ways.

For all its broad range, this journal issue circles around and back to particular themes: physicality in the training of non-Japanese students of *noh*, *kyōgen*, and *butoh* (Halebsky; Hernández; Fraleigh); the

influence of postwar playwrights Terayama Shūji and Ōta Shōgo (Maeshiba; Ridgley; Lichtenfels); performative writing (Maeshiba; Fraleigh; Bolles et al.); the role of experimentalism (Bolles et al.; Jude; Ridgely); and the voice beyond signification (Hernández; Jude). It is also concerned with what might broadly be called STEM topics, including biology, ecology, topology, and media technology (Jude; drum; Ridgely) as well as collaboration and transmission (Halebsky; drum; Bolles et al.; Lichtenfels). Perhaps inevitably, Japanese aesthetic terms such as *kata* (form), *ma* (interval), and *jo-ha-kyū* (introduction, break, conclusion) recirculate through the writers' thinking. At the same time, newer terms from Japanese—the long-popular *anime* (animation) and the less-familiar *onkyō* (sound)—emerge just as English terminology is expanded in creative ways.

The issue begins with articles by Judith Halebsky and Sondra Fraleigh explicating how traditional and modern Japanese bodily practices of noh and butoh enter into contact zones of non-Japanese cultures. In her article, "Yuriko Doi's Teaching and Transmission of Noh and Kyōgen in San Francisco," Halebsky traces the history of Doi's foundational work with her San Francisco-based troupe Theatre of Yugen. Halebsky examines both cross-Pacific transmission (how to make ancient Japanese forms emotionally accessible and aesthetically intelligible to contemporary American audiences) and artistic transmission (how to train actors to move through radically different physicality), while giving an overview of the ancient roots of noh and kyōgen. Halebsky explores Doi's concept of "extra-creation," which draws from the traditional training and welds it to the training of Western practitioners so that it acquires the personal insight of "being real." Rather than a fusion to an idea of exact tradition, Doi suggests "pollination." Instead of borrowing Japanese techniques, a transcultural performer will experience a collision of somatic trainings that leads to a "digestion" of those techniques and releases an energy of dynamic performance. Halebsky's essay, based on personal interviews, also provides an invaluable document of a Japanese noh practitioner's lifetime of work in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Fraleigh's writing, similarly rooted in years of collaboration and study with her materials, provides both scholarly analysis and performance scores for experiential knowledge. In "Performing Everyday Things: Ecosomatic Threads of Butoh, Phenomenology, and Zen," she presents a fruitful dialogue between Japanese Zen (primarily Dōgen) and German phenomenology (primarily Husserl), as she aims toward deeper understanding of the time she spent moving with the influential butoh artist Ohno Kazuo and his son, Yoshito. She suggests that the body in butoh converges with its environment through an inner somatic resonance. Transformation becomes not only the enacted moment but also the transition in between the somatic self and that moment that "actively constitutes a world." Fraleigh includes exercises for readers to try out their own first-hand phenomenological understanding of butoh in the form of poetic instructional scores. This grounding in the experiential body sets the tone for the writers of the subsequent three articles, who reflect upon their own creative work, engaging with ways that cultural and geographical location change the materiality of their instruments.

The next three articles explore zones of contact that include performance in both traditional and modern forms of dance, theatre, and music. These authors, Naoko Maeshiba, Álvaro Iván Hernández, and core members of Thingamajigs Performance Group (TPG), focus on the workings of embodied practices. They use personal, somatic responses to their transcultural experiences in PAR—not in any abstract sense, but in the most concrete and particular forms. Of necessity, these scholar-practitioners write beyond the expository essay form, hailing the poetic functions of language to invent not only new vocabularies—such as Maeshiba's "thinking with the body," and

Hernández's "in-provisation" and "no-character"—but also new grammars such as those exemplified in the dialectical explorations by Northern California–based TPG.

In "Anatomy of Conflict," Maeshiba considers the conflicts, confusions, and resolutions of her Japanese/Western body. A highly experienced performer and teacher of movement, she opens out the connections between her personal somatic growth and her approaches to performance. She includes physical training exercises for actors, detailing with deep somatic fluency the effects of her own transcultural experiences growing up in Japan and working as an artist in the United States. The article reflects on the different senses both of an individualistic and more fluid selfhood that have emerged in her professional work, and how that expansion of "thinking with the body" has helped her move forward. Reflections on her work with playwright Ōta Shōgo show her keen sensitivity to how culture infuses the body and how emplacement is an ongoing interaction that entails exchange and generation and flow of energies that are difficult to articulate, particularly in a second language.

Colombian theatre artmaker Álvaro Iván Hernández, in "On the Path of No-Character: Zeami's Traces Walked Back and Forward," connects his experiences studying noh in Japan with embodied practices of walking and chanting. In this way, he weaves together stories of the Indigenous people of southern Colombia with modern Peruvian poetry into a solo piece developed in Bogotá and performed worldwide. Hernández echoes Fraleigh's description of the butoh body converging with the environment, recounting the way that a performer, instead of pursuing a unified character, learns to become multiple, dissolved, and dilated. He proposes the term *in-provisation* to articulate the coming together and apart in performance, not of Western concepts of "character," but indeed, of "no-character." Key to Hernández's retelling is the insight that before he went to Japan and was trained in noh, his dramaturgy was already seeking no-character, and that noh offered a way of articulating this performativity. Dealing with the monstrous legacies of (post)colonialism, Hernández's grounding in the aesthetic writings of Zeami breaks a pathway for moving past pain and uncertainty through creative persistence.

Dylan Bolles, Keith Evans, Suki O'Kane, and Edward Schocker, who are all members of the experimental Thingamajigs Performance Group (TPG), perform/reconstruct a far-ranging "discussion" of their collective musical composition entitled ]MA[. Placing linguistic play in the foreground, they define the concept through their performance/composition, "]MA[—The Space between the Interval." The freewheeling quality of this conversation is founded on the conversants' deep expertise in and dedication to Japanese and Korean traditional musics and experimentalism. In this article, *gagaku* meets Frank Zappa, John Cage meets *Speed Racer*, and *hichiriki*[3] meets microphone in a squeal of feedback amid an ocean of silence. At the centre of this verbal whirlwind is the quiet breath of *ma*, the Japanese aesthetic (re)claimed and reinterpreted by postwar composers on both sides of the Pacific, with attention to what TPG discuss as the embodied resonance of "tuning" and "para-tuning." The article itself becomes a kind of meditative score for a performance enacted by the reader in the space of their own mind.

The second half of the collection returns to a more scholarly tone, with articles by Gretchen Jude and duskin drum both exploring the relationality of transcultural flows through digital media and examining methodologies of what the intercultural can offer—not only embodied responses on a sensory or affective level for the individual experiencing transcultural art-making but also into the weeds of what happens when people exchange cultural practices. Jude's notion of "plasmatic voice" continues TPG's engagement with transcultural experimental music to face some of the issues that occur when different cultures exchange embodied practices. Jude's article, "Ami Yoshida, Onkyō,

and the Persistently 'Japanese' Body: Making (Electro)voice Sound," takes a 180-degree turn in its approach to Japanese experimentalism and its critical resonances outside the archipelago. Jude focuses on an underexamined member of the twenty-first-century Japanese *onkyō* group that eschewed what they viewed as stereotypically "Japanese" aesthetics, in order to get at the problem of an identity and a body that struggles to shed the marks of gender, nationality, and race. Jude understands Yoshida as using technological re-embodiment to dis/re-assemble identity as performed rather than fixed—a transcultural strategy simultaneously both Western and Japanese. Triangulation of the voice as it vibrates and flows through audio networks—along with a Japanese female vocalist's location and relation to the complex of recording media, viewers' bodies, and cultural discourse structures—indicates a way to begin to understand how profoundly communications technology affects voice.

In "Surprising Pedagogy through Japanese Anime," duskin drum picks up the topics of media, technology, and gender and examines them in the radically different context of his experiences using anime to teach environmental studies to university students in Russia and California. Facing head-on the question of what happens to Japanese cultural practices/artifacts once they leave Japan, drum embraces the possibilities of unavoidable misinterpretation and misunderstanding as productive of a "mess" from which students can learn. drum also engages with post-human ecological implications of multiple popular anime films and series. Since there are always places/concepts/feelings/affective domains that are not and cannot be known by another culture, drum recounts his development of respectful yet brave strategies that recognize the impact of working with multiple Others beyond the goal of "resolving issues." Instead, he finds potential for performative possibilities mixed into the problems—and recalls Halebsky's opening call for Doi's pollination rather than fusion.

With the work of Steven Ridgely and Peter Lichtenfels, the issue comes full circle, once again examining intercultural performing arts practices, but with a reversal of positionality. Here the Western scholar and director observe what Japanese theatre practitioners (namely Terayama in Europe and Ōta in the Americas) do when they import non-Japanese forms into Japanese repertoire—and what then flows back to "the West." Like Jude and drum, Ridgely attempts to understand humanistic performances with STEM fields, specifically engaging with Terayama Shūji's 1970s avant-garde theatre and film through the study of topology. In "Everting the Theatrical Sphere Like Terayama," Ridgeley posits the mathematical transformation called "eversion" as frame for Terayama's multiple radical reversals, moving toward residual effects, a process that holds the potential for radically other performance to alter the experience of time and space. For Ridgely, Terayama's performances of bodily intervention everted the form of theatre, and Terayama's elicitation of frustration and other affective states generated a "transformation of theatricalized space." Ridgely continues exploring themes of STEM fields in performance, examining how Terayama Shūji's interest in mathematical models of eversion, or turning the inside out, influenced his work in avant-garde theatre and film, particularly as presented in 1970s Amsterdam. Hailing Massumi's notion of affective intensity, Ridgely observes that Terayama's positioning of the audience went beyond the mere notion of "revolution" into something more complex and evocative, in which the highly scripted expectation of normative everyday life comes into question. Bodily and spatial interventions bring together viewers and performers, with the purpose of transforming social life through the affects, the everting, of the particular feelings generated by the experience of the artwork.

Peter Lichtenfels similarly focuses on the body as the site of energetic and affective potential, as he discusses the challenges of staging the works of Ōta Shōgo outside Japan, with non-Japanese actors

and audiences using both verbal scripts and video records as playtexts. "Directing Ōta Shōgo's *Elements*: From Form to Body" traces multiple transcultural and cross-genre resonances—Daoism, noh, Zen—all with embodiment at the centre. Lichtenfels's practice-based study exhibits how attention to the actor's body can honour the spirit of a culturally different text while also honouring the performers' present reality—with both grounded in the goal of energizing the relationship between performers and audience as they realize a shared, valued performativity. Lichtenfels's reflections on directing productions of Ōta's plays illustrate deeply collaborative, complexly transcultural processes that attend to the disconsonant and its emergence into the fundamentally embodied nature of performance. Tracing the repetition of physical forms, vocal resonance, and bodily rhythms necessary to achieve energetic forms for Ōta's work, Lichtenfels unlocks the malleability of time as both a personal and a collective experience. In common with other contributors to this collection, his article describes working within a Japanese context as diffusing the edges of the body, "as if the body was becoming part of a mixture with other people and things in the theatre." He calls this a "virtuosity of sameness" and contrasts it with the virtuosity of difference so prevalent in Western theatre.

This final article exemplifies all the writers' commitment to a deep respect and dedicated engagement upon which transcultural performance must be based, and which they hope to bring about. In all their diversity, the writers gathered together in this issue share first-hand knowledge of what is at stake in working as artmakers with audiences across what might feel like unbridgeable gaps in culture, language, and tradition. At the core of the endeavour is the shared human experience of being in a body, of our species' common sensorial and affective possibilities. Even with vastly different and sometimes even incompatible interpretative tools, performance can bring us together, resounding across oceans and bodies, performing into existence a resonance, even as a sensed and felt dissonance. Each work in this issue offers a different way of approaching the potential of transcorporeal vibrational practice: complex resonances which can shake us apart unless we learn how to (re)sound together.

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## Notes

1. Practice as research (PAR) was developed in several places (Riley and Hunter 2009; Nelson 2013) and has expanded over the past thirty years into many forms including practice-based research (Hansen and Barton 2009), action research (Yasuda 2009) and performance as research (Arlander, Dreyer-Lude, and Spatz 2019).

2. See the foundational article on the need for different styles of essay writing in performance studies by Della Pollock (1998) and chapter 3 on "documentation" in Lynette Hunter (2019).

3. An ancient double-reed wind instrument.

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# Yuriko Doi's Teaching and Transmission of Noh and Kyōgen in San Francisco

Judith Halebsky

In 1967, Yuriko Doi moved from Tokyo to the San Francisco Bay Area to pursue a career as a director. She founded the Theatre of Yugen and taught *noh* and *kyōgen* to American students for more than thirty years. In its original mission statement, Theatre of Yugen emphasizes drawing from traditional forms as well as contemporary influences: "Theatre of Yugen's . . . innovations are grounded in traditional Japanese theatre techniques and its experimentation in music, dance, mime, chanted English, and the use of masks represent a fusion of new and old, discipline and inspiration" (qtd. in Ehn 2004, 7). What was articulated as *fusion* in this mission statement from 1978 changed over time into what can now be seen a process of pollination. Doi's Theatre of Yugen offered an active learning and engagement with Japanese theatre forms and explorations of new work influenced by these practices. Under Doi's leadership, Theatre of Yugen performed locally and nationally, often at universities and art festivals. Their physical theatre space, NohSpace, hosted performers and theatre artists with some connection to Japanese performance forms. Through her work teaching US students, performing kyōgen in English, and making new productions informed by the aesthetic concepts and performance techniques of noh, Doi has shaped the artistic landscape in San Francisco and brought a familiarity with Japanese theatre to northern California.

Doi's transmission of noh to her students in the United States passes on an embodied aesthetics of art practice through the techniques of noh and kyōgen and, in broad mentorships, cultivates her students as creative artists. This process of transmission reflects established modes of teaching noh and perpetuating artistic lineage. Transmission is a means of instruction and learning that is not based in written or verbal information and guidance; rather, it is a passing on of an embodied aesthetic practice. Examining Doi's teaching of students in the United States reveals that culture not only lives in historical and social knowledge but is also held within the body and transmitted from body to body. Doi's vision for noh and kyōgen in San Francisco requires a "give and take" with the form (Doi 2019). Adhering solely to the form as it is traditionally practised mutes the actors and diminishes the creative energy of the performance (Doi 2019). While maintaining central aspects of noh and kyōgen, Doi negotiates ways that actors need to adapt the practice to their personal experience and training in order for the form to maintain a vibrancy in this new location. Doi offers the concept of "extra-creation" to describe the embodied synergy of actors who draw from their training in noh and kyōgen along with spoken drama and other physically embodied trainings.

In *America's Japan and Japan's Performing Arts: Cultural Mobility and Exchange in New York 1952–2011*, Barbara Thornbury examines how performers and performance works from Japan were received in New York City over a period of almost sixty years. Her research is based on press articles and published reviews of the New York City performances of groups and companies from Japan. These

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reviews reveal assumptions about Japanese theatre that audiences and reviewers bring to performances. She points out how these assumptions shape interpretations of what people see onstage and names this gaze "America's Japan." She writes: "Through their writings we can identify major modes of audience reaction to the unfamiliar. Critics' published reviews and related essays form the historical archive of intellectual engagement with and reception of theatre (as well as dance and music) from Japan—in other words, the body of writing that constructs the narrative of America's Japan through the performing arts" (Thornbury 2013, 265). Much of what Thornbury finds in the reception of productions from Japan in New York City echoes the reviews and reception of Doi's work in the San Francisco Bay Area. Doi's work, however, differs from many of the productions that Thornbury examines. Thornbury examines productions that are one-time events, short runs, or return performances. Doi's work is based in the United States and extends over time, in ongoing relationship with audiences. She trains US-based actors to perform in her productions and as ongoing members of her theatre company. This essay offers a practice-based investigation of how Doi draws from noh and kyōgen in her San Francisco–based theatre company and how she adapts and changes these forms to the skills of her US students and to the tastes of San Francisco theatre audiences.

Thornbury (2013) describes how US audiences of performance works from Japan expect to find traditional or timelessness qualities in the work: "An assumption of America's kabuki-Japan is that the traditional arts represent inviolable practices that have been—and continue to be—maintained intact" (159). While Thornbury frames this through audience expectations shaped by perceptions of *kabuki*, it is clear in the larger context of her writing that this includes audiences coming to see work related not just to other traditional forms such as noh and kyōgen but to any work from Japan more broadly. She describes one critic as "predictably compelled to find within the play evidence of Japanese cultural continuity" (160). She also points out how Teshigawara Saburō's warm reception in Europe was not replicated in the United States because his contemporary dance did not always have an overt connection to Japanese performance forms. She writes that "he had cultivated enthusiastic audiences in Europe but in a way was shunted aside by American presenters wary of booking even the most serious and sophisticated artists from Japan whose work did not appear distinctly 'Japanese'" (157).

Doi was aware of these limits and constraints and positioned her work accordingly. Performing English-language versions of kyōgen and teaching Japanese theatre in elementary and junior high schools became the mainstay of the theatre company's income (Ehn 2004, 12). Teaching multiple times a week gave the company many opportunities to practise their skills. This stability allowed the company to mount productions that drew from noh and other performance traditions. Doi had experience acting in spoken drama productions but was interested in pursuing work that drew from Japanese forms. This also gave her a position of authority. Even though she does not have professional status within a noh or kyōgen school in Japan, in San Francisco she is considered an expert on these forms, with knowledge to impart and share. In this way, she navigated the expectations of the theatre community and brought aspects of traditional Japanese theatre to new works.[1]

I came to study noh as a PhD student at UC Davis. Previously, I had lived in Japan for eighteen months on a scholarship from the Japanese government to study at the Kanazawa College of Art. While in Japan, I had studied *butoh* with Motofuji Akiko and with Ohno Kazuo and Ohno Yoshito, and I had stayed at Tanaka Min's Body Weather Farm. I entered the PhD program intending to study butoh, particularly how it lives in Japan and how it is understood and practised in San

Francisco. I was never really a dancer; I did dance as a body-based aesthetic practice from which I could enter a creative state to write poems. To me, poetry is a physically active somatic practice, despite how overwhelmingly it is presented as the quiet, desk-sitting work of the mind. To lay a foundation to study butoh, my professor advised me to start by studying traditional Japanese performance forms and then to chronologically work up to modern and contemporary dance. I began by studying noh theatre and reading Zeami Motokiyo's treatises on the art of noh. I never returned to butoh as a primary focus. Instead, I got more involved in trying to understand noh theatre and its aesthetic concepts. In the winter of 2005, I took a six-week training course in noh and kyōgen at Theatre of Yugen taught by Jubilith Moore. Moore was Yuriko Doi's student, a longtime member of Theatre of Yugen, and she later served as its artistic director. The course culminated with a recital on February 26, 2005.[2] I went on to train in noh song and dance with Richard Emmert in Tokyo and to study at Hōsei University's Noh Research Institute from 2007 to 2010 on a MEXT scholarship. My research developed to include how noh is changed in its employments outside of Japan and how new locations (San Francisco and Vancouver) ascribe new meanings and values onto the art.

Doi began training in theatre by learning noh dance and song from her great-grandmother, who taught in the Hōshō school of noh. As an undergraduate at Waseda University, Doi studied *shingeki,* a modern Japanese drama form based in the techniques of spoken drama. In 1965, through a Waseda University professor, Doi began to study with kyōgen master Nomura Mansaku. Two years later, she moved to the United States, aspiring to be a director. She maintained strong ties with Nomura Mansaku,[3] and despite living in California, she continued to train with him for twenty more years. There were opportunities for training when Nomura Mansaku was performing in the United States, and during Doi's many trips to Japan.

Noh is a sombre and serious performance form that integrates music, dance, poetry, and acting. Kyōgen is a comedic form performed along with noh. For more than 650 years, noh has been in living practice. Noh actor and playwright Zeami Motokiyo codified the form of noh in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. His art carried on and developed the artistic lineage of his father, Kan'ami (1333–1384). Zeami drew from his father's innovations to the precursor of noh, *sarugaku* noh, to create a highly structured, stylized, and refined performance form. There are 200–250 plays within the current active repertoire of noh that have been passed down from teacher to student for generations. There are five surviving schools of noh that continue to perform these plays. There are also groups in Japan creating new noh plays, as well as occasional collaborations with scholars, in efforts to perform the surviving plays as they might have been performed in Zeami's time. Kyōgen is performed in between noh plays and, more recently, independently in day-long kyōgen performances. Kyōgen has stock characters and readily accessible humour, which has made it easier for Doi to translate and perform kyōgen successfully for new audiences.

Ideally, noh is taught through transmission that begins in early childhood and continues in a one-on-one mentorship until the student becomes a professional performer. There are two general aspects to the concept of transmission in noh. One aspect reflects how knowledge is conducted from teacher to student. This encompasses all aspects of the physical, aesthetic, and compositional structures of noh. It includes the *kata* (units of noh practice) such as movement and vocal technique, noh performance philosophy, and the broader cultivation of the student as an artist onstage and in daily life. The other aspect of transmission reflects how status and recognition of authority are awarded to a student as they become a master or professional. The awarding of physical objects such

as documents, costumes, and props and the assignment of partial or full management of a performance troupe mark the transmission of status.

The transmission of noh has been described as a mind-to-mind or body-to-body transfer. It involves three general and overlapping stages of learning. The first and most basic centres on training of the body in the external, surface qualities of the art form. The next stage, which goes on concurrently with the first stage but gains in depth and importance as technical proficiency increases, is the embodiment of the aesthetics of noh. These aesthetics include a *jo-ha-kyū* (introduction, break, conclusion) timing structure, *yūgen* (dark or obscure) beauty, and a cultivated inner intensity (these will be discussed in greater detail below). The third aspect of transmission is the broad cultivation of the student to reach a point of agency over that form to such a degree that the student makes their own connection with and contribution to the practice. At the higher levels of transmission, the most important feature of this third aspect is that it requires personal insight connecting the art form to broader issues of existence. Doi calls this "being real." This encompasses the stages of learning, from external qualities to an embodied form to the luminosity of form and cultivation of spirit.

For more than twenty-five years, Theatre of Yugen performed works informed by noh and kyōgen in San Francisco. Doi's work includes English versions of traditional-style kyōgen, projects that join noh with Greek tragedy, and projects that join multiple performance traditions. Doi stepped down from running Theatre of Yugen in 2002 and passed on the leadership of the theatre to her students. However, she has continued to direct plays. Most recently she directed *Mystical Abyss*, excerpts of which were performed at Colorado State University in 2015.

To plant noh in San Francisco, Doi sought to create, maintain, and nourish a fluency of form in noh and kyōgen within her company members. Her vision faced many challenges. It is particularly difficult to teach aspects of noh acting technique such as face and body expression, and the time structure of noh, within a context informed predominantly by the performance traditions of Western Europe. Her students started training in noh and kyōgen as adults, which made it difficult for them to make up the years of training they missed out on by not starting as children. They also lacked the language skills, and the historical and cultural framework, that would help them to engage with noh and kyōgen directly. Not only did Doi need to educate her students about noh, but she also needed to educate her audiences. Some of the compromises she made to the production aspects of noh for Theatre of Yugen's early performances in San Francisco were no longer required by the late 1990s, due to a growing understanding of noh (Zilber 2008, 158). The impact of Theatre of Yugen is the result of Doi's sustained training and cultivation of dedicated students, who through a process of transmission have come to embody the internal practice of noh and the substance of its aesthetics and of her cultivation of audiences.

## Actor Training in Traditional Noh: Function and Substance

The cultivation of spirit that Doi teaches reflects Zeami's concept of the "full flower." Zeami uses the metaphor of a flower to discuss many aspects of acting technique. An actor achieves a full flower only with the highest levels of acting technique, and once a full flower is reached, the actor can access it for the rest of their career. Zeami predicts that an actor can attain a full flower sometime in their thirties. This full flower is an established route within the body for reaching a sophisticated and immediate level of creative engagement. This degree of attention requires great sensitivity on the part of an artist and is evidence of a level of mastery that not all students will attain. Zeami, of

course, conceives of the full flower in terms of the noh he created during his lifetime. There has been a great deal of change in how Zeami's teachings have been understood and employed over time.[4] This essay reflects on the meaning that Doi (along with other contemporary practitioners) draws both from her physical training with her teacher, Nomura Mansaku, and from Zeami's written treatises. Doi's aesthetic goals for her students include a full embodiment and integration of the form. Doi teaches that Zeami's full flower includes an artist's malleability in personal location, their ability to expand frames of knowledge, and their commitment to drawing broadly from multiple influences in their creative practice.

Within Zeami's many writings on the secrets of his art, he differentiates between the external and internal aspects of noh, or what Rimer and Yamakazi translate as "Function" and "Substance" (Zeami 1984, 71). Zeami's treatise *Teachings on the Flower* (*Fushikaden*) outlines the stages of learning from an initial surface imitation of the teacher to an embodied form. Zeami stresses that the richness of noh lies in its internal aspects: it is this deep engagement with the internal form of noh that defines its mastery. It takes years of training to develop even a basic level of proficiency in the external qualities of noh. These external qualities are a minor part of the art of noh and a building block to higher levels of skill. As Zeami writes in *The True Path of the Flower* (*Shikadō*), "Art that remains external is to be despised" (66).

Kita school noh instructor Richard Emmert similarly separates noh into external and internal elements, arguing that it is the internal elements that define noh. While the masks and kimono of noh are in themselves works of art, they are not definitive of the art form. A noh performance without a mask, in different costumes, or on a different kind of stage can still be noh. A performance requires the internal elements, such as the beauty of *yūgen*—and the structure of time and intensity in the introduction, break point, and conclusion of *jo-ha-kyū*—to be within the tradition of noh. Emmert (1997) writes: "[One can] divide the various elements of noh into internal and external elements. Internal elements are those which, if changed, make noh something else: 'noh-influenced' perhaps, but certainly not 'noh.' External elements, on the other hand, are those which are usually associated with noh in its traditional form but in fact are capable of being changed" (171). It is difficult to clearly differentiate between aspects of noh and equally difficult to determine whether these aspects, such as movement or jo-ha-kyū, are exclusively either internal or external. It is helpful in discussing Doi's work to make a general separation between external markers of the noh tradition and internal philosophical and aesthetic aspects of the practice that also have an external presence. This makes it possible to examine degrees of influence, from surface borrowing to embodied practice. Of course, this is complicated, particularly when training begins with mimetic copying of external aspects of song and dance.

Zeami (1984) set up a separation between "Function" and "Substance" in *The True Path of the Flower* that can be understood as the aspects of noh that are either external or internal for the actor (71). Function refers to the surface qualities and markers of the form such as costume, movement, and vocal technique. Substance is the philosophy, energy, embodiment, and mastery of form. Zeami writes:

> When it comes to observing the noh, those who truly understand the art watch it with the spirit, while those who do not merely watch it with their eyes. To see with the spirit is to grasp the Substance; to see with the eyes is merely to observe the Function. Thus it is that beginning actors merely grasp the Function and try to imitate that. Although they do not understand the real principle of Function [that is,

> the fact that it derives from Substance], they attempt to copy it. Yet Function cannot be imitated. Those who truly understand the noh, since they grasp it with their spirit, are able to imitate its Substance. Thus in a performance, Function comes of itself from a successful attempt to assimilate Substance. (71)[5]

Here Zeami alludes to a learning journey of noh that begins with the function and develops into learning the substance of noh. Grasping the spirit of noh then informs the function of noh, creating depth and beauty in a performance. Doi's vision of translating noh for San Francisco relies on engaging with the internal aspects, which are the substance of noh. It is the integration of proficiency in noh's external aspects with an actor's cultivation of spirit, their cultural location, and a mastery of noh's internal aspects that allows an actor create a powerful performance onstage.

## Yuriko Doi's Goals in Function and Substance

The most important aspect of Doi's work in performance that employs noh and kyōgen is an embodied understanding of these traditional forms. Actors not only need to study these forms but also must strive for a depth of knowledge in the practice that includes its cultural roots and influences. Doi required company members to develop a proficiency in the function aspects of noh, such as movement and vocal technique. But, more importantly, she stressed the embodiment of the substance of noh in its aesthetic philosophy. Doi is willing to adjust aspects of noh's function, such as adapting the facial expressions of noh and kyōgen to the acting strengths of her American students. At the same time, she rigorously defends the substance of noh and is unwilling to change the timing and pacing of the art of noh, even when faced with direct criticism from theatre critics.

Doi's vision is for her students to embody noh, and to have a sensitivity to noh's aesthetic goals, in creating the beauty of yūgen and performing with the timing and intensity of jo-ha-kyū. Doi refers to actors who have a deep understanding of the substance of noh as having the form "digested" in their bodies. She contrasts them to theatre groups in North America who employ aspects of the function of noh, such as costume, mask, or movement, without connecting these elements to the broader art of noh. In a roundtable discussion on fusion theatre at the Theatre of Yugen, Doi differentiated between thoroughly understanding the art of noh, which she called "digesting" the form, and taking surface elements from noh out of context and layering them onto new work, which she called "borrowing." Borrowing relates in part to the idea that it is relatively simple to make something seem like noh by using noh costumes or staging techniques, while it is much more complex to understand and engage with the aesthetics that inform noh. Doi explains:

> First thing is, you really have to respect the form. Digest the form, and then create it a new way. If it's not digesting the form, you are borrowing. . . . You should go into the form, as much as [you can] know and understand culturally, everything [all aspects that you can] understand. Digest through your [own] way and create. Very often I see that a group is just borrowing the form, just borrowing for no reason . . . that means it is not digested at all, [there's no] connection to your heart, to the movement, or the dance. (Theatre of Yugen 2007)[6]

This dichotomy between borrowing and digesting is similar to the divide between the external and internal aspects of noh discussed above. Costumes, movement patterns, and vocal technique are part of the external aspects of noh, which can be copied in a relatively straightforward manner. The

internal aspects, such as the cultivation of concentration within the actor and creating a performance with yūgen beauty, are much more difficult to understand and to recreate.

Jo-ha-kyū, yūgen, and moments of no-action are particularly difficult to access for an audience new to noh. Jo-ha-kyū (introduction, break, conclusion) has a slow introduction that builds into two ha phases of extended introduction. The third phase of ha is when the sequence reaches its highest point of intensity. Kyū is the resolution of the sequence. Jo-ha-kyū shapes the broader structure of a play but is also found in much smaller units within all aspects of a noh performance. The slow introduction of jo is the part of jo-ha-kyū that contrasts most directly with popular structures of spoken drama and is one of the more challenging aspects of noh for a new audience. This timing does not rely on speed, or fast-paced aspects within a stage performance, but instead creates intensity and contrasts within the sequence of jo-ha-kyū. While a noh performance might seem slow overall, a noh-educated audience is looking for shifts in the timing and intensity within the jo-ha-kyū structure. They are not comparing stage time with social time.

Yūgen is a complex and mysterious beauty created through suggestion. Clouds obscuring a view of the moon, or mist drifting over huts in the distance, are images that could evoke yūgen. The image is somewhat hidden and the viewer needs to create it with their imagination. One example of how yūgen is created in noh is through blocking a direct view of the lead actor. At the highest movements of emotional confession, or the revelation of personal struggle or true identity, the lead actor recites lines with a fan blocking a direct view of the mask. Rather than showing the character's conflict, this blocking asks the audience to create within themselves the emotional conflict of the performance.

Yūgen and noh's moments of no-action are interrelated. Yūgen can be found in Zeami's concept of "feel ten show seven." The actor holds intense emotion internally and reveals only part of that emotion to the audience, striving to bring the audience into the internalized emotion. The actor not only needs to internalize this sensibility but also must strive to obtain a strength of inner focus and concentration that the audience can access. This intention creates subtlety and suggestion within the performance. Moments of no-action are when this inner focus is at its strongest and there are no other sounds or movements onstage to detract from this concentration. The performers strive to create an attunement between the focus of the audience and the inner focus of the *shite* (main actor). This relies on a powerful internal concentration that is cultivated over years of actor training. It is called "no-action" because it does not have external action. Rather, it has internal tension, concentration, and the movement of energy. Doi has striven to create new work that shares these qualities of noh in ways that allow new audiences to engage with them.

## Limitations and Opportunities for Doi's Career

Doi came to the United States intending to pursue a career in contemporary theatre, not traditional Japanese theatre. She aspired to be a director; this role does not explicitly exist within traditional noh or kyōgen. The potential of going abroad as a means to develop a professional career was intensified by barriers women face in gaining respect and inclusion within Tokyo theatre circles. In a 2003 conversation with Erik Ehn (2004), Doi explained:

> More and more, I wanted to direct. In Japan then (and even now), there are only marginal directing opportunities for women. Theatre workers had the status of

> beggars—even going a long way back, they called an actor a "river-bank beggar." And a woman in theatre was considered more like a prostitute. It is really tough to do theater as a woman. . . . So I thought, in that case, I am just going to learn theatre technique and go abroad. There was something of an inferiority complex about foreign culture, back then. There was only one successful woman directing in Japan: she had come back from Paris. Well then, I thought, that's what I'll do. (9–10)

As a woman, Doi found that avenues for leadership in the theatre world in Japan were closed to her. Once she was in the United States, her training in noh and kyōgen became an asset for creating an entryway into the San Francisco theatre world.

Nomura Mansaku, Doi's kyōgen teacher, strongly encouraged Doi's directorial vision—to join noh with other performance forms—and her aspirations in the United States. The strict lineages of performance forms and the barriers she faced as a woman severely limited the possibilities for Doi to do innovative work within traditional forms in Japan. Doi explains her teacher's advice to her: "Mansaku Nomura really encouraged me. 'You are a woman and in the United States you can do creative things beyond tradition, you can break it up'" (Theatre of Yugen 2007). Doi primarily specialized in kyōgen, but noh has a greater influence on Theatre of Yugen's fusion and contemporary productions. The opportunities to create new work and the interest in Japanese traditional theatre shaped Doi's productions and drew her to build a career in the United States rather than return to Tokyo.

Doi studied under James Graham at San Francisco State University. For one of her classes, she directed the noh play *Momijigari* (*Maple Leaf Viewing*). This was the beginning of Doi's work producing theatre based in Japanese forms in the San Francisco Bay Area. Soon after, Doi began teaching Japanese theatre at San Francisco State University. She directed a kyōgen piece, *The Melon Thief*, at the Japantown Cherry Blossom Festival. Doi started to take on kyōgen students, and her group began doing performances, calling themselves the Oriental Mime Troupe. This name, now dated, intended at that time to root the group in Asian Drama and to situate it in the San Francisco Bay Area, in relation to the San Francisco Mime Troupe. As the professional troupe began to take shape, they changed their name to Theatre of Yugen to reference the centrality of yūgen in Zeami's noh.

As Theatre of Yugen grew, Doi had to manage multiple issues of adapting noh and kyōgen for San Francisco audiences. The multicultural emphasis of the arts community in the 1980s and 1990s brought increased interest in theatre from outside the Western tradition, particularly fusion theatre (Moore 2005). Many of Doi's works, such as *Jaku and the Beanstalk* and *Antigone*, are based on plays and stories from outside the noh tradition. She was particularly interested in employing noh to create new versions of Greek tragedy. Despite eagerness by funders and patrons, audiences, and the theatre community to have theatre works and traditions from outside the Western canon, Theatre of Yugen—and Doi as a director—were criticized in reviews for not addressing conventions of Western theatre.

Doi was flexible in adjusting the function aspects of noh, such as masks and facial expression, for her US students. At the same time, she maintained a steadfast commitment to the substance aspects of noh, such as jo-ha-kyū, in the training of her students and in her productions. Noh plays do not use expressive facial gestures. The acting is communicated through the actor's body, sound, and codified gesture and movement. In noh, only the lead actor and the supporting lead actor wear

masks. The chorus, musicians, and other actors do not wear masks. The masks of lead actors generally have neutral expressions, with the exception of the demon masks. The masks are carved with a very subtle expression that changes slightly with movement, placement, and shadow. For example, looking up creates a frown and looking down creates a faint smile in the young woman mask. Doi tried to train her actors to have neutral faces onstage. However, she found that for her American students, a lack of expression in the actor's face also led to a kind of reserve in the actor's body. In noh, the opposite is desired: a neutral face and an expressive body. While Doi felt that a neutral expression was desirable for her American actors, she needed to compromise. Doi explains: "I tried having our actors work with neutral masks to develop and focus on body movements. However, I soon discovered that restraining facial expression for American actors often ended up restraining the rest of their physical expression as well. Their bodies got stiffer. So I then told them that you can use your faces, but do not depend too much on your faces as an emotional telegraph" (qtd. in Ehn 2004, 14). With this concession, Doi negotiated between her vision of noh and kyōgen in North America and the cultural context within which she had to work. Muting facial expression runs counter to the physicality of social codes and conditioning in her American students. Doi connects the mask in noh with the conditioning of the medieval elite in Japan to not show extreme facial expressions (14). Actor training in North America draws heavily on emotions as communicated through the face as well as the body.

In critiques of Doi's productions, the central issue was the use of different aspects of timing on stage. The stylized speech of noh, and Doi's choice to employ this stylized speech, were also criticized. Critic Bernard Weiner's review of Doi's noh adaptation of *Antigone* illustrates the difficulties of pacing and time within a noh performance for an American audience: "In her dedication to authenticity, Doi risks coming up with a production that 'reads' like an academic exercise. Long pauses, excruciatingly slow entrances and exits, poetically declaimed speech—such are not ingredients for drawing a (mostly) Caucasian audience into a noh rendering of a Greek Drama. I don't think she'd sacrifice authenticity by being more conscious of western "theatre time": having her actors pick up cues faster, speaking a bit more realistically, choreographing their movements a bit more exciting[ly]" (Weiner 1983). This highlights the struggle faced by Theatre of Yugen to find a balance between creating theatre work that is informed by Japanese performance and requires a specialized knowledge to engage with, on the one hand, and making that work accessible to a San Francisco audience, on the other. Over time, Doi's artistic struggles developed into a negotiation among three issues: educating the audience, maintaining aspects of performance central to noh and kyōgen, and creating performances that can appeal to an audience with little previous exposure to these forms.

In her noh performances, much more than in kyōgen, Doi struggled to maintain traditional structures in timing such as jo-ha-kyū, as well as sparcity of plot development and stage movement. Doi writes: "A defining struggle my whole artistic life in the United States with audiences and critics has been how much to adjust the pace for the audience. This is a much larger problem in our noh productions than in our kyōgen. If I train actors to perform at a faster pace, they will never understand the original noh and kyōgen theatre forms" (Doi and Theatre of Yugen 2007, 249). Pace, time, and intensity are structures central to noh that are found in yūgen, jo-ha-kyū, and moments of no-action, as discussed above. These are part of the internal elements of noh. While they are tied to the external practice, they rely on an embodied sensibility of aesthetics to succeed on stage. The importance of maintaining these aspects in the training of Doi's students also reflects her understanding of how fusion work can succeed; it depends on the embodiment of the tradition, the need for the work to be fully "digested" before it can be employed in a meaningful way in new work.

Doi describes her creative vision, of drawing from noh and kyōgen and other performance lineages such as Greek drama and spoken drama, as a "collision." Her aim is to have two things that she calls "real" collide onstage to make something that is "extra-creation." Realness, for Doi, is not authenticity or an exactitude of the form; it is the actor drawing from and performing from their embodied cultural location. An American actor's performance of noh or kyōgen needs to connect to their other training and life experiences for the performance to be successful. If they try to hide the American influence, the performance will lose its power. In Doi's work, it is not that an American is performing noh but that an American is performing noh in a way that is shaped by their Americanness. When these two or more performance traditions shaped by cultural location collide, they make Doi's "extra-creation." It is the energy released in this collision that can make a dynamic performance onstage.

According to Doi, to fully digest noh means to connect noh's substance with a depth of practice and the personal cultivation of the artist. This needs to develop out of the artist relating to multiple influences, such as migrations and shifts in their cultural location. Doi's productions foreground these migrations in that the actors perform from complex identities, or what Doi calls the "real." This requires an artist to investigate their embodiment of cultural location and personal history through many influences outside of and beyond noh and kyōgen. Doi's "full flower" makes broader connections and is open to expanses of vocabularies. Substance is cultivated within noh. This mastery is cultivated through an endless array of influences that shape and propel the artist. In Doi's San Francisco noh, Zeami's "full flower" becomes "being real." As Doi's students strive to master the form, she asks them to embody noh and at the same time to draw from all of their training, experiences, and forms of knowledge.

## Transmission and Change at Theatre of Yugen

In tracing transmission at Theatre of Yugen, one issue of interest is the roles of the teacher and the student in other contexts and how the practice is passed between them. Doi brought with her to San Francisco a family line of noh and an extended training in a historical lineage of kyōgen. The majority of her students did not have previous exposure to noh or kyōgen. The Theatre of Yugen offered San Francisco actors sustained training at a time in their lives when they had "finished" American actor training. Doi auditioned company members and welcomed them on the basis of interest and skill. Unusual to the San Francisco theatre world was company membership that could offer ongoing professional relationships and creative dialogue.

Jubilith Moore and Libby Zilber came to the company through an open call for actors and trained with Doi for many years. Zilber explained that as a company, they are not interested in doing "straight" noh. This refers to creating and performing noh in a way that is formally and aesthetically consistent with traditional noh. Into the early 1990s, the company did not have the proficiency in noh to perform traditional noh (Zilber 2007). Over the years, company members have increased their skills in noh. By the 2000s, it became possible to mount productions more in keeping with traditional noh plays; however, that is not the vision of Theatre of Yugen (Zilber 2007). Zilber (2007) explains, "A noh play needs to have the *hayashi* and actors who are trained in noh and dedicated to the form. Before, we didn't have actors with the needed training. Now, we're at a point where we have the actors. We don't have the musicians [to do a formally traditional noh play] but also it's not our aesthetics and it's not our mission." They do, however, perform kyōgen plays in a

more strictly traditional way. In their productions of kyōgen classics such as *Busu*, they perform the script in English but with the stylized vocal techniques of traditional kyōgen. They also wear kyōgen costumes. In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, they adapted stylized versions of American movements into their kyōgen. In the early 2000s, company members improved their kyōgen skills and performed kyōgen that was closer to the form in Japan. Kyōgen does not have a musical component, so they were not hindered by a lack of trained musicians in their kyōgen works.

Theatre of Yugen has staged a number of productions based on works of literature well known in North America, such as *Frankenstein*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *Don Quixote*. By drawing on familiar stories and characters, Theatre of Yugen can explore an image or a few moments in time and dispense with a linear narrative. This play selection reworks a central device in noh: the reliance on the audience's prior knowledge of the story. With familiar stories and characters, Theatre of Yugen finds creative leeway to limit exposition and use nonrealistic portrayals of characters, settings, and events. In Jubilith Moore's production of *The Old Man and the Sea*, she was able to cast parts in the play without matching the gender and age of the actors with the gender and age of the characters they portrayed. Lluis Valls, in his mid-thirties, played the old man, and Max, a female Theatre of Yugen company member, played the young boy.[7] Casting two people of roughly the same age to play an old man and a young boy, as well as casting across gender lines for one of these characters, succeeded in two ways. First, the audience came to the production already knowing the characters in the story, so they could quickly assimilate and remember which actor was in which role. Second, this casting complemented the noh tradition, which casts men as women across gender lines. Also, in traditional noh there is little concern about the age of the actor corresponding to the age of the character they are creating. The nonrealistic casting of the production succeeded both because it was in keeping with noh tradition and because the audience knew the relationship between the characters and was already familiar with the storyline.

The 2007 production of the *Cycle Plays* was a significant milestone for Theatre of Yugen. It honoured Doi's retirement from the company. Noh was traditionally performed as a day-long series of plays. Currently, day-long series are produced most often to celebrate the New Year. They begin with a ritual performance called *Okina*, followed by a god play, a warrior play, a woman play, a mad woman play (also called miscellaneous category), and concluding with a demon play. In 1984, Theatre of Yugen produced Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei's *Medea: A Noh Cycle Based on the Greek Myth*. The Medea noh plays, written and created in the United States, connect the Greek myth of Medea with the structure of noh. The *Cycle Plays* are similarly based in noh's play categories but set within a US historical and social context. Erik Ehn wrote and directed the plays, which included the murder of Polly Klass as the demon play and the story of Helen Keller as the woman play. Ehn strove for a jo-ha-kyū throughout all aspects of the performance, from structuring devices within the plays to the broader shape of the day-long series. The day began with a ritual performance based on noh's Okina featuring Doi and Theatre of Yugen founding members Brenda Wong Aoki and Helen Morgenrath. Okina is a noh ritual that is performed on special occasions prior to a full cycle of noh plays; usually, the most senior members of a noh troupe perform the main roles. The ritual is a prayer that asks for longevity, good fortune, and the continuance of noh song and dance. This performance was a staged passing on of the leadership and artistic lineage of Theatre of Yugen from Doi to new artistic directors (Aoki 2007).

The aesthetic depth of Doi's teaching style drew Zilber to the company. Speaking of Doi, Zilber explains, "I still remember the first project we worked on, *Komachi Fuden*, we always started with a dance to warm up. She talked about, 'you don't see with your eyes, you see with your heart.' That

captured my spirit and I fell in love with the Theatre [of Yugen]" (Zilber 2007). This comment from Doi to Zilber reflects Zeami's underlying approach to noh, as discussed above. Zeami (1984) writes, "When it comes to observing the noh, those who truly understand the art watch it with the spirit, while those who do not merely watch it with their eyes" (71). With the *Komachi Fuden* production, Zilber began many years of sustaining and nourishing study with Doi, finding an embodied aesthetic practice that she had not encountered in her previous theatre work (Zilber 2007).

When I first began to watch and study noh, I felt that I could not access the performance because I did not understand the words of the play. The more I studied noh, however, the more I began to see that the language of the play was only one small part of the greater knowledge of Japanese performance, culture, and history I lacked, limiting my ability to engage with the form. Doi has tried in different ways to bring noh and kyōgen a little bit closer to the knowledge and frame of reference that North American and English-speaking students and actors bring to their studies of Japanese performance. While she has made concessions in noh and kyōgen to make them accessible to her students, she vehemently protects the parts of the tradition she sees as most important: the substance and internal qualities of noh.

Doi trained San Francisco actors in noh and kyōgen for more than thirty years, teaching them external and internal aspects of noh. It is the connection to an actor's embodied experience and knowledge that shapes this San Francisco version of noh and achieves Doi's "extra-creation" onstage. Doi passed these arts to her students and has seen them make it their own. Although Doi officially retired in 2002, she has since then staged new productions and performed internationally. Members of the theatre community in Japan have celebrated her work as an example of the global reach of Japanese art forms. For example, she was invited to stage her play *Moon of the Scarlet Plums* at the Aichi World Expo in 2005.

Without Doi's direct oversight, Theatre of Yugen has struggled to find its footing. While Theatre of Yugen continues to teach students, mount productions, and perform locally, it has yet to regain the momentum that it had under Doi. Many of Doi's students have continued to share this lineage of San Francisco noh in vibrant performance careers. Two of Doi's students perform with an international English noh company called Theatre Nohgaku. While Doi sought to draw from noh and kyōgen to make new work, Theatre Nohgaku aims to bring audiences to traditional noh by performing in English. They create new plays that adhere to structures of traditional noh but present contemporary stories often set outside of Japan. Lluis Valls continues to teach kyōgen at Theatre of Yugen. Another of Doi's students, Brenda Wong Aoki, has built a strong career on stage working in multiple forms, including new work influenced by noh and kyōgen as well as contemporary storytelling. Kyoko Yoshida and Miwa Kaneko currently codirect the theatre. Yoshida has long standing ties with Theatre of Yugen and they both have expertise in arts management (Theatre of Yugen, n.d.).

When Doi's former company members go on to perform work that is largely within the frame of spoken drama or new experimental work, their training in noh and kyōgen risk going unmarked. Lluis Valls recently performed Cyrano in a jug-band version of Edmond Ronstand's play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In a 2022 review, Alexa Chipman described Valls's performance as "instantly impressive. . . . He has sensational stage presence, rapier-sharp dialogue and elegant ease during fight choreography." Chipman stresses Valls's stage presence and elegant choreography, which were at least honed during his many years of training in noh and kyōgen with Doi. However, unless the performance makes an overt connection to Japanese forms, this influence goes unmarked. In this

way, Doi's ripples of influence—in performance techniques and approaches to time and intensity—may go unacknowledged.

Noh offers a depth and complexity of practice that can enrich theatre in the twenty-first century and can also be a point of resistance to demands for an easy realism and mass reproduction of a theatre product. There is a need and a thirst for art forms that do not live between commercials but rather engage body-to-body and dance within a shared energy between actor and audience. Doi departed from the function of noh but strove to maintain the substance of noh in the training of her students in the United States. She asked them to learn the external qualities of noh and to fully digest and bring into their bodies its internal qualities. Through a sustained mentorship, students worked toward a mastery of form. At the higher levels of acting, once the student has an embodied sensibility of the internal and external aspects of noh and the function and substance of noh, they can interpret noh through the other forms of knowledge that shape and inform their cultural location. Doi strove to pass on these art practices to her students in San Francisco and created a San Francisco lineage of noh. While the context of noh has changed, and many of its surface details have been adapted to a new location, generation, and body of cultural knowledge, the internal practice of noh, its aesthetics, and an embodied art practice live on through Doi's transmission.

## Notes

1. In founding her theatre company, Doi saw her artistic goal as creating an aesthetic experience based in the concept of *yūgen*, which she describes as "a spiritual sense of flowering" (Ehn 2004, 11).

2. On March 2, 2005, I wrote this reflection on studying at Theatre of Yugen: "I came to the study of noh at the Theatre of Yugen wanting verbal instructions and spoken explanations of the form. I was much more interested in hearing about the meaning and philosophical ideas of noh than I was about learning it through physical practice. In workshop I was waiting for verbal gems while showing significantly less commitment and attention to learning about noh through my body. However, through the weeks of my study at Theatre of Yugen, I was drawn into the physical practice of noh as taught by Jubilith and came to see the movements as not just movements but a broad embodiment of the practice of noh."

3. In theatre circles Nomura Mansaku is known by his given name, Mansaku, to differentiate him from the many other well-known actors in his family. I use his full name throughout this article for clarity.

4. See Takemoto (2008). This article details the concept of jo-ha-kyū in terms of its origins, Zeami's understanding of the concept, and contemporary interpretations.

5. Bracketed explication is that of translator Thomas Rimer.

6. I have made slight adjustments to some of the verb tenses within this quote to make it read smoothly.

7. Max is the full stage name of this actor.

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# Performing Everyday Things: Ecosomatic Threads of Butoh, Phenomenology, and Zen[1]

Sondra Fraleigh

## Introduction

Ecosomatics, *butoh*, phenomenology, Zen, performance, suchness, body, nature, lifeworld, *ma*, Original Face: What do these complicated names and cultural distinctions have in common? When considered conceptually, they brook myriad interconnected values that are increasingly important in our current world of social and ecological crises. In this essay, I unpack these terms to write about their confluence and provide readers with a better understanding of their intercultural significance from East to West. Butoh is the dance and theatre form that arose from the ashes of Japan in the shadow of ecological and social upheaval after the Second World War. It is interpreted widely in current forms that extend well beyond the borders of Japan.

More specifically, the geography of butoh has spread from East to West and back since it began in Japan, but it is now global in its creative and performative adaptations.[2] The migrations of butoh move even more serendipitously as they continue to flow through a diverse network of international and multiethnic artist-teachers who trace their aesthetic roots to Japan. Since my first encounter with this form of dance and therapy in 1985, I have become part of a diverse butoh network of remarkable intercultural inclusiveness, and I sometimes wonder why. Butoh is not a high art but a psychological one that accommodates the everyday—certainly in flowers and mud—and acceptance of clumsiness, weakness, disease, and disability. Most extensively, the body in butoh converges with environing nature in fascinating somatic ways. These are some of butoh's common translations over cultural boundaries. I write about these here, explaining embodiments of nature and culture through the aesthetic joining of dissimilarities. I seek to weave ecosomatic threads of butoh, phenomenology, and Zen across this essay and, as part of the threading, to create short performance maps for readers to experience in extending the everyday.

Butoh can be seen through a prism of Zen and phenomenology because they share similar philosophical outlooks on performance and explain everyday things. This reflective essay takes a somatic turn inward to matters of consciousness related to "suchness," a nondual principle of Zen spanning several kinds of Buddhism. Suchness as perceptual oneness arises through meditative or neutral attention without attachment or need. Here it concerns consciousness in performance through the influence of butoh, whether in dullness or heightened awareness of the everyday. I understand *suchness in performance* of butoh (and beyond) as attentive, generous presentation and witnessing—these propelled by acumen and guidance more than criticism. Judgments can have simple good sense in suchness. An attitude of suchness accepts things and people and performances as they are, whether in personal relationships or on the stage. Expectations are not lowered through suchness; they are open to curiosity and wonder.

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## Waiting at First

You should stop searching for phrases and chasing after words. Take the backward step and turn the light inward. Your body-mind of itself will drop off and your original face will appear. If you want to attain just this, immediately practice just this.

—Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253)

Heeding Dōgen's (2013, 58) advice, I seek "the backward step and inward light." Nevertheless, my search to illuminate performance of everyday things chases after words. In the spirit of phenomenology and Zen, I wait at first in a state of not-knowing. From there, I envision three pathways as methods to guide the body of this essay: descriptive-experiential methods of phenomenology, prompts from butoh, and insights of Zen Buddhism. My quest is to find their common source and describe their world-friendly values.

First, I offer some thumbnail definitions. *Butoh* is a form of dance and theatre that arose underground in Japan in the ecological-social crisis after the Second Word War. It is interpreted widely in current forms that extend well beyond the borders of Japan. *The everyday* is articulated in the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, particularly through concepts of "worlding," how our works ripple out to create a world, as phenomenology and Zen each hold in their own way. I write about butoh through a prism of Zen and phenomenology because they share similar philosophical outlooks on performance, and they explain everyday things. In articulating performance in the everyday, the progress of this reflective essay takes a somatic turn inward to matters of consciousness, ethics, and perception.

The writing stems from my participation in butoh as a student, performer, and scholar since 1985, my university teaching of dance and somatics since 1963, and my philosophical and lived investigations of phenomenology and Buddhism. Through phenomenology, the essay is descriptive, performative, and concerned with "lived experience," including how features of experience appear and transform in consciousness. The methods of phenomenology ask one to look beneath first impressions of phenomena (anything material, ideational, affective or kinesthetic) to discover what is hidden in plain view, to exhume one's own experience in the finding and be ready for surprise. Most widely, phenomenology is the study of consciousness. In dance, for instance, centre is not an immovable point. Its potential depends on the dancer's consciousness and where the movement grounds and tends, just as phenomenology aims to reveal the suchness of things as they are. Pivotal to my philosophical approach is the idea of an ever-moving centre in the cultural melds and performativity of butoh.

## Suchness—As It Is

Jakusho Kwong explains that "in the Zen world the word *nyo* means 'as it is' as well as 'just like this.'" He further says that in the vernacular, it means "everything is OK" (Kwong 2003, 183). Closely related meanings are oneness and nameless *thusness*, a quality of being—like the "catness" of a cat, for instance. If I carry *nyo* into Western thought, I land squarely in the centre of phenomenology—the study of *things in themselves*.

## Nyo

The several threads of this essay relate through themes of *nyo*, matters of suchness, a nondual principle of Zen spanning several kinds of Buddhism. Suchness as perceptual oneness arises through meditative or neutral attention without attachment or need. This can be a special kind of neutrality, sometimes even luminous. I understand *suchness in performance* as attentive, generous presentation and witnessing propelled by insight and guidance more than criticism. What if aesthetic insight could arrive without stress and manipulation? This is a high purpose, of course, but better to set this course and learn along the way than squeeze the life out of a performance. Judgments can have simple good sense in suchness too. The mind of suchness accepts people and performances as they are, not measuring them against expectations, whether in personal relationships or on the stage. Hopes are not lowered through suchness; they are open to curiosity and not attached to goals.

Phenomenologist Nagatomo Shigenori (1992) explains nondual awareness somatically and through Dōgen's Zen as "casting off (the everyday sense of) the body and the mind" (153). A related phenomenon in butoh is sometimes called "shedding," shedding the body that has been "robbed" (or culturally conditioned). Similarly, phenomenology brackets habitual thinking and doing, setting these aside as biases of perceptual conditioning. Butoh dancers cast off stylized, formalized bodies of dance to become more alive to the moment of movement and the place of performance.

They also *step back* from themselves and *follow behind*, as I learned in my first butoh experience with Ashikawa Yoko, the dancer that butoh founder Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986) thought most responsive to his style. Ashikawa's instructions were repeated durationally and slowly, over and over: "You are walking in front of yourself; pieces of your body move out to your sides, and you are following behind yourself" (workshop with Ashikawa in Tokyo, May 20, 1991). Gliding along uncertainly and trembling, I felt my body decentre and multiply beyond me. For a time, the solidity of my ego fell away. What a relief!

## To Perform

Performances always exist in context—in acting, dancing, cooking, conversation, and more. Performance is a way of doing something that involves familiarity and practice, and in this sense, it relates to phenomenology and Zen. To perform is to actively engage in an express purpose and to have the ability to fulfill it. I might perform a task, for instance, like cleaning my house (but not today). To perform in the arts is to orient actions in ways that are practised everyday—to sing and dance as we might like to. In the one-pointed attitude of Zen, we learn the oneness of concentration, how to be sensitively aware in the moment of action, which is exactly the project of any performance. Phenomenology, like Zen, is a philosophy and practice toward clearing the mind, erasing the taken-for-granted, that we might see our biases more clearly (as they are) and be able to act and perform responsively. Suchness indicates acceptance at the beginning. It says, "yes, I see," not wishing for circumstances to be otherwise. "Don't push away the messiness of life," says Ohno Kazuo (1906–2010), the cofounder of butoh along with Hijikata (Ohno's workshop advice, July 2, 1990).

Ohno also teaches that "butoh does not belong to culture," and relative to this, "butoh is the dance of everyday life." Through his somatic performative suggestions of "be a stone" and "dreaming a fetus," I understand the organic projects of butoh that encourage its global participation. In a Buddhist turn, butoh brings marks of suffering and compassion into performance, extending the body's liminal, meditative states. Like sand and life, butoh keeps shifting.

Assaying Zen and butoh in metamorphic processes intersecting the everyday, here at the outset are two performance experiments *to do*, the first inspired by classes with Ohno Kazuo-sensei in Yokohama, Japan, and the second adapted from Hijikata Tatsumi-sensei and his student Nakajima Natsu. These are my interpretations and prompts for butoh experiences and can be performed alone or in community. All they require is a curious mind and willingness to find strength in weakness.

> *The Sacrifice of Others*
> *Go out into the world, somewhere soft and comforting. Let the place you choose speak to you. Sit or lie down as you become mellow and motherly. "The fetus always wants something more," Ohno-sensei says. "Move with a dissatisfaction that helps it grow, and remember yourself in your mother's womb. Give gratitude for all that others have done to make your life possible. Never forget them. You are not the be all and end all of life," says Ohno (workshop in Yokohama Japan, August 17, 1986).*

> *Disappear and Reappear*
> *"Disappear" in light of butoh founder Hijikata Tatsumi-sensei's dance suggestions. Take as much time as you need to feel porous and distant from your usual self. "Become nothing." Walk very slowly by gliding your feet on the ground, never leaving the ground. Do this anywhere. Over time, walk back, reappear and come back to yourself; cry if you want to as you return renewed (workshop in Toronto, Canada, with Hijikata's student Nakajima Natsu, July 16, 1988).*

## Yielding Descent

Akin to Buddhism, butoh admits suffering and weakness. It is not progressive; it yields and descends. Morphic disintegration and cycles of renewal are part of its suchness. In its descent toward nothingness, butoh shares common tones with Zen and phenomenology. Zen stillness empties thoughts toward "no mind," or the unperturbed mind of meditation, and phenomenology attempts to clear away the habits of mind, while the attuned mind of butoh transforms in evanescence.

Aesthetically, butoh is postmodern through its cultural eclecticism, but in attitude, it is antimodern. If butoh could talk, it would say: "The world is going nowhere." It rejects the futurist idea of continual progress; instead, it values present time and place. It shares a Buddhist perspective on lived time and suffering that also has precedent in philosophies of the West, reaching back at least as far as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1859) with his inclusion of Buddhist wisdom in *The World as Will and Representation* ([1818] 1969). Schopenhauer conveys an ethic of suffering that looks back toward "the overcomers of the world and voluntary penitents" produced by the wisdom of India (1:85–91). In later German philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche ([1883] 1966) writes, "I love those who do not know how to live, except by going under, for they are those who cross over" (15).

Schopenhauer's valuing of the body precedes the existential and poetic philosophy of Nietzsche ([1883] 1966) with its great faith in the body: "the body that does not say 'I,' but does 'I'" (61–62). From there, it is just a small step toward "lived body" concepts in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, the bedrock of phenomenology, and later studies of experience by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger.[3] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger ([1927] 1962) writes about "the ecstasy of time," as past and future are lived in the present (401–3). In *Heidegger's Hidden Sources* (1996), Reinhard May reveals that Heidegger admired Buddhist and Taoist teachings and learned from them. As predicate for German philosophy, Schopenhauer gleaned a great deal from Buddhism. His theories set the stage for the arrival of phenomenology, surrealism,

and psychoanalysis in the West, the latter finally exploring the unconscious, or "the collective unconscious," in Carl Jung's depth psychology. Both Schopenhauer and Jung studied nonrational elements of East Asian thought, urging art expressions beyond controlling instincts of the ego.

Butoh lives in this confluence of East and West, circumventing ascendant forms of expression, and also with this, deflating the romance of genius. Schopenhauer ([1818] 1969), himself on the precipice of a romantic age, held the elastic aesthetic notion that everyone has genius: without it, humans would never understand so complicated a phenomenon as art (194–95). He predicted that the flow of Indian wisdom to Europe would "produce a fundamental change in our [Western] knowledge and thought" (357). For Schopenhauer, all nature, including human nature, is an expression of *the will to life*. Tracing life to matters of will (inclinations, ambitions, desires) and grappling with all the pitfalls of the trace, also occupies Zen and butoh in their global presence. Butoh is not one thing, but many. Among other things, it dances *the body in crisis* (Michael Sakamoto), *work* (Tanaka Min), *enigma* (Ohno Kazuo and Ohno Yoshito), *nature's vastness* (Takenouchi Atsushi), and *the yielding yin* (Nakajima Natsu, Joan Laage, Robert Bingham, and many others).

Robert Bingham in *Torn*, a butoh work born in crisis and performed with an aura of yielding non-attachment, choreographed by Lani Weissbach (2006). Photograph by Elena Shalaev, 2006.

We do not often consider that the softness of yielding takes practice, but it does. The Zen-like recognition of pain and suffering in butoh allows me to release projections of strength in dance and related somatic practices, to feel what I feel, not needing to satisfy societal expectations or some ideal of beauty. In every breath, I gather strength, and yield it. Butoh allows me to practise stepping back, to hone it in *letting things be as they are* in dance and everyday life.

## Returning—As Stepping Back

In *No Beginning, No End,* Kwong (2003) quotes Dōgen on *stepping back*: "Dōgen points the way when he says that we take the backward step by turning our thinking mind, with the light of awareness, on our own mind source" (116).

### Return to Source

Returning to source is a prominent common tone of butoh, phenomenology, and Zen. This can be seen clearly in butoh costumes as they mix and morph. There is no one mind to follow. Costumes might include the unisex Japanese kimono, a long billowing dress, or a casual suit jacket, and so forth. Then again, the body is often shown almost nude and powdered with white rice powder. The shorn white figure became a butoh signature, and is still a marker, but butoh aesthetics is fluid and not limited to white spectres. Somatic approaches to butoh pay more attention to the experience of the participant than any specific presentation of the body. Before present-day unisex dressing, butoh costumes were already transgressing typical gendered designations, sometimes for play, no doubt, and sometimes for mythic reasons or to upset gendered expectations.

Regarding his costumes, Ohno Kazuo (2004) says: "My intentions in dressing like a woman on stage are not to become the imitator of a woman or to turn myself into a woman. Rather, I want to trace my life back to its earliest origins. More than anything, I wish to return to where I came from" (76). Kwong (2003) says, "The Zen 'art' of looking into the mind source instead of pursuing thoughts or external stimuli is called *eko hensho*, 'Turning the light around and shining [or looking] back'" (140).

Ohno and other butoh artists catapult the imagination back behind binary distinctions, creating a collage chiaroscuro of light and shade. Entering *ma*, or the space between in butoh and Japanese cosmology, butoh dancers ease sexual distinctions and their cultural labelling. (*Ma* involves source, but also has other meanings, as we see in the last section.) In return to source, butoh dancers play with gender and identity through metamorphosis. The dancer leaves her everyday self *behind* as she becomes other, yielding personal history that her original face might peek through.

### Stepping Back

In the affective presence of *letting be*, *stepping back* meets *suchness*. Stepping back demarcates transformative butoh, particularly apparent in the work of Ohno Kazuo's son Ohno Yoshito.[4] *Kuu* (Emptiness; 2007) is the title of Yoshito's key work, which premiered in New York City. He performs *Kuu* solo, crossing between Japanese and Western styles in costumes and music. Johann Sebastian Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* floods the stage with organ music at the beginning, while Yoshito holds a point of unblinking stillness. From there, he unfolds a wide range of movement affects from brittle to tender, deftly migrating between images. If we don't always know the source of an image, we cannot mistake "image making" as the morphic process at work. At the end, he performs with filmed images and a finger puppet of his father. Stepping back toward

tradition and away from individualism, Yoshito honours his father. Stepping into emptiness in *Kuu,* he steps toward the open centre of Zen.

Another step back develops in the contemporary dance of Tanaka Min, whose early butoh work hones a workmanlike everyday aesthetic. Tanka's *Tree IV* installation, which I saw in Tokyo in 1990, encompasses performance of everyday pedestrian events: walking, reaching, falling, going in and out of doors, outlining the perimeter of a raised platform stage, and so forth. At the end, the performers sit on the edge of the platform near the audience, looking at the faces looking back at them. Neutrality and curiosity coexist in the collaborative atmosphere of being seen. I remember experiencing myself as part of the matter-of-fact dance, and recall the quiet surrounding me, even in noisy Tokyo. In the turnabout moment of being seen as a witness, I felt a return to innocence and expansion of my world. I appreciated how the commonplace-everyday can be framed as art and experienced in dance.[5]

## Original Face

As a form of dance and theatre having its roots in mid-twentieth-century Japan, butoh continues to migrate across cultures through translations that are individually shaped, and some like Tanaka, mentioned above, no longer identify with butoh. Its original face is transmogrifying and muddy: "I come from the mud," Hijikata famously declared at the root. In movement style, this dance form remains radical and deceptively simple, not being based on steps, but rather more on images and weather-like changes. In its several guises, butoh is practised as theatre, dance, and somatic therapy. Its improvisational practices merge human movements with sky, water, leaf, snow, rust and mud, to name a few empathies. Butoh develops mimesis in absorption. It does not meet the mirror; rather, it yields and melts. The aesthetic of butoh is porous and not solid. It reminds us of our ephemerality, morphing through perplexing states of *being*, transforming in appearance and disappearance. The ego (as a solid sense of self) dissolves in mud and returns in wellbeing.

As butoh brought marks of suffering into theatre, it extended the dancing body's liminal, intermediate states (known as *ma* in Japan). In his butoh workshops, Ohno Yoshito teaches that "every step is pain." It could be agony or grief, ongoing, or moving in a space between hope and forgetfulness. The politics of butoh also manifest in matters of discovery. In many ways, butoh questions the status quo and resists tyranny wherever it crops up. Hijikata envisions butoh as protest in his sharp trope of "slashing space." Can you slash space? Well, you can try, but you won't cut anything. Hijikata's art resisted America's incursion into Japan after the Second World War, especially capitalist mass production, but his butoh doesn't preach; it lights up contradictions and dances in our scars. Butoh dancers from Hijikata until now perform the body in resistance as evolutionary and imaginable (Fraleigh 2010, 63–78).

These are aesthetic tendencies and butoh riddles, since individuals find their own way in any art. As a father and son duet, the Ohnos are a special case. Casting a global net, their dancing embodies conscience. *Jelly Fish* (1950s) was Kazuo's first dance on returning to Japan after nine years as a soldier, including two as a prisoner of war. It commemorates the Japanese soldiers who died at sea on the long journey home. In a widely human sense, Kazuo often intoned, "When I dance, I carry all the dead with me." In their international workshops, the Ohnos underscore the need to give gratitude for life and others. Their dances are also laced with concern for the natural world: Yoshito admires birds and snow, and flowers are Kazuo's favourite form of life. Through his large hands, Kazuo shows love of dance and movement from various cultures, dancing tango in *Admiring La*

*Argentina* (1977), an evening-long dance inspired by and honouring Antonia Mercé, better known by her stage name, La Argentina.

My love of butoh always returns to my mentors, the Ohnos. When I witnessed Kazuo in performance, it seemed to me that he danced for me and not for a distant other. I mean that his dances appear near at hand (in his studio, on stage, and on film) as do those of Yoshito. Dancing with his father in *Suiren* (Water lilies; 1987), Yoshito creates a flinty and seething *yang*, then over time transforms into a peaceful lotus goddess. Kazuo himself appears first in a frilly gown and carrying a parasol, then finally he dances freely at the end, wearing a black suit and white shirt while skimming the floor in broad strokes to the singing of Elvis Presley. *Suiren*, which is based on French painter Claude Monet's water lily canvases, is full of surprises. In his choreography of this dance, Kazuo carries us from French impressionism to a popular American idol through an easy, everyday hybridity. He gestures past his many years and Japanese background, reminding us how active art can be in shaping perception. The original face of butoh is transformative, and as Kazuo reminds us, it does not belong to culture. It is about "taking care of life" he told me (July 11, 1997).

Might butoh be seen, then, in the face of everyone? I experienced my butoh face several ways in Japan, dancing and laughing with Yoshito, learning from Kazuo (although he says he does not teach), and witnessing him in bed with his teeth out in his hundredth year. But I have also found my butoh face just as easily close to home—when my attention shifts, my face pinches, becomes rubbery, dissolves in mush, and returns anew.

## Lifeworld—As Body

> Mountains, rivers, sun, moon, wind, and rain, as well as humans, animals, grass, and trees—each and all have been held up. This is holding up the flower. The coming and going of birth and death is a variety of blossoms and their colours. For us to study in this way is holding up the blossom.
>
> —Dōgen Zenji (2013, 89)

When I bend my knees slightly and lower my centre of gravity in a meditative butoh walk, I absorb the earth. In every slow step, I belong to the earth, and it belongs to me. I lean back and look up at the sky, my knees stay soft, my back arches, and everything in me gives up. This is my experience of earth and world in butoh, whether in the studio, or on grass or sandstone. In dancing my relationship to earth and world, I hold up the flower on my path.

### Interactive Lifeworld

At the foundation of phenomenology, Husserl (1859–1938) conceptualized what he called—*the lifeworld*—constituted in the kinesthetic field of bodily awareness. I hold that dance and theatre experiences can relate self to others and the lifeworld. Husserl's term and its layered meanings are greatly expanded in light of dance through several phenomenologies and authors in a recently edited volume, *Back to the Dance Itself* (Fraleigh 2018). Husserl first delineates the "lifeworld" in his criticisms of empirical (object specific) directions of natural sciences, which he views as only one way of knowing ([1952] 1989, 383–90). He conceptualizes the body as experienced with complexity from related lifeworld "horizons" or "attitudes" ([1933–1934] 1995, 164–65), all those we might expect: intuitive, social, affective, political, aesthetic, ecological, and scientific ([1952] 1989, 383–90).

What we might not expect is Husserl's somatic perspective: that in human life, lifeworld is originally based in the intricate phenomena of the psychophysical body, extending interactively toward the environing world of nature. He wrote of human life as part of the "mattering" of nature. In this, he founded what eventually propelled ecosomatic phenomenology and aesthetic activism (Fraleigh and Bingham 2018).

I hold with phenomenology that we are not passive recipients of an already constituted world, which does not mean the world is not already constituted and in process. Husserl writes that human subjectivity is active. We *experience* and come to *know* the world "in fashioning a world through activity," thereby constituting and possessing a consciousness of the world, whether through the strife of politics or the soil of nature and history. Human subjects bear every sense of what is meant by *world*; the world of nature itself is alive and has ontological being (Husserl 1995, 167–89).

I hold that we create our world and its ecology in everyday performances: the acts and deeds that surface in theatre and the taken-for-granted rituals of daily life. In language, *world* is used loosely to indicate wide expanses of land and collectives of experience and thought, but is not always turned back toward the inner world of embodied life. In phenomenology, w*orlding* is a pregnant, generative concept, indicating appearance of phenomena (things) as individuals become increasingly aware of them.

*Enworlding* (*verweltlichung*) is Husserl's concept for the ongoing incompletion of the world in human consciousness (Bruzina 1995, li). His phenomenology has a meditative quality in elucidating "the flowing live present" (xiv). He theorizes *enworlding* in his texts relating to Eugene Fink's draft of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (Husserl [1933–1934] 1995, 188–92) and proffers a transcendental idea with this, not pointing to religiosity but to how we might more fully realize the world, as we live it. World (as encompassing) and earth (as home) are interactive aspects of consciousness, incomplete and in process.

"Worlding" in word and sound creates an expansive feeling in me, a sense of things on the verge, as in butoh when the dancer communicates emergent movement with uninflected slowness that seems never ending. Takenouchi Atsushi, who studied with both Hijikata and Ohno, can move in this minimal way but also slams into objects and speeds with spatial abandon. Much of what happens in his performance seethes beneath the surface. Something remains unstated, unknown and invisible, as though the world will never be known all the way through. He provides a ready example of what it means to create a world through dance, dancing in tortured and remote places to heal the earth, as his mentor Ohno did before him. Through dance experience and participation, butoh generates transcultural interconnections with ecological conscience. Following Ohno's example, Takenouchi made it his mission to dance in places of peril and endangerment around the world. He also likes to match the abundance of elegant environments.

Takenouchi Atsushi dancing in Italy at Lake Maggoire. Photograph by Hiroko Komiya, 2018.

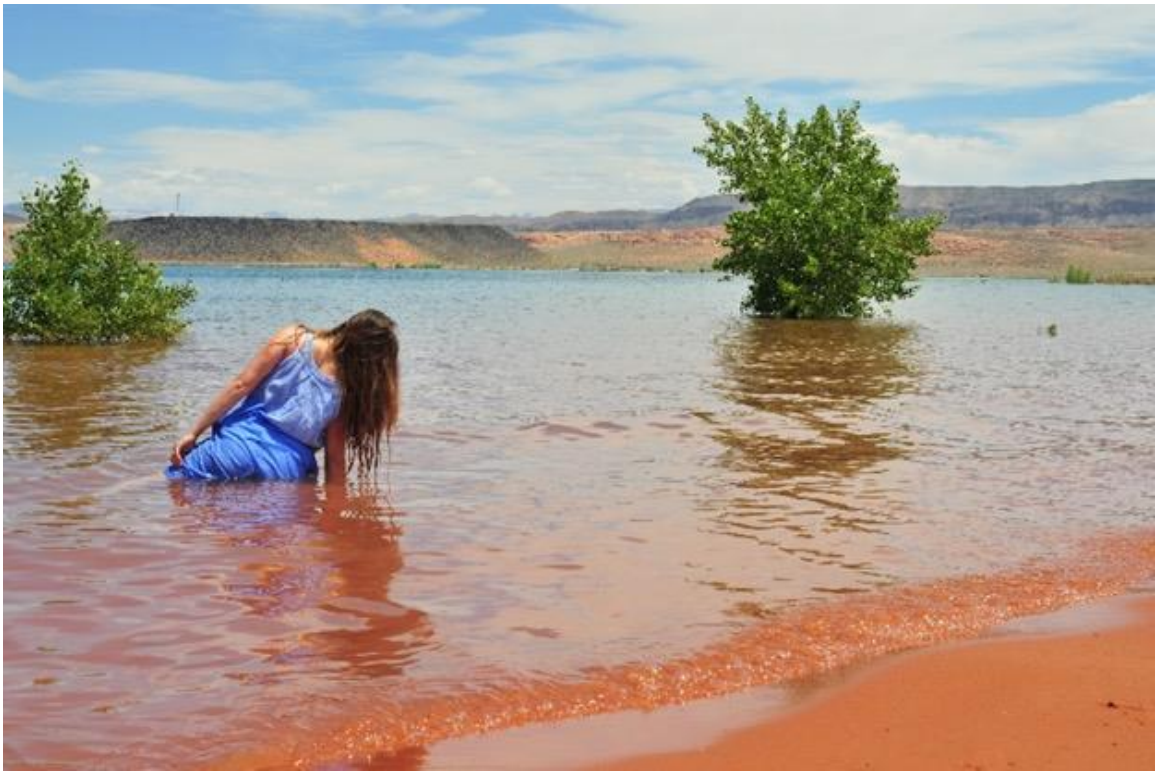
## Ecosomatic Threads

We have been concerned with butoh in its generative aspects; now, we look more widely toward its eco-somatic potentials. Husserl and the later phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty offer an understanding of how ego, or the solid and separate sense of self, binds us to materiality and a consciousness of the external world. Husserl's philosophy holds that "the world is not only the *external world* but the inclusional unity of immanence and transcendence" (Husserl [1933–1934] 1995, 158). He also speaks of an environing world and cultural world that does not reduce to "*man's construct"* (158). His philosophy carries the mind beyond the cultural constructs of self and ego. His view is that "human life is *we life"* (192). "Self" is a limited identification, not a separate, solid state of being. *We life* is the inclusive world of nature in which we share. Try as we might, we are not ultimate "doers." The world worlds beyond human consciousness, even as it converges with it.

For a similar view, we turn to Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa (2002), who speaks of "spiritual materialism" in the struggle to maintain a solid ego or sense of self: "In the Buddhist tradition, the analogy of the sun appearing from behind the clouds is often used to explain the discovery of enlightenment. . . . The struggle to maintain the sense of a solid, continuous self is the action of ego" (4). Trungpa explains that the process of meditation brings freedom in *letting be*: "Meditation involves seeing the transparency of concepts so that labelling no longer serves as a way of solidifying our world and our image of self" (11).

*Letting be* the wholeness of body and world is central to ecological phenomenology (James 2009, 95–96). Husserl and his students Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty set the stage for current concerns of ecology in explaining that how we understand body and world enters into human behaviour. Heidegger (1996) critiqued vast technologies that exploit nature as "resource" (330). Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962) created a phenomenology of the human as an inseparable part of the already expressive world (3–5, 35, 53, 67–68). The phenomenology of performance artist David Abram extends these sources in our century, recently in *Becoming Animal* (2010), while Edward Casey (1997) and John Llewelyn (2003) also further ecological phenomenology.

If we look toward Japan, we encounter similar concerns in the ecological philosophy of Yasuo Yuasa (1993) who explains the human as issuing from nature and as integral to the ecosystem, "for the human being is originally a being born out of nature" (188). In *The Body, Self-Cultivation & Ki-Energy*, he presents mind and material through their embodied oneness as moved by *ki* (universal energy). Just as the Buddha mind is everywhere, *ki* permeates and connects us to everything.



Amber Olpin-Watkins dancing at Sand Hollow in Southwest Utah. Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh, 2016.

*In returning to source, stepping back and letting be*, we see how butoh also connects to nature and the ecosystem. In somatic performances, dancers can attune meditatively to site-specific environments through the neutrality of non-judgment and awareness of place. The fluid aesthetic of butoh prompts such attunement. Below, I suggest a performance of the everyday in a butoh frame of mind. This somatic event is not conceived for an audience, but it could provide background for theatre performance:

> *Letting Be*
> *Spend a day near a lake, an ocean, a brook, or another body of water.*
> *When you return home, sit in silence and attune to your aliveness.*
> *Crawl on all fours for a minute or so.*
> *Then walk on hands and feet as you come to standing.*
> *Take your time.*
> *Notice any new sensations.*
> *Thank your ancestors for your life.*
> *If a spontaneous gesture arises, let it flow.*
> *Follow it into disappearance.*

### Performing Phenomenology

One can explain phenomenology or do phenomenology. The latter is a performance more than an explanation, switching from static modes of theory to active contexts of event. The first is sometimes necessary in order to set the stage for the second, as in this essay. I use the term *event* for movements, happenings, or standings undertaken consciously, like the suggested explorations *to do*, or performative events intersecting this essay. Such events draw a difference between dance performed primarily for the stage and that undertaken in somatic contexts for personal development, group cohesion, and community activism.

Performing phenomenology as an author is another kind of doing, as one digs ever more deeply into the original intuitions set in motion by central questions. My writing often takes a performative direction to extend nondual concepts of the body through descriptive aesthetics. Heidegger's innovations in phenomenology catapulted from a theory-based orientation in his teacher Husserl to *the performative* that underlies work in the arts (Grant 2019; Fraleigh 2018, 2019), social theory (Grant 2019), and feminism, particularly *performativity* in Judith Butler (Grant 2019; Fraleigh 2004). The voluminous and much quoted work of Merleau-Ponty is as performative as it is theoretical, while Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) carry performative methods of writing even further.

The value of performing phenomenology lies in what it asks of the author and performer herself. Phenomenology requires a bracketing of what Husserl called "the natural attitude," or the way the world and objects appear on first glance, and what we might say of them if we look more deeply and suspend bias and ego attachments in the process. This is a journey through one's own experience, eventually opening into a larger field of discoveries of others. We have seen that the goal of phenomenology is to overcome face value prejudices in *perceptions*, and now I add, *in performative events*. Next, we consider the somatic basis of such events in relation to butoh and Zen.

## Environing Cores—As Somatic Attunement

In *Attunement through the Body*, Shigenori Nagatomo (1992) explains somatic attunement in Zen. The chapter "Dōgen and the Body in Transformation" offers a full account (131–54). Nagatomo conceives affective transformation in somatic awareness as "felt inner resonance," an attunement or harmony arising through a change in the assumed body image through "casting off the body and mind," as stated in Dōgen's Zen. We live our everyday body image from within "the boundary of the skin," Nagatomo says, but body image is not limited to this. Transformation occurs through a somatic act, casting off the everyday body and mind. This is "a somatic achievement" according to Nagatomo, "a lived feeling which expands beyond the physical delineation of the skin to embrace the shaped things of the natural world" (153). Butoh in particular is motivated by images from myriad sources that have profound effects on body image.

### Felt Inner Resonance

Butoh transformation joins commonalities across dissimilarities. Of the many "things" I have become in butoh, I remember being a water bag, crouching old woman, grinning insect, seed, bee pollen, crone to beauty, flower, moth, fetus, lightning, chicken, ash pillar, ice, peacock wearing high heels, whale, and much more—all ready to crumble with an uncertainty especially appreciated in Buddhism. Moreover, the actions of butoh are not imitative, rather does one become the image or *butoh-fu* (chronicle or dance image). The process is unlike any in dance forms that depend on

narrative or imitation. When I become a crone and transform toward beauty, I am not imitating a crone or a beautiful woman, I become them and the transition in between. I find an inner resonance with otherness and make it mine; this is a somatic process in actively constituting a world, one micro-step at a time. As a performer, I might also communicate this world, but that would represent another step.

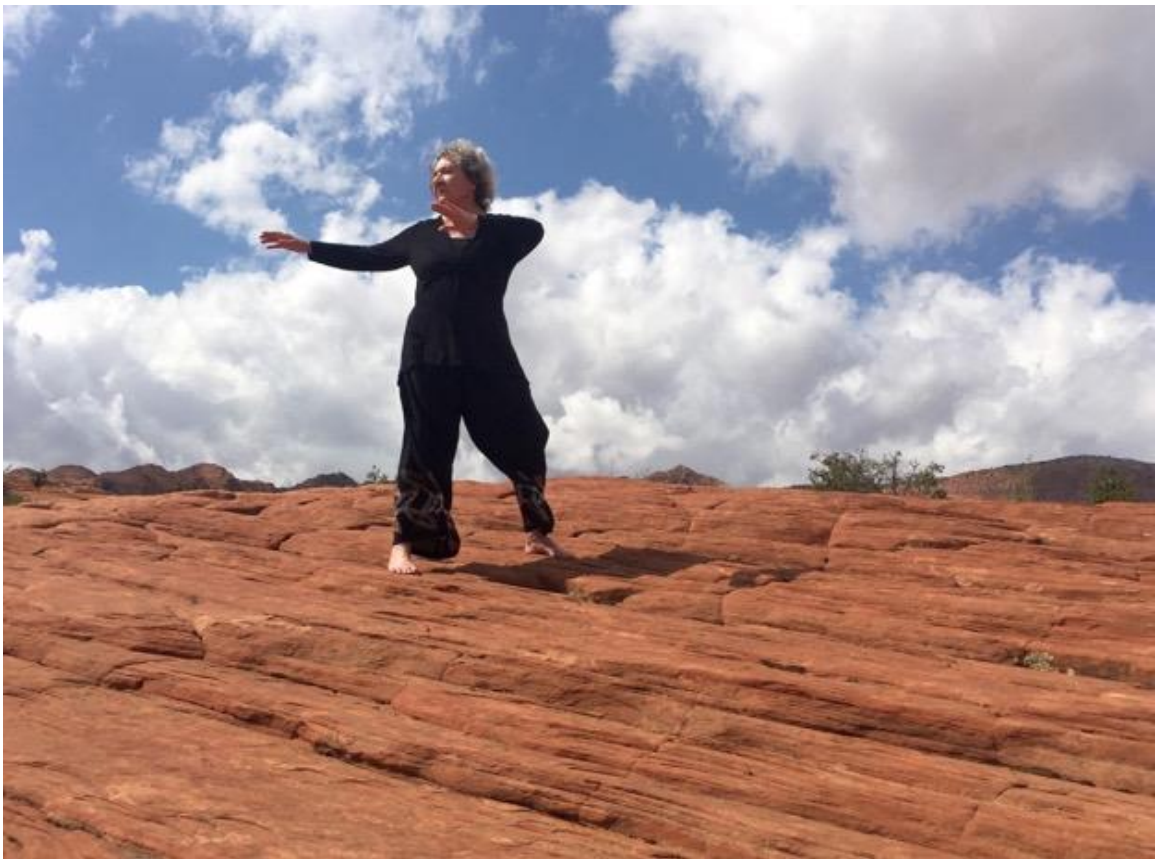
*Somatic movement practices* propose to improve skills and performance, but are more broadly concerned with emotional health, ethical understanding, and empathic movement experience. Butoh exists in both somatic contexts, and why would it not? It can expand the expressive range of performance; and in morphic processes, performing and witnessing butoh can be therapeutic. Many people participate for this reason alone.[6]

Movement for self-cultivation and environmental connectivity is also a matter of perceptual attunement in Japanese phenomenology, as we just saw with Nagatomo. This can be seen further through the community butoh of Harada Nobuo in Fukuoka, Japan (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, 138–43) and in the international teaching of Kasai Akira (Fraleigh 1999, 228–41). Harada and Kasai were both active in the founding of butoh along with Hijikata and Ohno. The international performance and teaching of Takenouchi Atsushi in the second generation provides a clear example of environmental butoh.

Takenouchi Atsushi dancing in nature at Lake Maggiore. Photo by Hiroko Komiya, 2018.

Several strands of butoh and other somatic dance practices engage the environmental world: a rising area of social concern explored extensively in *Dancing on Earth* (LaMothe 2017), *Performing Ecologies in a World in Crisis* (Fraleigh and Bingham 2018), and *Back to the Dance Itself* (Fraleigh 2018). Husserl's rich lifeworld concepts lie behind such efforts. He views nature as constituted in sense: "The world as nature remains . . . a construct of sense, a synthetic unity in the infinity of environing natural cores" (Husserl [1933–1934] 1995, 189). This is significant for any kind of performance because the body as lived participates in the constitution of the lifeworld, and the world we sense is embodied in performance.

Following phenomenology toward zero, the seeker might stumble across the no-mind of Zen, hesitate and wait in a space of not-knowing. Lifeworld encounters aid in dissolution of the time-constituted ego in its ever-streaming passage (Husserl [1933–1934] 1995, 170–71). Body, the soma of self and the environing world of nature are intrinsically (experientially) connected. Through choreography, improvisation, and in several avenues of performance, we translate the lived to the known when we dance. An invisible, felt inner resonance connects us aesthetically (affectively) to the subjective life that animates performance. Such somatic attunements and aesthetic feelings can serve to remind us of the resonant life we share with the natural world, as I am reminded when I dance near my home in Saint George, Utah.



Sondra Fraleigh in *Soma 77* dances barefoot on sandstone in Snow Canyon, Utah. Photograph by Alycia Bright Holland, 2016.

## Orientation of Awareness in Ancient Dance

Butoh develops wholistic awareness of what *butoh-ka* (butoh dancers) call "ancient dance." A definition of dance and a matter of awareness, ancient dance ties together the various strands of butoh, as I observed at international butoh festivals in San Francisco (1997), London (2005), Chicago (2006), and New York City (2007). Ancient dance is the dance we already do, the dance always happening everywhere. Takenouchi (2003) calls it *Jinen Butoh* (dance with nature). This is not necessarily dance for the stage; it might land on stage, in your kitchen, or on a mountaintop. It can also blossom in your heart as compassion, the dance that beacons to you in the dark in the desert.

The following short performance is a practice in orientation of awareness that uses pedestrian, everyday movement. I think of it as butoh in its simplicity and matter-of-fact suchness. These are

movements we cannot get out of. Most ancient, they are everywhere we are, and we have done them developmentally and morphologically since birth. Here we explore them performatively as a somatic event. The movements can become interesting, and maybe even intriguing as art when observed as developmental expressions of motile life.

*I stand up*
*I sit down*
*I lie down*
*I roll over*
*I curl up*
*I sit up*
*I stand up*
*I walk*

The movements may look dispersed on the page, but they have a through line in the body. To perform this list as butoh, slow the movements down—way down. And let any struggle to find the next movement become part of what you show. Let the transitions (the *ma*) emerge naturally and pay attention to transitional spaces in between the indicated movements. If you have any trouble getting up and down from the floor, use your hands or a prop, or include someone in your performance who can assist you. They can become part of the suchness of the performance in its being OK as it is. Butoh performers like Endo Tadashi and Takenouchi include a range of movement abilities in their work. If someone cannot do something being asked, they get help. And this is part of the *ma*.

Takenouchi Atsushi in rehearsal, showing how to assist and include a dancer with challenges. They will be part of a group performance and environmental work under a full moon at Broellin Castle in Germany (night of August 15, 2003). Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh, 2003.

## Chiasm (Entwinement)—As *Ma*

The experience of *ma*, the space between in Japanese, or *limina* in psychology, is more important than visible form in butoh. Further, *ma* is not personalized through narrative, as often in dancing; it moves in light and shadow never quite arriving. In an objective sense, *ma* is nothing; yet we know it is there in shades. Butoh morphology prompts translations of *ma,* ugly affects or beautiful images in process, OK *as they are*. They change, disappear, or intensify like the flow of nature, *as it is*.

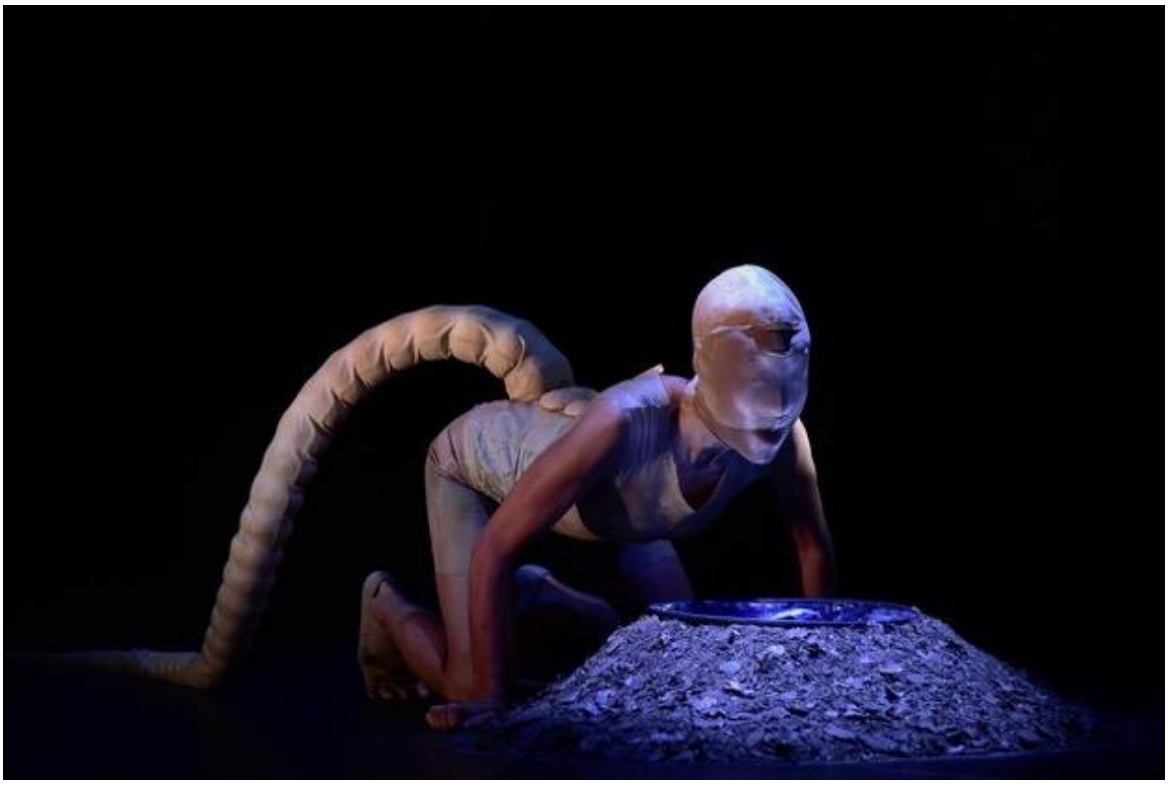
### Spaces of Possibility in Ma and Chiasm

*Ma* is a Japanese and Zen word for evanescent space-time or the emptiness in between things. There is no direct translation into English, but *ma* accords roughly with liminal transitional space and indeterminate time. *Ma* is similar to *chiasm*, a symbiotic term from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty that describes a crossing over and return. This can be understood relative to perceptual oneness and the "in-betweens" of Japanese thought. *Chiasm* indicates the space between as one of entwinement, where the seer is seen and the knower becomes known, or "doubled" (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968, 264). The symbiotic play of *chiasm* animates qualities of presence and oneness (214–15). *Chiasm and ma* are similar nondual, spacious images, but there is a difference. *Ma* is essence and evanescence at once, while *chiasm* elaborates bodily entwinement with space and time. Our body is not in space and time, as Merleau-Ponty holds; it belongs to and combines with them ([1945] 2002, 162).[7]

*Ma* is interval, a space of possibility in human imagination. In her chapter "Being *Ma:* Moonlight Peeping through the Doorway," Christine Bellerose (2018) shows how *ma* inhabits butoh. The aesthetic of butoh transforms through *ma*, just as we in our human nature change through time. Neither futuristic nor nostalgic, butoh appears and evanesces in present time. Ohno Yoshito teaches butoh workshops through conundrum, creating a space of possibility in "the patience of not starting," while Hijikata expresses *ma* through "the weak body." His last solo, *Leprosy* (1973), falters close to the body at the beginning, and in time totters to the outsides of the feet.[8] Hijikata dances neither with alarm nor in seeking resolution—he expresses a middle way, and to my mind, *nyo*.

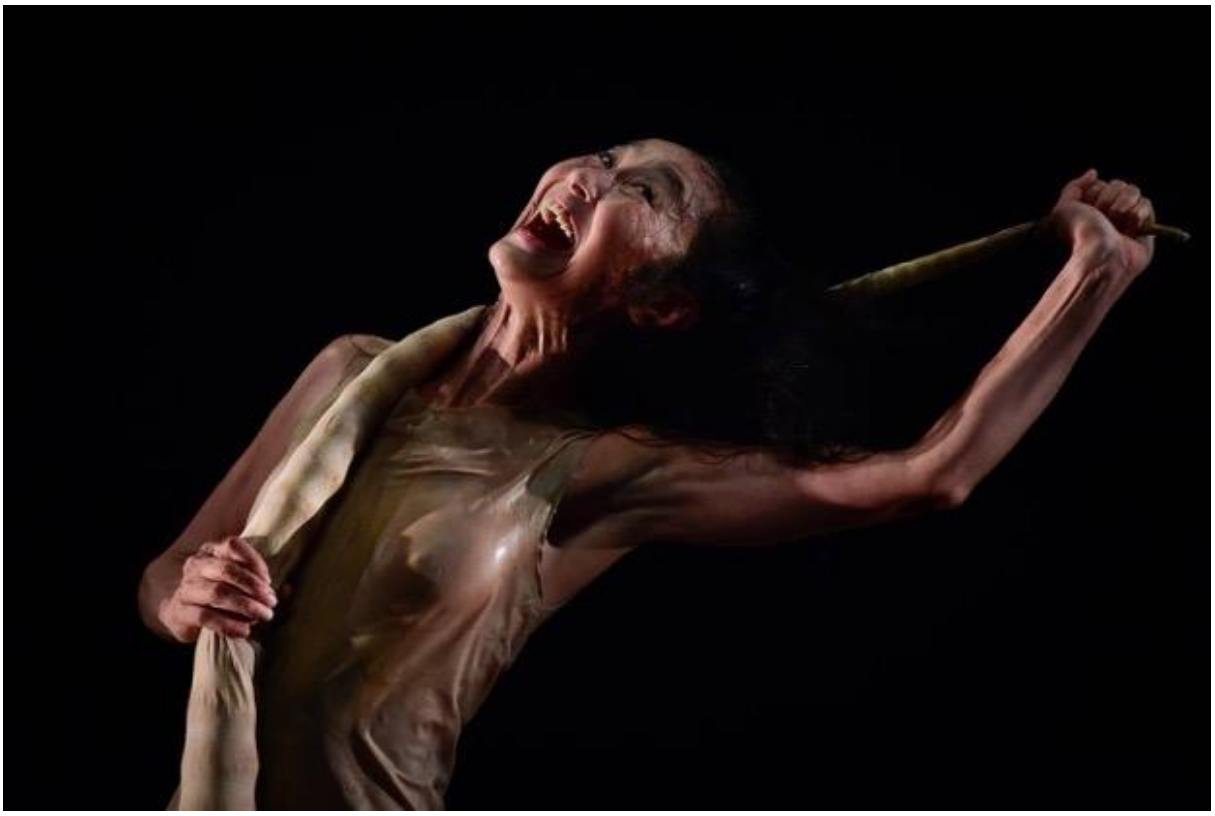
In Japanese mythology, spirits known as *kami* animate *ma,* especially in plum blossoms and bamboo shoots, conical sand piles and round boulders, waterfalls, and other natural phenomena. *Kami* expressly enter the flow of dancers. In butoh, *ma* enters matter as philosophy, essence, and evanescence. "*Ma* permeates the cosmological flow of Shintō Zen divinities' order, and it enters the contemporary dance philosophy of butoh as embodied flow" (Bellerose 2018, 162–67). In *MA* (1991), Endo Tadashi dances between *wabi-sabi*, weathered, spare and muted beauty and animal imagery. I describe this work fully in another text (2010, 167–71).

Yoshioka Yumiko evokes *ma* through otherworldly monsters in her solo *One Hundred Light Years of Solitude* (2016).



Yoshioka Yumiko in *One Hundred Light Years of Solitude* (2016), premiere in Porto Portugal at Armazem 22. Photograph by Edgar Gutiérrez Calvillo in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, © 2017. Photograph courtesy of Yoshioka Yumiko.

Over time, she senses her eternal solitude, desperately grasping and eating her own tail. Yoshioka's dance is inspired by Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* She dances the life of a unique creature, born on a planet one hundred light years away (email to author, May 17, 2018). In her notes on the dance, Yoshioka says: "In my childhood, the imaginary creatures and monsters of fairy tales always fascinated me. Butoh, a dance of metamorphosis, helps me to explore this imaginary world, and make something invisible visible." Yoshioka's works move through strange and specious images that disrupt a solid sense of self, as Zen riddles also do.

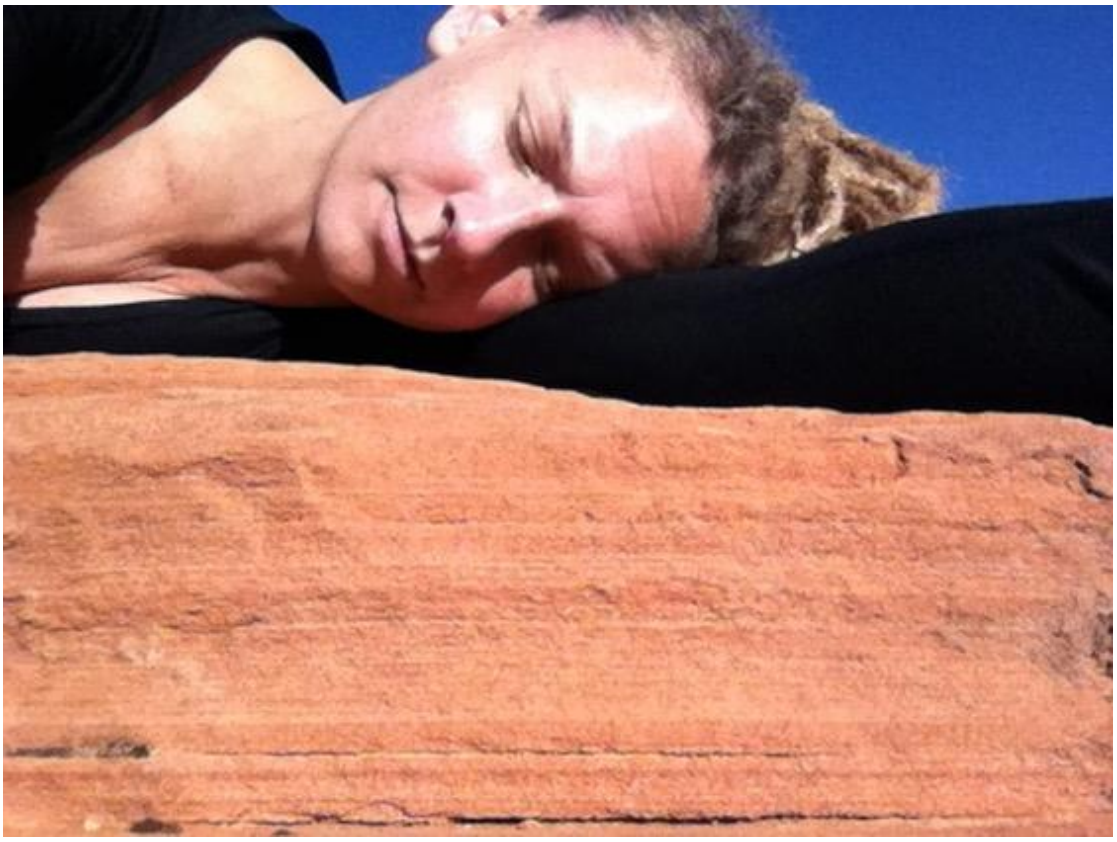


Yoshioka Yumiko in *One Hundred Light Years of Solitude* (2016). Photograph by Edgar Gutiérrez Calvillo, © 2017. Photograph courtesy of Yoshioka Yumiko.

## Oneness

When I go out into the natural world to perform with my students, we dance in an attitude of oneness. Our task is to shed what we think we know to experience a deeper truth in bodily attunement and potential. The world in its worlding intervals entwines with and surrounds us—as we cross over, move under and in between. In the spirit of performing phenomenology, I include a video link of our environmental butoh, Robert Bingham in "Sounding Earth," https://youtu.be/Es2xZIR7aFQ.

Below is a photograph of Karen Barbour, a dancer from New Zealand, exploring the butoh of her *Land and Body are One* on visit with me in Utah in 2015.



Karen Barbour, selfie, in Southwest Utah, 2015.

There is a poem I like by the great Chinese Zen master Hongzhi Zhengjue (Wanshi Shōgaku in Japanese), who lived in China from 1091 to 1157 and had a profound influence on the Japanese Sōtō Zen tradition. In this poem, Hongzhi alludes to the empty nature and luminosity of oneness in return to source—also returning readers to the central theme of *nyo* in this essay. His lines are simple like haiku poetry, but not bound to the form, and they express the suchness of everyday things. One might notice how each line shines perception. They come from Hongzhi's poem "Acupuncture Needle of Zazen" (qtd. in Kwong 2003, 132).

> The water is clear right down
> to the bottom.
> Fish swim lazily on.
> The sky is vast without end.
> Birds fly far into the distance.

I have a Japanese friend called "Laughing Stone" who lived in the countryside near the bombing of Hiroshima at the end of the Second World War. Now he owns land in this area that was once scorched. I walked the land with him one day, listening to his stories of atomic disaster and how the people there ate roots to stay alive after the bombing. Now he grows tall grasses on the once devastated land, extending his larger self and laughing identity. He has created a rest centre for cancer treatment and cultivates products for health, while his daughter who teaches dance somatics and butoh runs his business. He is a man who has suffered and come to realize a very large life. He and his daughter remind me that laughing and dancing are paths for the development of

consciousness, and that cultivation of the body and the land go hand in hand in the performance of everyday things.

Nearing the finish of this essay, I ask into my original insights: shall I bracket once again to ask myself if there is something I am missing or should revise? No. I should simply step back and say in the spirit of Zen that everything is OK. But I do see something is missing. That would be my gratitude—for teachers and traditions supporting my work—as I extend below.

First, for Ohno Kazuo (1906–2010) and his son Yoshito (born 1938), for their generous spirit and gentle dancing, for risking craziness, for wild gender juxtapositions, and for dancing beyond genres while mixing cultures.

For phenomenology: It forged in me an understanding of butoh, which I might have otherwise missed, since the maddening project of opening our minds is also the project of phenomenology. There is always something we miss. Hesitate! Wait, and more will appear.

For Edmund Husserl (1859–1938): As a Jew living in Germany during the rise of Hitler, his life and writings were often at risk. He prepared a path for embodied philosophy and gave both dancers and philosophers a way to speak about the convergence of body with world and nature.

For somatic movement arts as a field of study—attending to performance in an everyday frame of mind while entwining a large and often unseen whole.

For Zen, and my great good fortune in befriending Akane Akiko in Japan. She introduced me to her father, Zen master Akane Shodo, whose mastery is the difficult art of calligraphy. He became my Zen teacher and encouraged my writing on dance and Zen, subsequently creating calligraphy for my first book on butoh, *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan* (1999).

I gratefully renew my experiences with Japan and Zen in this essay—with a note that the Zen way of calligraphy relates to the everyday, as I learned through my sensei Akane Shodo, in the line of the great master Eihei Dōgen Zenji. The Zen way is not about trying to make anything beautiful or skillful, just giving full attention as if discovering writing or any other action for the first time.

## On Sounding Bodies

*This essay might be extended in several directions, since phenomenology, butoh, and Zen are practices of continuing attention and revelation. For now, I invite you to perform the following in a meditative frame of mind.*

> *ON SOUND AND SILENCE*
> *Find a quiet place where you can be alone and ask yourself,*
> *What comfort is available in sitting or lying down.*
>
> *If you are sitting, sit forward so that your back is free.*
> *Let your back relax upward and your head float peacefully.*
> *If you lie down, find out which feels better—*
> *lying on your back,*
> *or curling over in embryo on your side.*
> *Then choose the position you like.*

*Let an easy balance arise in your body,*
*while gently swelling your belly breath.*
*Let gravity hold you. Let the earth hold you.*

*With nothing to do, nowhere to go,*
*and not acting upon sounds,*
*Let sound be.*
*Remain as you are as long as you like.*
*And when you rise, notice if an instinctive gesture*
*Rises and moves you.*
*If so, let it flow, or simply be quiet.*

*Let gestures gesture and be still,*
*Let sounds sound and be silent,*
*Let butoh be as it is*

## Notes

1. Initially published as "Performing Everyday Things," *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities* 8, no. 1–2 (December 2021): 33–55.

2. I write *butoh* in lower case when it runs into the text, as I would any other dance form or genre.

3. For an account of lived body concepts in relation to all of these authors, see Fraleigh (1987).

4. The essay occasionally uses first names to distinguish between the Ohnos.

5. I saw *Tree IV* in Tokyo at Plan B on June 2, 1990.

6. Prominent examples of somatic movement practices in Western contexts are the Feldenkrais Method, the Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering, Shin Somatics, and Authentic Movement Practice. For a full account, see Fraleigh (2015).

7. Here we note in Merleau-Ponty an echo of Husserl's convergence of body with world and nature that we considered earlier.

8. Hijikata's *Leprosy* (1973) is described more fully in Fraleigh (2010, 87–90).

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# Anatomy of Conflict[1]

Naoko Maeshiba

This practice-based essay is about my inquiry into the matter of physicality in performance. My suggestions about generating physicality deal with this matter from different angles: sensation in body, space and body, Western horizontality vs. Japanese verticality, head logic and body thinking, emotion and body, and approach to creating a potent body. My exploration of the physicality of actors is rooted in the flux and ambiguity of confidence and the confinement that I experience in my Japanese/Western body. First, I examine how I view the disconnect between body, mind, and space currently happening in the field of theatre.[2] I then explore and investigate the origins of my view by revisiting my cultural background and excavating the roots of my own physical/mental construct as someone born in Westernized, modern Japan and who moves back and forth between Japan and the United States. I will juxtapose my reflections on my past experiences with my current classroom experience, providing concrete examples of the conflicts, challenges, and questions that I confront in the process of merging Eastern and Western approaches. As I examine the East-West dynamics in my physical/mental construct, I call attention to the relationship between body and space, referring to the work of visionary Japanese director and playwright Ōta Shōgo. Ōta was an influential figure in Japanese theatre in the 1970s and 1980s when underground theatre flourished as a response to both traditional theatre and Western-oriented modern theatre.[3] The essay then turns to a reflection on the reintegration of my Japanese/Western body before addressing the question of whether a universal approach to potentiality in performance is possible. I conclude with an excerpt of my forthcoming workbook, *Anatomy of Conflict Workbook: Daily Practice for a Potent Body*.

## My Disconnect

What excites me most in performance is the fact that there is a live body on stage: a body that breathes, moves, sees, hears, and interacts with other bodies. What thrills me most is that holy moment when the performer's body starts vibrating with the space. My breath starts synchronizing with the performer's. I start feeling the particles of air.

Electricity runs through my body. My pores open, my temperature shifts, and I feel strong sensation travelling through my spine. I'm experiencing what she is experiencing. The colour around me starts altering. I am seeing what I'm not seeing. I sense what's arising in space through her body as a medium. It is like hearing an overtone in Tuvan singing. It's exhilarating. I'm alive. My cells are alive. I feel ecstatic. Sadly, this happens rarely. Most often, I'm staring at what seem like deadened bodies and an empty space. Whether it's Broadway or experimental theatre or educational theatre, in my limited experiences, I often find myself not engaging, not because the performance is in English but because of the disconnect that happens between the body and the mind, the body and the words, and the body and the space. I stop feeling and desperately start searching for some kind of thread to hang onto. My thoughts float away from my body, entering a sort of maze as I try to listen to and

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make sense of what's being presented to me. I stop breathing. I can feel my energy go up in my head. I try to understand. My head is hot. My body is in pain. I feel powerless. Many questions start swirling in my head. Why are their bodies not matching with their words? Why can't I just take make-believe as make-believe? Why do they just sit like that as if they didn't sense the feeling of the sofa? Why do they move as if they knew it all? What are they afraid of? What am I afraid of? Depth? Subtlety? Why do I not feel anything? I am alone.

I look around and the rest of the audience is having a great time.

Laughing, crying, feeling catharsis, and experiencing enlightenment. I sit, feeling like a complete failure, questioning myself. Why do I feel that it's not real? On the surface, I hear them speak beautifully, move around with finesse. The space is well crafted. But my own body doesn't quite believe it. Why? Maybe this has something to do with my Japanese upbringing.

## Japan in My Body

Growing up in Kobe, Japan, in the 1960s and 1970s, nature and culture merged all around me.

Playing on an unpaved road, seeing bats fly around in the orange dark sky, smelling the persimmons falling from a tree, sneaking into a neighbour's small cow farm and stepping on cows' droppings, hiding in a small cave and listening to the insects, and escaping from a small snake, the welding factory around the corner, the loud abrasive sound and smell of iron, the fresh scent of lumber from the lumberyard right behind my house . . . that's where I gathered neighbourhood kids and performed my first play. My feet remember the precariousness of different sizes of lumber. My hands remember the warmth of the soft earth. Every evening at twilight, as the sky got dark, I felt a little lonely and wanted to go home. The first day of spring, when the cherry blossoms arrived, my eyes, ears, nostrils, and skin all opened to enter into the festivity. I felt a little sad when the petals started falling. The boundary between my body and the environment around me often became blurry. Embracing and enjoying these precious moments was the main purpose of my life.

Indoor life was just as rich as outdoor life. In a standard size, traditional Japanese house, rooms are loosely separated by sliding doors. We also demarcate the space by taking off shoes, putting them on, taking them off and putting on indoor slippers, then taking them off and putting on toilet slippers, so on and so forth. In the house where I grew up, all the rooms were multifunctional. One room turned into a bedroom, a living room, and a study. Every time the room got rearranged and redefined, my default body position changed from lying to sitting to standing. I registered each room and its function through my physical sense. The small kitchen with a low sink was a place in which we often rotated our bodies, bent over and extended. The room that faced the corridor was the one where we sat on tatami mats, and the dining room was the only "chair" room, in which my body was allowed to extend fully, making me feel much taller. The bathroom entailed squatting low and sinking in lower. The energy from different spaces lingered, leaving their traces in my body. My body was an extension of each particular place, each environment.

*With these sensations still alive somewhere in my body, I approach young actors and immediately hit a wall. I find myself struggling with the feeling that I need to explain myself better through words. The more I talk, the more diluted the essence becomes. Since "speaking" is not my forte, I would often start from the physical life of performance and drive other elements from there. Yet again I immediately hit that wall. My students don't trust their own physical*

*sense. In fact, they don't seem to trust anything other than the words they are uttering. It seems there has to be an intellectual reason to make any action happen. So I grab a real object for them to work with. "OK, here, let's say there is this chair in the room and you love it." They stand next to it. They tentatively or carelessly touch it. They lift it, hold it, put it down again. They try to form some kind of a relationship with it, but often it appears to be difficult to form any real connection between their bodies and this object. They try to be agents enacting some action on it. It's as if they've inhibited themselves from engaging through their own feelings and sensations. I don't feel them or the chair. They try really hard to make something happen, to make some kind of context. Now it's a telescope, now it's a broom, now this, now that. A sliver of context emerges, but it is rarely enough to transform their stiff bodies, the chair, or the space. Nothing feels real. The room feels stuffy. I start getting exhausted and losing interest.*

*Somehow, moving is much more foreign to them than speaking. Sensations are even more foreign to them. I'm getting extremely desperate. Jump! Run around! What is your breath like now? Now touch the chair. Let the chair touch you. How do you feel? Stand. No, REALLY stand. OK, now sit. What changed? Lie down now. What changed? Stand up. What does it mean to stand? What is standing? Walk. What does it mean to walk? Are you breathing? Why do you breathe? What does it mean to breathe? Let's start from there.*

There is another thing about my Japanese culture—the invisible spirits that inhabit physical spaces. My family practised Buddhism, and they often talked about actually seeing and hearing the spirits. I was always curious about these entities I couldn't see but only sense. The back room of my house was dark and had a Buddhist altar, where all our ancestors slept. Without quite understanding the meaning of this room, I was scared of entering it.

This was the only room in the house with a door that creaked as it opened and closed. The door had a texture of many cracked lines, and when it was ajar, faint voices chanting in a mysterious tone seeped out of the room. The musty scent of incense, the gold inscription on three small, black tablets, candles, scripture, sweet offerings—things of and for the other world. The darkness was not just dark but thick and heavy on my body, suggesting the presence of something, even if I couldn't see what it was.

As I began sensing the intricacies of a physical space, I developed a sensitivity to the energy of and between the people in it. I often noticed a certain atmosphere subtly vibrating inside a person even if nothing was said or expressed verbally. I picked up an inkling of a fight even before my parents started the actual fight. I was learning that how people appeared to be on the outside and what was actually happening inside were two different things. Even though I couldn't see it, people's energy affected the energy of the space, which affected my senses and made me feel certain emotions. When my parents fought, the room felt gloomy and sticky. Something hard like a brown rubber ball grew in my solar plexus. The room turned the colour of red and yellow. I felt anger. When my grandmother read bedtime stories, I warmed up, opened, and felt cozy. I was filled with joy. When I found out that she left early in the morning without letting me know, my futon felt colder, the floor harder, and my body felt like it was shrinking. The bottom of my stomach turned ash-white. I felt sadness. I began to understand something about the intangible entities circulating in, around, and through tangible elements. When energy was flowing in and out of my body, my sensations were alive. My emotions pulsated strongly and vividly. It was physical.

*One thing that my students have trouble digesting is the idea that emotions are physical. Because emotions are invisible, they seem to think that they are some kind of entity that lives in their heads. Somehow, sensations are not easily accessible, and their relationship with emotions is vague to them.*[4] *They say they feel "emotional" without recognizing*

*physical sensations. I wonder if this perception about emotions comes solely from the environment they grew up in or are there any other reasons.*

## The West in My Body

I was born into a Japan already heavily infused with Western culture. Western practices and ideas were around me everywhere—in food, literature, music, fashion, media, and architecture. On a typical day, I would read Greek mythology, study *King Lear*, eat a hamburger my mother had made, and watch *Bewitched* on TV. We celebrated Christmas with a Christmas tree, turkey, and champagne while honouring the New Year by visiting shrines in traditional Japanese kimonos. The West entered into my body slowly and steadily. Constantly inhaling the scent of the foreign land made me itch. I began to yearn for the real experience of these foreign cultures.

As Japan has strived for economic growth, nature around me has gradually disappeared. No more rice fields, no more cow farms or butterflies in vast flowerbeds or mysterious vacant lots for adventure. Every piece of land became occupied by houses and other buildings. The whole culture was moving toward the sleek, efficient, fast, fashionable, and big. We focused intently on working toward our goals and eliminated the things unrelated to them. Achievement was a survival tool and a gauge of your value to society. My body became a crucial tool to support whatever I had to accomplish. There was no more space outside or inside of my body. I started to forget the sense of the land. I started to forget the feel of my body. We embraced the West with our Japanese bodies in Japanese space, but our land didn't grow big, and our physical features didn't become Westernized to match the change. The more imbued with the West I became, the more dissonant my existence grew. Traditional Japanese culture felt obsolete and implicit. It was hard to see what this mysterious and absolute ethos rooted in thousands of years of history had to do with who I was. The explicit societal codes, extracted from traditional values and warped to suit the contemporary societal needs, were similarly alien, and increasingly constraining, to me. I couldn't breathe in tiny Japan. I was dying to get out, leave my house, my family, and my country altogether.

When my small Japanese body stepped onto the vast land of the United States for the first time, it exploded and cried out—FREEDOM! Sheer optimism, light and casual attitudes, bold and bright colours, and friendly smiles all opened me up with excitement.

People didn't seem to care so much about exactly what you said or did. I LOVED that. There was a LOT of space, and infinite resources and future possibilities. Compared to the Japanese tendency of honouring conformity to the majority, American culture honoured distinct individualities. Instead of constantly caring about what people thought or how I could maneuver through small spaces and the people and objects in them, I was able to express my voice, own my space, and move around with dynamism and boldness. I could be me! Learning the new language, cultural code, and mannerism liberated me. The sense of autonomy made me feel invincible.

Then something happened. As I watched large American people occupy space and move with a wide confident gait, my body began to delineate itself from the environment instead of merging into it. The strong sense of "I" was established and became the agent for everything. I asserted my voice, toughening my skin to make a statement. I articulated my behaviour with a crisp contour. I acted as if I knew. I generated a new body suited to speak the English language, a body without ambiguity. As I felt more visible, I increasingly gained confidence. Living in this culture breathed a completely

different life force into my being, into a body that had been suffocating as if it were about to disappear into the homogeneity of merging I had previously learned. I was visible as a clearly defined individual. I became a "Japanese woman." As I continued living in this culture, I realized that this definition affected people's perception of me and my work. On the one hand, it explained me in very simple terms without my having to explain. On the other hand, it implied specific ideas, images, and expectations. I felt guarded and confined once again, but differently.

The dissonance I had been experiencing in Westernized, modern Japan, which appeared to be resolved when I landed in the United States, resurged and drove me to reestablish my Japanese identity more strongly and widely in this foreign country. Instead of trying to become like an American, I saw myself attempting to reintroduce a Japanese accent into my speech, and to act with an assertive yet reserved attitude in my interactions with people.

Reflecting upon the disconnect I've been feeling in both watching and directing/teaching a performance, I'm beginning to wonder if the source of this disconnect lies in my own disconnect from myself. Within the US context, my Japanese body, with its sense of the particular places in which I grew up—Japan, my house, these rooms, specific customs—and invisible physicality of emotion and is confined by an inappropriate space and body movement. My Western body has no ambiguity and is confident in itself, skin-toughened, and yet also defined as a specific image of a Japanese woman.

Where is my Japanese/Western body?

*Teaching actors in the United States had been a crucible that thwarted rather than afforded my Japanese body the possibility of generating a different sense of space and material. But as I observed my students' guardedness, I started wondering if my own bias and tendency to perceive Japan and the West as two separate, even binary, entities rather than as points on a fluid continuum was making me blind to the source of their disconnect, closing the pathway between us. Perhaps the crux of this matter is more fundamental, having to do with our compromised self-image in the process of adaptation and survival. In the US, with its pronounced culture of individualism, I felt the need to project myself as a "Japanese woman living the United States." In the same way, perhaps my students might be constantly responding to the implicit demand to project themselves as unique and distinct individuals. Performing this image day in and day out, a person's physical, mental, and spiritual sense could gradually become fixed, obliterating other possibilities.*[5] *I feel a social armour that encases my Western body, that draws strong boundaries between us and space, between people and material around us, making bodies with which we come in contact surfaces to slide over not places to encounter, coalesce around, or acknowledge our commonalities. Piercing through the protective shells of my students' Western bodies, I try to reach out and touch the unknown, the essence of their persons buried deep underneath. I don't fully understand their culture, but if I loosen my own armour, I will start feeling a place of connection between us. And I realized that if I were to express the kind of spiritual/emotional potency of my Japanese body that I had cultivated and inhabited—its openness to an unknown that can touch me and change me—in the US context, it had to be in a different way.*

## Working with Ōta Shōgo's *Water Station*

### Body with Vertical Space Awareness

In my conflicted state of being, I remembered one of my mentors, Ōta Shōgo, a Japanese director and playwright who taught me a very important lesson about theatre. He considered a human being to be not a speaking person but rather a fundamentally silent person. After all, we spend most of

our days in silence. He used a slow tempo and silence to reveal what was hidden underneath everyday human behaviour.

Ōta's theatre told a story about human beings as living organisms in the universe, not about individuals living in a society bound by its values. His work challenged conventional theatre by asking the question, "Can human existence itself become theatre?" Working with him, I developed a practice of verticality that would allow me to carry the energy of my Japanese body into the theatre worlds of the United States.[6]

His wordless play *Water Station* brought him onto the world stage in the 1980s. Characters moved very slowly across an open and bare stage, moving as slowly as sixteen feet in two minutes, stopping at the broken faucet in the centre of the space, living through their ephemeral moments before continuing their journeys. The sound of water constantly running from the faucet established a sense of eternity. This place was here first before anything else. Without explaining or intentionally demonstrating any particular attitudes or images, the actors just stood there as themselves. The weight of silence forced their bodies to release primal expressions buried deep under their skin. Personal histories evoked collective memories. The story of existence unfolded. Theatre emerged in their moment-to-moment metamorphoses.

Ōta's experiment with silence aimed to capture the existence, life, and death of a person born unto this earth. In order to help bring this lifespan onto the stage, he carefully prepared the stage surface. Stepping onto this surface, whether it was sand, metal, or water, brought acute sense of awareness to the actors' bodies. On this stage, the simple act of "standing" took on an entirely different meaning; a strong vertical energy shot up from the ground toward the sky, moving through the centre of the actors' bodies. The counterforce of gravity brought balance, pulling the actors down toward the centre of the earth. Standing on this vertical axis, propelled toward the sky and pulled toward the earth, the physical tension was reduced and space was created inside. Sensations poured inside and raw emotions spilled out of every single move they made.

When I first met Ōta in 1997, he told me his thoughts about verticality. We were meeting at a coffee shop in Osaka to talk about his plan for staging *Water Station III* the following year. After his usual long silence, he took my pen and started writing two circles on my notepad. The two circles were next to each other with about an inch of a space between. He drew a horizontal line to connect the two circles and said, "This is the 'You' second person connection." As soon as he drew this horizontal line, the space enclosed around the two circles, pouring strong energy into the space between two circles. Then he drew another set of two circles next to that. They were also separated by about an inch distance. He then drew a vertical line from each of the circle he drew. He said, "This is the 'I' first person connection. We shifted from 'I' connection to 'You' connection. The further we shift to 'You' connection, the further we go away from 'I' connection." When he drew a vertical line from each circle, two circles were still connected and related; however, there was another stronger connection—the connection with the space and the environment. Each one of the circles was connected to this larger environment individually. At the same time, they were connected with each other. But because the two lines were not connected with each other, there was a sense of openness that did not demarcate the space/environment the two circles were in.[7]

During a rehearsal process in 1998, some actors expressed to me that Ōta's work tends to be monologue-oriented, even when two people are on stage having a dialogue. By *monologue* here, I

mean that the character is part of the whole scene, not an individual. Ōta's *Silent Station* series revolves around each character's monologue, in other words, their inseparability from their environment. The central character in *Tales of Komachi Blown by the Wind* goes through the whole play monologuing in silence. Her entire monologue is written in the script, never spoken. Even his other works, in which multiple people are seemingly having a dialogue, are monologue-oriented. In staging Ōta's work myself, I have realized the challenge of working with actors who were going to engage in a "dialogue," which lessens the potency of his writing. A body evokes its life force in the vertical space it inhabits. It illuminates and moulds the space. It is a part of the space. Vertical space awareness is the beginning of the connection between an individual body and the environment, promoting and enhancing and the connection both between parts of an individual body as well as between the body and emotion.

*In my daily practice, I stand on the vertical axis, following gravity. My skin opens outwardly, and the inside and the outside start merging with each other. Overwhelming sensations pour inside. When I'm in this state of being, staying in the present becomes so satisfying that I cannot think about the past or the future. This is the first step toward a state of "being," a state of not knowing.*

When a body is organized optimally according to its structure and relationship with the ground, we can fully follow gravity. When we reach this state of being, effort becomes minimal and space inside opens up. It is worth mentioning that this open space doesn't necessarily lead to a sense of freedom for many people. Many of my students in the United States did not embrace this state of being but did express their sense of a void and a feeling of fear. It could be because they have a tendency to rely much more on external sources than internal ones in terms of both an impulse to act and a gauge of the outcome. Some of them use the word *empty* to express this state of being.

## Thinking with the Body

American actors impress me greatly with their dynamic expression. Bold actions, clear intentions, and vibrant presence. They enter every space as defined individuals—various body types, particular gestures, heritages, and styles. I rarely see this degree of definition in Japanese actors. I adjust my stance, trying to be on the same plane as my students, defining myself as they do. But I feel unnatural. There are things I cannot explain in words. Articulating for the sake of articulating gets me only in my head. I'm yearning to go back inside the warm cocoon where I don't have to explain or articulate: the unknown, that ambiguous place I know performance can access. I feel awkward about leading them with clarity, it might become too defined, but I need to direct them somehow. What do I say? How can I convey this quality I'm looking for? Not black or white but a fine gradation of grey?

Ōta challenged the audience by breaking the usual cause-and-effect logic. The lack of verbal information creates a certain ambiguity, which demands a different way of communicating with as well as a different type of understanding from the audience. During some inexplicable moments according to intellectual logic, the audience remained in a state of unknowing, searching for ways to shift their perceptions to experience the world of the performance. In Western realism, the context and the content can be established through the text and the design elements in addition to the actors' physicality. In *Water Station*, actors' bodies and their relationships with the space were the only content. On the bare stage, with minimal suggestive architectural elements, every second was magnified, making all the fine details visible. Slight shifts of the body, its placement in space, and its directionality and particular physicality, all created particular meaning. Changing the body ever so

slightly created a different context; their inner sensations affected their emotions and filled in the content. Honing one's attention to these nuances, trusting and following them, actors followed their bodies' logic.

Many of my students in the United States tell me they want to get out of their heads. They wonder if there is some other approach beyond analyzing what they are supposed to do and doing what they have analyzed. Despite recognizing their dilemma, they have a hard time letting go of the head logic. The urge to make sense is strongly ingrained in our social system. But when we try to figure out something with our heads, we go back to past habits and gauge the present against past standards. Operating with the head logic, we live in our heads' little space, forgetting that we are a part of the earth organism, following the law of gravity. Through "understanding" we fit ourselves into someone else's idea. Labelling, defining, articulating, we are constantly assuring ourselves of the meaning and value of things, including ourselves. This illusion has nothing to do with the only reality we have—our bodies. Thinking with the body is different. It means staying in the sensations all the time even if you don't understand or you can't explain. There is a Japanese phrase about understanding through the body: 腑に落ちる *fu ni ochiru* (fall into the gut). It's a physical sensation that the information you receive falls into your internal organs and becomes a part of your body. It is the state your whole being, body and mind together, is convinced. It has nothing to do with fitting oneself into someone else's idea. English also has a similar phrase, *gut feeling*, but this feeling seems to have little value compared to intellectual understanding.

*My colleague, a Russian director, and I have this conversation all the time. We would do anything that creates vibration inside our students' bodies in order to get them off-balance. We try all kinds of things to break their head logic: start rehearsal with a montage of body shapes, personal memories, objects, and music; speak at different tempos; reverse the sequence or make the sequence random; move time through aspect instead of tense.*[8] *And we still have not found a way to get the actors to let go of head logic. Perhaps off balance is still too intellectual. Perhaps it's still too logical.*

## "Waiting" the Body

How do you bring actors to this level of consciousness? To a place they can operate according to body logic? To a place where they just exist? In 1998, I had an opportunity to assist Ōta with his creation of *Water Station III*. I observed him in his rehearsal process and discovered one secret. He waited. He would wait in nothingness for a long time until something starts birthing. This "waiting" time was crucial for a seed to germinate, become ripe, and eventually release what he called an "unparaphrasable realm of existence." I'm reminded of one of the principles of *noh* theatre—accumulate and spend. The rhythmic cycle of accumulation and release is like nature's cycle. Accumulating what was coming in from all the directions of the space, their bodies slowly merging with the environment that surrounded them. Birthing what has been accumulated at the most unpredictable of timings, and then the next cycle starts.

In *Water Station III*, all of a sudden, time and space expanded to the past and the future. They became a part of one large organism, which included me. The surface of the performance space trembled with a certain rhythm, causing vibration inside my skin, stronger and stronger. A sensation I'd known for a long time but had forgotten arose in my body.

In this moment of waiting, my vision suddenly cleared and I started seeing everything vividly. It was as if my existence had expanded and burst out of my familiar body and connected with a larger

consciousness outside. My whole presence was there even if I didn't exactly know what is happening or what was going to happen. Tension mounted while I stayed in the unknown, listening to my own breath. I'm waiting. My body is curious. I'm given an ample freedom to imagine. I'm experiencing the performance through my entire being.

*Letting things emerge. There is something beautiful about it. Not about showing or explaining. When things are explained to me, my body prepares. I feel the need to understand. When things emerge out of the unfocused, my whole body yields and drops in an intimate exchange with what they really are. They illuminate me and I illuminate them. I soften.*

## Body and Emotion

Working in the field of theatre, the most challenging element for me has been emotion. Having come from a culture where people do not express their emotions so overtly, I was at a loss. I had very little idea how to work with Western materials that demanded strong emotional involvement. At first, I thought emotions were going to come out of the actors naturally if I created the blocking. I quickly realized this was not the case. With a series of visually stimulating moving images, I thought I'd embodied the world of the play successfully. However, the actors just enacted the blocking like puppets without connecting what was happening inside of them with what they were presenting on their outsides. There was no emotional life. I knew what the problem was but didn't know how to solve it. The next thing I did was try to coax emotions using physical actions, since I was taught that emotions were the by-products of these actions. I made sure that the actors were fully physically engaged with their actions. This approach worked somewhat, but also had limitations. The actors expressed their feelings with great passion, but what was expressed often fell into certain stereotypical expressions of anger, sadness, grief, and joy. What they projected outside didn't match the much fuller, richer worlds they had inside them.

Having failed in both approaches, I resorted to stylization. I controlled the environment with precision and rigour. By throwing them into highly disciplined foreign forms, I wanted to stir them and activate their feelings. I was convinced that stylization was a way for us to connect with a realm we couldn't normally reach or connect with. I also felt comfortable in the way emotions arose in stylization, not overtly, but indirectly. If you look at traditional Japanese theatre forms such as noh, *kabuki*, and *bunraku*, emotions are expressed indirectly. In noh theatre, emotions are felt in the movements—in the way they are carried out in terms of rhythm, timing, force, and pace. Emotions are expressed in an exaggerated manner in kabuki through extremely stylized voice and movement. In bunraku, emotion is felt in the singing of the narrator who expresses how the puppets feel. This also comes from how the puppets are brought to life by the puppeteers. I worked with my students in various stylizations, drawing from these traditional forms.

My desire to get them off-balance didn't quite happen. Gaining a heightened sense through stylization, students were physically and emotionally active. Vertical force was strongly established. Audiences were in awe, deeply moved. My colleagues sitting next to me expressed amazement at the students' achievement, but I was noticing something else. Students were busy with accomplishing the precision of the form, stopping their breathing and tightening their bodies. The emotions that came out of these bodies were more archetypical than personal. The performance had lost its human quality—the warmth, the amorphousness, and the flesh and blood. The harder I tried, the farther I moved away from emotions.

For the past ten years, I have been attempting to reintegrate the mental, emotional, and muscular aspects of life through somatic education. As I bring this practice into the classroom, I've been gaining a new perspective on emotions. I used to think that emotions would arise when they were called upon. In other words, they are not in us until then. What I'm realizing is that emotions exist inside us even before we are born. They are always there, flowing inside. They are not something to be coaxed. They are not the by-products of something else. They are the central element of a human being. They are not in our heads or only under the surface of the skin. They live in our organs, bones, and muscles. They are the central force for a performance. They bring body and space together. With varying frequency, textures, temperature, colours, and speeds, different emotions move through our bodies, constantly vibrating the inside and the outside. We release them in the form of expressions of communication with others. They drive our actions. Emotion is energy that forms us.

*After one performance of* Water Station III*, Ōta looked at me and said, "This will be the last Water Station." I sensed the passing of time.* Water Station III *did not strike a chord with the audience in 1998 in quite in the same way as the original 1981 version did. Though the performance was extremely well executed, the actors excellent, and the environment exquisite, the primal energy present in the original seemed to be missing. Actors stayed within the self-contained performance space that lay in front of the audience without extending energy toward them or affecting the entire theatre space. This made me think that the key to activating the space outside us is to activate the space within us first.*

## Japan/the West in My Body—My Reintegration

Having moved from Japan to Dallas, back to Japan, to Hawaii, to Washington, DC, and to Maryland, I have adapted to many new environments—responding to the characteristics of each place—its size, temperature, colour, shape, smell, and density: expanding, diffusing, hardening, and diffusing again and again. I have learned to maintain and carry my individuality wherever I go.

However, somehow, when I listen to my inner voice carefully, I notice that it is not quite that simple. My internal world is always in flux. Always in-between.

Inside, my body feels unclear, although my skin is trying to define. The space around me feels equally opaque. I'm in a murky ambiguous place. I'm perpetually searching. There are kinds of deeply ingrained fundamental principles operating inside, making me sense, feel, and think the particular places and invisible physical emotions of my Japanese body. I'm looking for the nuances and the textures, which are hard to find in the focus on clarity and articulation in US academic English. When I'm interacting with another person, I see the contour of her, and I'm waiting for what's lurking inside to spill out slowly. I feel the urge to feel everything on a molecular level. I'm wanting to see small strokes within a big stroke.

*Students have become my mirror. From a murky ambiguous place, I stumble through the unknown within me, trying to connect with the unknown within them.*

*Please feel the chair you are sitting on. Are both of your sitting bones in contact with the chair? How is your right foot touching the ground? Your left foot? As you breathe, which part of your body is moving? Do you feel the space between your ribs?*

*Under your armpit? Allow your tongue to relax and soften your jaw. What's changing now? How do you feel differently from a minute ago?*

*Let the space/object/other actors illuminate you. Let what she just said move your body before you respond so quickly. Delay your response and see what happens in your body. The space behind you. Feel 10, show 7. When in doubt, do not do anything. Just be there until your body wants to move. Yes, stand. No REALLY stand. Let's see how you can minimize what you just did. Smaller, slower, even slower. Breathe into your back. Close-up. Run around three times, no four, five, OK speak now. How did you feel when the driver hit your car? Describe your emotional, physical, and verbal landscape step by step.*

*Listen with the tips of your fingers. Diffuse your focus. Yes, indirect. Trace the energy of your partner. Feel her breath with your back. Yes. Do it again, again, repeat it ten times and see what's in there. What is in the space now? How did it change now? Yes, stay in the place you don't know. Stay in the ambiguity. The place in-between. What are you feeling? What are you feeling? What are you feeling?*

I'm looking for something. I'm looking for the seed of vibrancy starting to release from their inner world. I'm searching for the moment when their skin opens and the boundary between inside and outside starts becoming blurry. Inside becomes outside becomes inside. When they move, the space moves. When they cry, the space changes colour. When they confine their inner emotion, the space converges. Inner cosmos of body in outer cosmos of space—where in the space an actor stands matters great deal. I'm on a quest to get to the depth of the body and its expression as a life force.

I am searching for the maximum potentiality of the body. I want to be IN. I want to be OUT. I want to be IN and OUT at the same time. I want to be free.

Though initially framed as a conflict of living in two cultures—the United States and Japan—the real conflict, I see now, is not that simple. It is the conflict between head and body, because we pay so much attention to the head and not enough to the body. It is the perceived conflict between horizontal and vertical. It is the conflict between individual and collective, our social being and mortal existence. Is potency cultural? Is it personal? Or is that something you can acquire through training? Or is training detrimental? How is the potency or energy on stage connected with the potency of daily life? What is the ethical and social significance of creating the potent body? How does that affect the environment? My head swirls again and I need to breathe.

I'm still in-between. We are conflicted beings torn between bodies and consciousness/ideas. We are different and homogeneous. As the boundary between my body and environment diffuses again, my new self starts appearing, the border between two cultures slowly disappearing. I look into my conflicts, and they are all there—the nature I grew up with, my first American experience, all the spirits, the West in me, the East in me. I see my molecular being expanding, extending, receiving the energy from the earth, following the law of gravity. I see the horizontal axis that connects two cultures converge with the vertical axis of my existence from the far away past to the future ahead. I am starting to remember that I breathe, eat, sleep, live, and die and this is the absolute reality. I look in, I look in, I look out from inside. I'm just Naoko.

## Moving Forward

I wrote the essay above in 2017. Now, five years later, in 2022, immersing myself in nature and continuing somatic education for performers, where do I stand on all these matters? There are three specific points of curiosity I'm currently pursuing: the matter of "mind" (and how we can go around it); the interconnection of space, emotion, and body; and the role of imagination. These points will become the foundation for my forthcoming workbook *Daily Practice for a Potent Body*.

### The Matter of "Mind" (and How We Can Go Around It)

As I continue working in the field of somatic education, my question about the mind persists. The power of the mind always pulls my students back into their old habits. As a result, even if their physical organization improves, their self-image doesn't change, inhibiting the creation of new pathways and new choices. Mind tends to filter what body experiences, but they work as an "inseparable whole while functioning," according to Moshé Feldenkrais ([1964] 1980, 75). So what is the mind doing exactly? Feldenkrais (1981) writes, "The mind gradually develops and begins to program the functioning of the brain" (26). If the mind is governing the body constantly and programming the functioning of the brain, how can we create new habits, new choices, and new pathways? Further research about how mind works would help us understand the intricate relationship between mind, body, and brain, and to reexamine new constructs of body-mind unity.

### Interconnection of Space, Emotion, and Body

As I continue observing the constant shifts of my body senses in nature, I'm realizing how much space affects my emotions. If the sky is grey for many days, I feel a certain heavy energy inside. When I'm driving through a vast field, I sense myself larger and brighter. I start thinking about big ideas. Body is a vessel in which external energy and internal energy meet, a medium through which the connection between space and emotion manifests. Our perception of the interconnection of space, body, and emotion forms our self-image, which all our choices and actions are based on.[9]

### The Role of Imagination

Imagination is the foundation of our creation in performance. And yet I feel that it is underexercised and underpractised. I have seen many productions that lack imagination or were completely devoid of imagination. I'm spoon-fed what I'm supposed to feel and think in every second of the entire production. Some other productions have a hint of imagination, but this type of imagination imitates someone else's imaginative ideas. When the creator's imagination is vast and real, it creates open space for the audience to imagine. When I see a performance with this type of imagination, I feel my own potential grow as well as the potential for performance creation. I want to go into a studio and start creating immediately. I can see that this creator's imagination came out of her daily practice, that it was not just exercised for a particular production. When we live in habitual thinking and habitual responses day in and day out, our imagination gets reduced to a minimum. We follow the same old cause-and-effect logic. We limit our choices and stay within a safe and known territory. Imagination expands our awareness of what we do not know and opens up new options. If we can exercise our imagination to our fullest capacity constantly, our performance in daily life and on stage would exceed what "mind" creates. Imagination is the strong undercurrent for space-emotion-body interconnection as well as the tool to evoke it. As the world develops and technologies advance, imagination is going to become increasingly crucial in our lives and performances in the future.

## Anatomy of Conflict Workbook, *Daily Practice for a Potent Body*, excerpts

Below are several exercises from my forthcoming book for the student practitioner that are geared to helping them bring their craft to life:

### Minute Speed

*An exercise for waiting: I first learned this exercise of moving extremely slowly while I was studying dance on a farm in Japan, then later discovered that a Japanese dancer of the same origin, Ryuzo Fukuhara, has formulated it in the seven-minute form. When we change the speed of how we move, we change not only how we feel inside but also the relationship between our body and the space around us. When we move slowly, we release our bodies into the universe.*

1. Lie on the floor in any form.
2. Take seven minutes to stand up in any position.
3. Observe what happens inside as you move through this process, your sensations and feelings.

### Falling into the Unknown (Walking)

*Walking is falling. You step into the unknown. Walking is feeling you. Every step opens a new door.*

*I've been doing what I call a "reflective walk." With each step I take, I feel myself differently. I move my head a little this way and my feeling of my feet changes immediately. I move onto a different surface and I can feel my feet and my whole body adjusting. Along with this change, my inner feeling also changes.*

Stand with ten toes facing out. Feel the stability of this position. Slowly move your body forward and step one foot out as if you were falling. Land on that foot. Push the other foot and put that foot in front of the first foot. Repeat. Make sure your body moves forward first before stepping out.

*When we walk, we tend to put our feet out before our body. As a result, our bodies get left behind. Our spines are placed on the back of our bodies, making it functional for us to move our bodies forward, from the upper body. When our feet move out and the torso and the head are left behind, we are not fully walking either forward or backward. We fall into the split between the past (moving backward) and the future (moving forward), the unknown space in-between. When we leave a part of our body in the past and hurriedly try to move other parts toward the future, we are also not in the present. Walking is feeling us in connection with the ground. Each step is an opportunity to reevaluate our relationship with ourselves and our stance toward life.*

### Morphing Space

Start this exercise by standing in one spot inside a room. Gradually expand the space as you continue paying attention to your sensations, feelings, and thoughts. In your imagination, expand the space from the spot to the entire room, the entire apartment, the entire floor of the building, the entire apartment building, the entire area where your apartment building stands, the entire town, city, state, country, world, and so on. Then imagine that the space gradually shrinks back to the spot with which you started. See how your self-image shifts as the space shifts.

*Stand in one spot inside of your room. Bring your awareness to how you are standing. Feet, knees, hip joint, pelvis, ribcage, shoulders, arms hanging from your shoulder joints, spine holding you up, head is at the very top balancing itself. How's your breathing? How are you feeling? Now, bring your awareness to the spot in the room where you are*

*standing. Do you feel light coming in? How's the temperature of that spot? How do you feel? Now expand space. See yourself in your room. How do you feel emotionally in a space this size? What did you sense as the space expanded? What is your emotional landscape like? Expand the space one more time. See yourself standing on this spot in your room in the entire apartment/house. You are imagining this. Can you become aware of the edge of the space as you sense and feel yourself?*

### Conversation with Vertical Awareness

Practise the following when speaking in public situations such as at a store, a bank, and other places as you engage in a conversation with another person. Vertical awareness is awareness of "I" in any context. Here, we practise this verticality in horizontality with another person. You can focus on one element at a time or gradually add multiple elements and see how the course of your conversation might be affected.

1. (Breathing) Listen to your breathing AS you have a conversation with someone.
2. (Feet) Feel the bottom of your feet on the ground.
3. (Voice) Listen to your own voice as you speak to them. Listen to the tone, the pitch, the colour, the vibration, and the volume. Listen and observe how and when your voice shifts.
4. (Eyes) Rest your eyes on the person you are speaking to. Keep soft focus. Gradually start opening up your peripheral vision with the soft central focus on them. Observe any shift in how you feel and the course of your conversation with them.
5. (Emotion and Body) Sense any shift in the energy flow inside of you during the interaction. See how you hold your body changes along with the change in the feelings.

### Speaking from the Inner Landscape

*This is something I tried in my Movement for Actors class, creating two tracks of speaking (outside) and sensing (inside) when my students did their monologues. Driven by their imagination and sensation, their actions and delivery broke through the usual habitual wall and blossomed into something completely unexpected. Imagination-Creation-Action.*

1. Have the performer give a monologue they prepared.
2. While they go through it, ask them where in their body they are feeling what they are saying at the moment.
3. Ask what sensation and image is coming to them in that body part. Have them feel it. Let the image drive their body. Let them keep visualizing this image as they speak.
4. Call attention to a specific body part you see is blocking their body flow and encourage them to feel that part (e.g., third rib, coccyx, etc.).
5. Continuously ask them what they feel and what they want to do (e.g., stand up, walk around, face certain directions, etc.).

## Notes

1. This essay is based on the text that was performed at the (Re)sounding Bodies symposium held at University of California, Davis on May 11–13, 2017.

2. The use of the word *mind* here refers to the mental aspect of performance life. Though I believe that body (*soma*) and mind (psyche) are merely two aspects of one entity, I am intentionally separating these two here for the purpose of this essay.

3. Intercultural approaches to physicality in performance that draw from Japanese traditions and disciplines include both performance pieces as well as critical writings by several theatre practitioners, most prominently Suzuki Tadashi (1993, 1996, 2015), Terayama Shūji (1984, 1993), and Ōta Shōgo (1988, 1994, 2005, 2006). In my work, however, I am developing a distinct approach based on my own bicultural existence living and working in the United States and Japan and my experiences in performance and somatic education.

4. The Japanese word 感動 *kandō* describes the state of being when we are moved emotionally. The word is written with two Chinese characters 感 (feeling) and 動 (moving). I used to think that the phenomenon kandō happens in steps, that feeling is generated inside and then our body moves and vibrates naturally. I think a little differently now—feeling and moving happen at the same time. Feeling itself is the vibration inside. After this experience happens, we put it into words by saying "感動した kandō shita" (I was moved).

5. The guardedness of East Coast youth in urban settings with whom I worked might originate from multiple sources: peer pressure in presenting themselves as strong and confident, urban stress, and the challenges of coping with images of an "ideal" body promoted by the media. Students manifested their disconnect in different ways. Some retreated into their bodies and avoided any contact. Others overly asserted their physical presence or limited their bodily contact to a surface level. The acculturation process of adopting the values and practices of a certain culture while trying to retain one's own distinct nature certainly puts great stress and strain on them.

6. Various theatrical approaches and methods—including Viewpoints, the Suzuki Method, the Rasa Box Technique, theatrical clowning, and the techniques of Jacques Lecoq, Jerzy Growtowski, and Rudolf Laban—have addressed the matter of physicality in stage performance. All are rooted in distinct philosophy, analysis, and physical training for performers. Based on my own experience, Ōta's theatre, as physical as it was, did not intend to offer any training in a set format. Rather, his actors were asked to practise the "readiness" to expose and reveal their beings on stage at any moment. How they lived their lives daily affected the level of potency they were able to bring to their performance.

7. In drawing these two models, Ōta seemed to associate Westernized, modern Japanese theatre such as Shingeki, with the horizontal "You" connection and traditional Japanese theatre, such as noh, with the vertical "I" connection. Ōta's own theatre followed neither of these models; instead, it encompassed both directionalities, generating a form and an approach birthed out of the tension between the two.

8. *Tense* denotes differences in time (past, present, future); *aspect* denotes changes in the manner in which an event took place (to completion, ongoing, etc.)

9. We act according to our self-image, which is based on our body image. According to Feldenkrais ([1964] 1980, 1981), one of the senses that contributes greatly to self-image formation is proprioception (perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body in space), sometimes referred to as the sixth sense.

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# On the Path of No-Character: Zeami's Traces Walked Back and Forward

Álvaro Iván Hernández Rodríguez

Zeami Motokiyo's texts, drawings, and at some point, the practice of *noh* Japanese theatre have become fundamental during a journey that has not come to an end, my journey as performer in the process of "flowering." In search of a character along the way, instead of finding unity, the performer learns in their encounter with Japanese noh to become multiple, dissolved, dilated, to come together and apart through the practice of what I call "in-provisation": a walking and sounding that repeats and gradually begins to connect worlds and nurture the process of becoming no-character. This essay is the story of my experience preparing for the character in my performance of *Los Nueve Monstruos* and his passage through Japan and back. It tells of the process of becoming no-character through in-provisation,

This is a practice-as-research *ensayo*. In Spanish, the word *ensayo* stands for both essay and rehearsal; this means, here, that this is a thinkingfeeling experiment; the words you are about to read are grounded in the experience of the doing and becoming of what I call no-character, involving the traces, particular stories, places, and occurrences that come to give form to its history. In this sense, the essay is also an unfinished rehearsal, just like the performance of *Los Nueve Monstruos*, bringing together what it was and will have been, its changes over time, and tracing its encounters across bodies and cultures.

This rehearsal/essay connects and collects the experiences already put in motion for the idea of no-character central to this piece. The experience of finding no-character was something initiated before my journey to Japan; however, the training in Japanese noh theatre allowed me to encounter a vocabulary for it and also led me to experience a heightened awareness that gives presence to a particular relation and way of understanding, sensing, and feeling a character. This way runs up against existing methods and structures for "building a character" and eschews them, instead seeking a movement of in-provisation. My experience in Japan radically changed what I was doing as a performer, and yet what I was doing before Japan as a performer was already nurturing this understanding and practice.

This is not an essay about the expertise of a performer in Japanese noh; rather, it relates the process of getting lost in the training of an irreducible practice and thus working on finding ways for this training to become rhythmic, sonic, tactile, in-provisational, something to change with, to become with. Rather than telling what was learned by a Western performer during a brief experience with Japanese noh, this essay provides an account of my experience of losing and loosing myself in noh to experience what a character could do and be otherwise.

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Walking and sounding become practices for feeling a radical relationality enabling the surfacing and becoming of the world's interdependence. It is in walking and sounding that the performer comes to feel the tangle of worlds, even if those worlds (Asia and the Americas) are separated by an ocean. The flower (*hana*) of Zeami's theories on the practice of noh is here also a way to think of the reactivation of an anatomy of relationality and constant change that puts us in contact, connects us in rhizomes, hyphae, mycelium, vibrations. In the step by step, the walk tells us about the passing and transit between material and immaterial worlds, much like the transit of a performer of noh along the *hashigakari*, or bridgeway, and about the opening of a body in the ecology of no-character. It is a walk from learning to move to becoming moved.

## It All Comes with a Walk

Sometime at the beginning of the 1990s, I visited el Valle del Sibundoy, a region in the southern part of Colombia at the end of three large mountain chains that traverse the country from north to south, and at the beginning of the Amazon region. The region is said to have two rainbows, one from the Andes and another from the Amazon, a convergence of a double geography, a double history of intersected and divergent stories. The region is home to two Indigenous communities, the Kamentsá and the Inga, whose origins and languages are completely different.

The reason for my visit, as a theatre actor, was to participate in research directed by a senior student of anthropology and textile design about the weaving techniques and symbolism of the fabric designs of the Kamentsá—also spelled Camentsá or Camsá—community of the Sibundoy Valley. My personal motivation was to take every opportunity to learn from and about the performance traditions of the Kamentsá peoples.

Every day we walked several kilometres to reach the houses of the weavers who were teaching us the techniques of vertical loom weaving. As they were weaving, they were telling stories and weaving those stories into the collective practice embedded and embodied in each piece of fabric. Into a special piece of fabric, *el chumbe* or *Tšombiach*—a girdle that can stretch several metres in length and that women wrap around their waists—they wove geometric shapes and designs that carried the stories told in their oral tradition, knotting together the elements that move through the living tradition of their community: the bear, the sun, the moon, the orchard (or *chagra*). Each one of these designs unfolded in the telling of the weaver. There was no "character" that could be taken up in the way that traditional Western drama offers characters rooted in a text for actors to inhabit. Instead, the stories were filled with a process of becoming-character as the people worked through their weaving and walking.

Over a few weeks, it all started to come together. After our daily visits to someone's home, I walked most days with a few women to the village, and on the way, the telling kept being told. On the way back to the house where I was staying, I would meet up with someone for the walk, usually one of the old men from the community who had become a friend, and he would tell me about the planting, or the cycles of the moon, or other stories of his childhood. And in between the tellings, I would learn about the textures woven into the warp of this valley. The stories walked also involved the many forms of violence that the Kamentsá and Inga peoples had experienced, how dangerous it was for the women to walk alone through the valley, the rapes by the settlers who came to the area, and the violence involving guerrillas or *paramiltars*.

Through the walkings and weavings, everyone learned I was an actor and stories began to come together. We were invited to a meeting at the bilingual school (Spanish and Kamentsá) where important leaders of the community assisted, and I was asked if I could work with them. Thus, we all came to walk and weave. The weavers working with us researchers, now much more confident, knowing we were also sharing and working with them, invited us to participate in their daily weaving practice as they told us the stories of each weaving and the weaving of the stories. I became fascinated by every detail of the weaving, the bodily co-composition of weaving and the unfolding of the telling, the mesh of the warp holding the walk of what is being told. Many people became involved. The women told the stories to the younger ones, and they in turn told them to all of us when we gathered at the school. Some Elders of the community attended and told details and other versions of the stories. Children, teenagers, and adults of all ages came together, and we all talked and rehearsed elements finding ways to tell and weave these stories.

At the end, we all came together in the weaving (netting) of a *chumbe*. During the performance, or what I saw of it, the women weavers were actually weaving with their looms and developing the warp on which the performance would literally unfold. Everyone else, with their practices and experiences, came to unwind the netting of these stories and tradition. Masks, objects, costumes, music, dances, and their own language were used in this performance, which was not really about acting out the stories for an audience. Although this gathering would perform for audiences—many of them white, *colonos*, authorities—the performance was mainly about themselves and the strength and vitality of the community, the changes they had gone through, especially as the younger generations were becoming less interested in their own traditions—the process was mainly directed at them. Every walk and every weaving were a lesson of a performance that was becoming, or rather of performance as a process of becoming (Min-Ha 2010).

After four months, and just a week before the performance of this collective gathering of practices, we had to leave and never saw what happened, learning only through stories told in messages and phone calls how it went, what it became.

## *Crece a treinta minutos por segundo, paso a paso* / It grows thirty minutes a second, step by step[1]

After returning to Bogota, the capital of Colombia, where I lived, my director, Juan Monsalve, with whom I had been working for years, brought me a poem by the Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo entitled "Los nueve monstrous" (The nine monsters), and proposed that I perform a solo piece based on it. The solo would be part of an experimental work exploring ideas about the locations of memory. Whatever the piece became, it was to be performed in a transparent cube—only the back side was to be covered—of three-by-three metres, that in time we actually built. When we did, each wooden post of the cube was about fifty centimetres thick, and the pieces could be assembled and disassembled. It looked like a reduced version of the main area of a noh stage, but the back panel, instead of a pine tree, was a pale and aged piece of fabric treated with colour by a painter.

The poem was a double fence (*cerco*) and a double groove (*surco*) of pain. Pain folded into everything and unwrapping in all things, double pain, pain twice, for the other as for me in the junction of a tangled pain, two times, doubling and coming together into the world's action. Pain in "el vaso, en la carniceria, en la aritmetica" (Vallejo [1959] 2014, 38; in the glass, in the butcher's shop, in the arithmetic), growing everywhere, in every direction, in any form, anchored to all things, (in)forming

all processes, seizing us all. And yet, in spite of all this, there is only doing. Action must take place, said Vallejo, at the end.

While in the Sibundoy Valley, our main concern was how to find ways for the stories to be told; here, there was no story, nor something that could be called a character, and when the poem was read in its entirety at normal speed, its duration was a maximum of five minutes. Besides, the place of the performance was already determined: the cube, which even though it could be moved from one place to another, was still a three-by-three-meter cube. The first time I read the poem, I was completely fascinated, and I immediately accepted Monsalve's proposition, however complex it would be to interpret it as a solo performance. I was an actor, but perhaps in the weaving and telling I had recently experienced, I would learn how not to be one.

A "felt thought" (Hernandez 2020) began to emerge in the practice. I became interested in the weaving of the warp and the process of weaving and becoming woven that I had learned with the Kamentsá. My interest thus moved from the telling of a story, or the need to tell a story, to the becoming-woven, the languagelessness coming from a primary grammar unfolding in the deep fabric of the process or poem. That is, a poetics of excess, the more-than-words of the pain exuding from the poem. In it, every word was pain, and yet no words could carry the unfolding affective mesh.

I began to practise with the loom and began to walk with an Indigenous friend from the Arhuaco community who studied at the same university. After classes we took together, we often walked across the university, and during our walks, we talked. During one conversation, he told me how some people, who are chosen from birth, prepare to become attuned to *Aluna*, or the source of life. In their preparation, which lasts for years (nine or eighteen, some sources say), they are deprived of light, made to spend their days in the dark in special caves, emerging only during the night. The process trains them to perceive and experience reality's deep connections.

At some point, the cube became a cave, not the one that my friend had told me about, but one I was creating to experience the limit, or the experience of the limit, the sense of deprivation and restraint of life on the borders of the sociocultural, and in such experience, "pain" should arise. What we called *pain* was for me a sense of place emerging from an affective tonality texturizing every word.

During these rehearsings, I was reading, and I found a Spanish translation of Zeami's *Fūshikaden*, and some terms stuck with me: *hana*, *yūgen*, *santai*. I took a look at the *Dictionary of Theater Anthropology*—I was looking at the 1998 Spanish edition, but I quote here from the 2005 English edition—because I remembered that I had seen in it some of Zeami's drawings, and there I found definitions and descriptions of three role types: the old man, the woman, and the warrior (Barba and Savaresse 2005, 86–87). Before reading about the roles, I had heard from my Arhuaco friend, or I might have imagined it, that the old wise man or woman, the *mamos*, went into caves in the highest parts of the mountains of their territory to prepare to die. That might not be true, but it was a true image that always came to me. From that image, I began to see the path that took me along the process of becoming a no-character.

The *Dictionary of Theater Anthropology* contained Zeami's drawing of the old man role, which it explains in the following terms: "It is interesting to note that in the drawing of the old person, who is leaning on a cane, Zeami takes care to indicate the upward position of the character's gaze. This is in contrast to the bent posture of an individual who is so weak that he must lean on a cane. A tension is thus created in the neck and the upper part of the spinal column" (Barba and Savarese

2005, 87). The explanation is accompanied by a quotation of Zeami: "One must study assiduously the precept: portray an old man while still possessing the Flower. The results should resemble that of an old tree that puts forth flower" (87). The *mamos* in the cave of the high mountains, and the distant gaze of Zeami's drawing always stayed with me, both closer to heaven and yet grounded on earth. When it came to the work, there was a deep sense of being grounded emanating from the feet, and the voice elevating from there and filling the body. The space that would emerge from this grounded elevation of voice was a beginning for the sounding of Vallejo's poem, and for finding the old man—Vallejo himself perhaps.

Repetition of a word, sometimes two, or of a complete line of the poem began to create a dissonant sound. As Monslave and I played with the word, simultaneously reciting parts of the poem, the meaning of the text started to fade, giving way to, becoming, a sound arising from the deep entanglements of a dark territory, the cave. Even if my director or the audience saw an actual place, for me it was none: the cave was a darkness, sounding intensive commotion until its exhaustion. Even if the director or the audience saw a character, for me there was none: instead, there was a body modulated by the flow of sound coming from the feet—almost stuck to the ground, elevating and expanding until the space was filled, and suddenly emptied. The old man was a gaze with the strength of time, ineffable, passing. Sometimes a word was extended until the breath was empty, and it got activated again and again, each time with a different duration. "It grows at thirty minutes by a second, step by step," says a line of the poem, and each step in his-my walking was the unearthing of a buried tongue that can no longer name.

I never understood how people could sustain their attention until the end of the performance. "Vallejo," the name collaborators gave to the performance as it was being rehearsed, grew in length until it ended up lasting forty-five to fifty minutes. But sometimes it lasted an hour, and on one occasion it lasted about an hour and a half. The time depended on the interactions between the voice of the director, who occasionally repeated some parts of the text at some important moments from a place outside the cube, and my responses to his interventions. The voice outside and the voice inside the cube affected each other, they diverged. One escaped the other, taking its own route, escaping the repetitions, and finding other ways to reiterate, extend, and expand the double sound of voice over voice. In some parts, the two voices would come together into a single text, but the unison created a kind of dissonant echo in which the sound did not find a coupling.

*Los Nueve Monstruos* was performed more than fifty times in Colombia in the year of its premiere. Since the cube was the only limit to the spacetime of the performance, it could be presented almost anywhere the cube fit. It was performed in corridors, patios, open spaces, basements, bookstores, libraries, plazas, auditoriums, and theatres, and in each space, *Los Nueve Monstruos* achieved a different relationship with the audience. On one occasion, it was performed in a theatre with a capacity of 1,500 people, with at least half of the seats occupied, and in the centre of this immense theatre was the small cube and the fragile old man sounding in the tonal affectivity of Vallejo's pain. As the performance grew, the voice from within took up more space, sounding louder, resonating in a wider spectrum of modulations, and as it swelled, the meaning of the text dissolved. The thought accompanying the gaze of the old man in Zeami's drawing always walked with me, as well as the image of his disappearance in the high peaks of the Colombian Sierra.

As the voice inside the cube grew, the voice outside vanished, until it was finally eradicated. Now it was just the cube and its inside pressing the force of the outside. At that moment, I left Colombia, after the performance won several awards, carrying a suitcase with the necessary items to carry the

poem. I took *The Nine Monsters* to Europe, where I performed it without the cube, inside a square outlined with the same dimensions, then in Boston, New York, Taiwan, and finally in Japan where a new Vallejo story began.

## Arriving: *El ojo es visto y esta oreja oída* / The eye is seen and this ear heard[2]

I came to Tokyo after living for a while in a Beijing opera school in Taipei, where I had performed *Los Nueve Monstruos*, and before that in several cities in Taiwan. At the Beijing opera school in Taipei, I lived and trained every day for extended periods of time with children and teenagers who, even at their young age, were already experts in acrobatics, martial arts, singing, stage combat, and so on. Compared to them, I was terrible. Besides, I did not understand Chinese at all, and there was no time to learn it. I was overwhelmed by the level of discipline and rigour, and the incredible skills cultivated throughout this learning. When I felt the need to be with adults, I would visit one of the teachers during his training hours and he would let me sit and watch him. He played the character of the monkey king and practised virtuoso acrobatics that I watched in silence and complete amazement. At times he would stop and explain in English what he was doing and tell stories about the opera. On the last day, after having participated in a performance organized by the school, I went to say goodbye to my friend and my main teacher, who offered a final piece of advice about the old man in the performance and about silence and attention that remains with me now and forever. That same night I left for Tokyo.

I had been invited to participate in a noh theatre workshop led by Kanze Hideo and his troupe. My flight landed at the Tokyo airport at 9 p.m., and once I got to the city, I found myself completely lost, walking again in a country I did not know. This immediate experience of not knowing was a foreknowledge of what I felt with noh.

The next day, I arrived about five minutes early to the workshop. When I entered the theatre, I crossed into a whole different world. I had never been to Japan and I did not speak Japanese; however, in less than two hours, we were already working on some basics of movement and chanting. The idea I had in mind of that old man from the drawings of Zeami and my thoughts about noh just went away. I was there on an actual noh stage, doing, without having an idea of what I was doing. Yet I was there feeling for myself what this was for the first time. I felt shocked in so many ways. Everything I had been doing at the school in Taipei had no place here, so I had to quiet my body, pay careful attention to every movement. Again, as I had done when I was at the Beijing opera school in Taipei, I slowed down. I had to learn to sit differently, and let my knees feel it until they got used to it, realizing the ways I had sat, and, of course, the ways I had walked. Again, there were my feet to ground me in this moment of complete disorientation.

For the next two weeks, the participants of this workshop worked the entire day of every day putting together fragments of two noh plays, *Kanawa* and *Hagoromo*, using the costumes, the masks, and everything else necessary to perform them. After the workshop, I stayed in Japan learning what I could, and later on, I won a scholarship and came back and stayed for some years. During that time, I continued to study noh, and also *kabuki buyō* and *butoh*. But this is not the story of my apprenticeship in Japan, it is the story of the character from the performance *Los Nueve Monstruos* and his passage through Japan and back.

***Y es una inundación con propios líquidos, con propio barro, y propia nube sólida* / And it is a flood with its own liquids, with its own mud and its own solid cloud**[3]

## From Improvisation to In-provisation

While training in Japan, the character of the performance *Los Nueve Monstruos* became more and more moved by the internal sound resonating inside the cube. In Japan, I was learning again to move differently. The precision of each movement and the clumsiness of a body that does not know the noh technique created a feeling of constant mismatch. To learn each *kata*, or form, was also to breathe each kata in a different way, as one of the masters said, which is to achieve the singular flow of each movement. But for a movement to become itself, it has to become absent to itself. This is how I see what a noh performer does. Learning the detail of each movement, coming to feel, sense, what it does, and letting it go so to be let go of by it. Letting go is the sense, or state, of being absent to itself. Movement outside of itself moving.

The learning of a noh sequence of movement, organized in katas, is a slow process that creates a deep embodiment that awakens a state of mind, which is a "state of 'no-mind' and Noh mind," as Trinh Min-Ha writes (2010, 88). She also writes that "the highly mystified 'presence' of the artist is both a presence and an absence to one-self." (88). From learning to move to becoming moved, there is a gap, a distance that can take years to travel. This is how I now understand the long training and learning experience of a noh actor. Of course, the time I spent in Japan was just a step on the path to closing this gap. I was not in Japan to become a noh actor, but just to learn how to walk along this path that I already had begun in my own way, and that I keep walking.

The character of *Los Nueve Monstruos* learned over the years to improvise his movements by following and being guided by sound, moved by the sound. The character's actions always changed according to the emergent tonality from each new encounter with the sound. Sound was a mode of engagement to find the texture materializing the text. The first sound (vocal sound) in the performance was the sound of the letter *i* in Spanish, close to the sound of the letter e in English. The sound was repeated and extended for several minutes, but it was somehow a way to become attuned to the vibratory quality that each performance would begin to set into motion. When I was in Japan, I learned to in-provise rather than improvise. By *in-provise*, I mean to sustain change within the repetition of the same form, to put in motion a flow that moves within the same form and yet unexpectedly and indeterminately changes each repetition in invisible ways by the openness of the body to the deep and minute relationality of the ecology of happening. The repetition of the same form is not so much a problem as it is a "taking," the emergence of the experience of each movement becoming or taking-form. Such feeling of the flow, that is a sense of time and a time out of itself, and out of self, is what I call dance. That might be what Zeami called no-mind, emptiness of mind; this is not action in formlessness but rather moving in the state in which "emptiness is form," as Yasuo Yuasa writes (1987, 108), with emptiness here referring to the "mind" (108). In such a state, the mind "is being emptied such that one's awareness disappears" (108).

The movement of the character in *Los Nueve Monstruos* became more and more tied to a defined score. It became a sequence of movements, or a sequence of actions fixed yet moved by the sound. But sound in this sense is the whole experience of being and becoming affected by the vibratory quality of sounding. The movement of the character changed from improvisation to in-provisation. The problem was now to let go and go along the body in the unbroken chain of actions. To go along means to be absent in the presence of time felt. This problem has been worked upon by,

among many others, the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, the director of Odin Teatret. For both, actions are defined and moved along a chain. I was well aware of the way Barba and Grotowski worked,[4] but I did not fully realize how it felt until I was in Japan. Their methods underline the copresence of mind in the practice. The question of actions in series, or action in chains, is also central to the pragmatism of William James. David Lapoujade (2019) formulates the question, in his explanation of James's pragmatism, like this: the question is not, he says, "Why do we act?" (which would lead us back to searching for the general reason for a first action), but "Why do actions unfurl into actions" (loc. 1177–78). That is also the problem for the performer. If actions are chained, there is no way to know what action unfolds as action moves into its nextness and becomes by the movement of its pastness. The problem for a performer is thus to go along, and to let go movement to be moved. The body is a flood of the excess of its own liquids, paraphrasing Vallejo.

## Dilation in In-provisation: *invierte el sufrimiento posiciones* / suffering inverts positions[5]

### Sounding and Moving

On account of in-provisation, of this felt flow of actions in chaining, a negation of the character arose. A character is usually a unity, an idea of a single being, a self-contradiction of internal narrative and external formation. And yet character could be otherwise. Once the body accomplishes going along in the movement of actions enchained, what is left is change. The entity called a character dilates, that is, it turns porous and opens to the experience of change. It came to be presence suspended in its own awareness of being absent, a becoming presence that was a tendential line toward not-knowing.

This experience of action moving is an excess of action unfolding and affecting beyond what could be possibly known. The precise chain of actions only unfolds by way of being moved in the activity of its past becoming nextness, and this passing is only felt when it happens. It is a passing that dilates the body in its indeterminate multiplicity. This indeterminate passing, that in this case comes once one is capable of abandoning oneself, and being out-of-self, is self-becoming, self-blossoming, the process of obtaining the flower (*hana*) in noh. A process that in the case of noh is possible only by means of "long perennial training" (Yuasa 1987, 108), which is "a mental readiness for training in accordance to one's age, from childhood to one's late years" (108), as Yuasa explains in his reading of Zeami. Hana is not a moment but a process accomplished with hard labour and work. With the practice of noh, the words of my sensei, the readings about it, I came to pay close attention to the process of transformation and change in in-provisation that entails the flowering of one's self in the continuous work in process that is life. For me, the multiple phases of transformation of the performance *Los Nueve Monstruos* were a process of cultivation, gardening for an emergence of the tonal affectivity of Vallejo's poem echoing suffering. The performance was in itself also a process of transformation in the taking and mobilizing of sound suffering deep down through the tissues of the performance and the performer's body.

I gave up thinking of a character in the performance of *Los Nueve Monstrous* and focused on the possibilities of the entanglement of sound moving action. The cave-cube came back to me. As I did not know Japanese, most of the time I had no idea what I was saying when learning the chanting. I repeated as anybody else until I learned it, but through in-provisation I became used to experiencing the words of the text as a vibratory experience rather than a signifying one. Stripped of the

possibility to make sense of the words, to rationalize, to understand the story—by my own lack of Japanese language understanding—I learned to attune to the vibratory quality of the chanting across the movement of the body. The body was in the modulations of its own vibration. Chanting, and by extension voice, became for me ways to connect to that vibratory quality emerging in the experience of activity. From then on, building on something that I had already been working through with Vallejo, I emphasized and put forward that experience in the performance of *Los Nueve Monstruos*. As Mark Nearman (1982) explains in a reading and translation of Zeami's treatise of acting, *Kakyō*, that I used to read when I was in Japan: "Recitation in Noh, unlike that customarily found in Western theatre, incorporates a vibratory theory. . . . This concept is encapsulated in the character for 'sound' which represents an utterance arising from the heart or mind through the open mouth. As this character implies, sound is regarded as not simply a phenomenon experienced by human hearing but as something created by an action. . . . Sound, like wind, was recognized as an invisible force capable of effective movement" (338).

Through noh, I came to finding, with *Los Nueve Monstruos*, an experience of the materiality of text within the experience of sounding. The positions inverted, as the poem of Vallejo says, the body inverted by means of voice vibrating and becoming the experience of suffering. But this character, now dissolved in the experience of its own materiality, did not ever show suffering or pain. It became fragile, soft, and even more then/after. It did find its walking and its ground even more then/after. I did find along the walk, and in the course of my experience of in-provisation in Japan, this no-character: character-less, in-personal, in-personage, unfinished, and existing only as material and materiality unfolding.

In my experience learning noh in Japan, I began to experience with joy the subtle and yet powerful energy mobilized by the feet. The groundedness of feet in noh was (and remains) of a completely different kind from what I had experienced before. It was a sort of unceasing attaining of attunement and intimacy with the floor and deep (literally) embodiment of the soil below. The step-by-step walking of noh is a concrete practice of slowing down and being attuned entirely to the sensory and vibratory qualities surfacing in the contact, a touch without touching happening in the encounter of feet-floor. Even though one of the most precious things to see when watching noh is the feet of the performers, one cannot see them detached from what they are doing with the floor, materializing the energy coming from the ground in such a way that the floor loses its presence and what is left is the flow, flying feet floating and emanating the specific quality of energy brought forth by each character. The most subtle changes in the feet bring with them a completely different energy.

Feet in noh are an event, they constitute, in my view, the experience of life, the flow of life of the "no-character," they are grounded without being ground, they are sliding, making the surface and surfacing of the stage erupt. In a way, to experience noh is to experience the feet in an undefined eluding of gravity. Feet working in noh are a subtle and refined expression of energy flowing. To walk, in noh, is to in-provise. To experience what I am saying: actually doing noh is probably one of the most difficult things, at least in my experience. I did not accomplish such a thing, and still today I keep doing it as part of my training, persisting in having the feeling of such an experience. I did learn from it, and kept working in this: the fragile, soft, and yet strong and grounded connection with the floor. The performance of *Los Nueve Monstruos* began to transform into a subtle dance of energy modulations moved by the deep entanglement of feet bringing up and tuning the space in the midst of pain vibration.

The deep embodiment of suffering in Vallejo's performance was an inquiry into the locus, and loci, of territories of memory, of the forgotten, and their possibility. William James spoke of the firm territories one can find to be rooted, and those that come from our *faith*, a word James used to speak of the uncertainty of action: "the zone of formative processes, the dynamic belt of quivering uncertainty, the line where past and future meet" (Lapoujade 2019, loc. 1208). The Indigenous peoples I walked with in Sibundoy, later down in the Amazon, or up in the Sierras of Colombia, have been walking for centuries in the midst of the suffering inflicted on their communities, their ways of living and knowing, and their permanent struggle to keep their practices alive and enlivening their territories. The steps taken, and those to come, are a quest for firmness and flexibility as well, survival and sustaining of land entanglements with their living practices and practices of living, weaving together the dynamic encounters of life emergence and nourishment in contact zones. Those steps are also a refusal of the persistence embedded in the practices settling man over nature and land. The rooted feet that I had found to encounter the sound in the cube of Vallejo in Colombia came from my experience of walking-with in the midst of encounters with some native peoples and non-native as well and the daily residual violence transfiguring and refiguring the work.[6]

## And Back: *Hay muchísimo que hacer* / There is so much to do[7]

And *Los Nueve Monstruos* did not stop, it was performed with more accuracy and awareness in an attempt to, as Min-Ha (2010) writes, convey "performance as becoming rather than making" (87), a mutual becoming of vibration and vibratory presence, through sounding and moving, chanting and walking. In the years after my experience in Japan, *Los Nueve Monstruos* became a symphony. I came back to my country and returned to the cube-cave, but this time with the memory of the four pillars holding the noh stage. The first time I performed it again I was working with a soprano singer, a cellist, and a violinist, whose instruments incessantly repeated a simple dissonant harmony that echoed the words-sound coming from inside the cube and reverberated through the whole space. The performance became a vibratory experience, or it brought the "vibratory quality of performance" (Zarrilli 2013, 123). The performance and performer became softer, and the character became a moving, a no-character, doubling the affect of pain, a double fold of sadness and joy, weakness and strength, flourishing and perishing, an affective dissonance resounding in the bodily contours of a neverending journey, what the poem refers to in the line "y el bien de ser, dolernos doblemente" (and the good of being, pain us doubly; Vallejo [1959] 2014, 38).

While I am writing these words, I have been thinking, what will have become of *Los Nueve Monstruos*, what will it become? I am sure there is something moving in this writing, sounding, announcing for something to come. This essay is a repetition that walks the performance again, in-provises with its resonance, finds its ground in the happening of a new ecology; the experience behind it, the rehearsing of it carries its traces, the places it had passed, the singular and multiple events that reform and inform what had been of a character that was not.

## Notes

1. From the poem "Los nueve monstrous" by Cesar Vallejo ([1959] 2014, 38). Translations of the poem are mine.

2. Vallejo ([1959] 2014, 39).

3. Vallejo ([1959] 2014, 38–39).

4. I have participated in workshops with Barba, been part of sessions of the International School of Theater Anthropology directed by Barba, and also been part of works directed by him. The works of Grotowski and Barba have similarities, including defined, repeatable forms.

5. Vallejo ([1959] 2014, 30).

6. This performance began to take shape and developed in the 1990s, a decade of genocides, massacres, bombings, and disappearances in Colombia. Walking saved many people.

7. Vallejo ([1959] 2014, 40).

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# ]MA[ – The Space between the Interval

Dylan Bolles, Keith Evans, Suki O'Kane, and Edward Schocker

Thingamajigs Performance Group (TPG) is a sound-based ensemble working co-creatively in a variety of mediums and with a wide array of local and international artists. Formed in 2008, TPG focuses on durational performance, alternate tuning, group and open compositional formats, interdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration, and site-specific work. Their fields of institutional study, performance practice, and instrumentation are directly informed by Japanese *noh* and *gagaku*, Korean *pansori*, *sijo*, and *sinawi*, formal training in both Western and Eastern art practices, and a commitment to experimental art. Their proximity to issues of intercultural performance is acute. They navigate relationships with traditional artists and idioms as an integrated part of their work.

Commissioned in 2013 to create a performance in response to *Silence*, an exhibition co-organized by the Menil Collection in Houston and the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, TPG embraced the exhibition's intent to "consider the absence of sound as a subject and a medium in contemporary art" (Menil Collection, n.d.). The performance premiered the TPG score ]MA[, which is a direct use of the Japanese word 間, which describes a gap, space, or pause and is aesthetically understood as the critical space between elements that itself propels meaning in a work of art. ]MA[ privileges this space between the notes, and uses the noh compositional structure of *jo-ha-kyū* (introduction, break, conclusion) to guide performers through a three-movement improvisation. The performance featured TPG's non-Western sources and instrumentation; it unfolded with live cinema, large-ensemble movement (by guest artists from Dandelion Dancetheater and the California State University East Bay's Inclusive Interdisciplinary Ensemble) and the sonic quintet of TPG's Dylan Bolles (handmade flutes, voice), Keith Evans (film, video, turntable and electronics), Suki O'Kane (percussion, accordion, electronics), Edward Schocker (*shō*, *piri*, *hichiriki*, glass, electric guitar) and Zachary James Watkins (electric guitar, electronics).

This essay is what we consider to be ]MA['s fourth movement, a documenting of our 2019 interrogation of ]MA['s composition, setting, and context through a series of interviews conducted and recomposed by Dylan Bolles with TPG members Keith Evans, Suki O'Kane, and Edward Schocker. At no point in the process of documentation were all of the members present at the same interview. As a composers' collective, we tend to work independently and then come together to share our practices, often through structured improvisations and collaborations with "nonmembers." Our working methodology itself is one of cross-pollination, which has necessarily included transcultural elements due to the various professional and personal experiences of our members. This document can be seen as an extension of that process and dynamic onto the written page.

The interview format is useful in practice-as-research methodology for dislocating the observer relationship and recentring the conversation within the temporal body of the practitioner and their particular experiences. It allows the reader to glimpse a process of intercultural integration in motion: how we were, how we are now, how we got here. This requires a level of intimacy, vulnerability, and bravery often largely absent from mainstream academic writing on the subject,

**Dylan Bolles, Keith Evans, Suki O'Kane, and Edward Schocker** are core members of Thingamajigs Performance Group.

yet critical for doing embodied research in our field. We are more in the business of making things *with* people than *about* them. Our conversations, disjointed as they are, intermingle both shared and previously unshared experiences from many years working together and apart on intercultural performance projects. The stories overlap, surface briefly, and then resubmerge into our collective being.

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**Dylan**: That we were playing in-between. And certainly my instruments, the flutes that I can bend and half hole also allow for finding those places in-between. **Keith**: I think that's a great spot. That edge that you can learn, and it's very difficult to even say what you've learned. And that's kind of what you're saying about the speed at which these things happen. It's part of practice. I mean, maybe in forty years I'll have the versatility and I can talk about this. **Edward**: I guess there's a point where you get to this exhaustion and then that's kind of when it gets interesting, because then you don't sound like a hichiriki.[1] All of a sudden, these notes, or these tones, will come out that you just could never do otherwise and it's like reaching this . . . it's almost like a wounded, dying animal. **Suki**: You don't even know how beautiful it is to hear that unfold. "Walked up, it had this really giant bell on it, started playing it."

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**Dylan**: I was playing gagaku music with the drummer from Hiroshima, in San Luis Obispo, halfway between here and LA on the coast. And just in terms of musicians communicating. Here's a Japanese American guy playing jazz/rock/fusion, pretty popular, on a drum set, and then I'm coming from where I'm coming from, and then we're meeting in the middle of CA in order to play this thousands of years old Japanese court music that neither one of us . . . it's not in either one of our vocabularies. I guess what I'm getting at is just. . . Well, and then this Korean piri[2] player shows up and we're all having an outdoor full-moon jam session, basically. I'm playing a flute I can't play, the gagaku flute, and this guy is playing some kind of hand drums, and then she comes out with a piri with a bell on it,[3] like an outdoor, like those Turkish double reeds with the bell, and man she lets loose, and the thing just takes off. You know what I mean? There is no. . . What were we playing? **Suki**: It was human music. **Dylan**: We were doing what happens when musicians communicate with each other using sound and there aren't any rules in that except the ones that we carry, what we bring to it. **Suki**: I think what you're talking about is the most desired experience. And then what happens, and it does happen, there is a marketplace that eventually intervenes. So, if it's a former Grateful Dead drummer and all of his friends. . . **Dylan**: We can go up there right now (to Mickey Hart's place, right up the road). **Suki**: I know, and check the phases of the moon. It did happen for those guys, and they will be on tour, and they're coming to a performing arts centre near you, and it costs forty-five dollars to sit and listen to them, and you will be transported, but not as transported as they were when they first were overheard by someone from the marketplace. I have to believe that the marketplace distorts what we're doing and that's the thing that's hard to accept in these conversations about where musical influences come from and the false dichotomy of a Western musician playing Eastern forms. The marketplace has created that problem because it hasn't valued all of the sources and all of the people using those resources in the same way. That's it and that is wrong. It should have valued them in the same way. But that would be another economic system. **Dylan**: Yes, exactly. Whoo, that's clear.

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**Edward**: I can't remember which piece we did in Berkeley Art Museum, but Tomoko [Schocker][4] was in the audience, and somebody came in and, you know, had no idea what was going on, probably didn't, was just in the museum, and she sat down next to Tomoko. Tomoko said it was another Asian lady. And she said, "What is this?" And Tomoko didn't know what to say so she said, "Well, it's Thingamajigs." And the woman said, "Is Thingamajigs some kind of a religion?" **Suki**: "Is it some kind of religion?" **Dylan**: I love that. **Keith**: Maybe that's what we are. I mean we are not, as beings, not capable of figuring this phenomenon out. And in some ways Acid Mother's Temple, and a lot of that Japanese rock and psych stuff, is very, it's head culture. It's basically shamanistic culture, right? And they are like "wall of sound." They start, and then there's an inculcation, this sort of magical thing that is happening. And/but then suddenly when there's nothing, or there's just one little thing, it's still ringing. You don't need the wall of sound to actually have just activated that kind of full-body thing. There's the dynamism of opening to be an instrument of listening. **Dylan**: I'm thinking of the ways that Japanese rock musicians have taken this Euro-American thing, and the ways that it affects our bodies in concert, and made it hyper intense and hyper focused on just that aspect. So, the vocalist is just going to do only the screaming, and the band is going to only do that part of the music that is going to pull your body. And I feel like, aesthetically, that's another kind of resonance that we have. In our music, a lot of times what we are going for is that visceral state, that state of mind and body that's not telling another story. It's only about this feeling of these frequencies in this space, and how they are acting on our body, in the body of the audience right now, which is a kind of distillation. If you think about classical music, like a Beethoven symphony, part of what's amazing about the symphony are those moments when it hits you in that way. But then there's all this other stuff going on; the developments, the themes, the melodies, the journey of it and everything, and we kind of cut that out. We just want that moment where everything is holding you in your body and we want to extend it. **Keith**: At that limit.

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**Suki**: Was it Keith who was talking about how our performance practice has different goals? Like body change or meditation? Was that a Keith thing? What were his thoughts on that? **Dylan**: We were talking about frequencies: the high frequencies, the low frequencies, volume, the nohkan, the taiko, and the intensity of frequency that we share with some kinds of Japanese music that are uncomfortable for Western audiences. That piercing sound. Why do you make that sound? And how these modern bands are really testing sound pressure, pitch-noise boundaries, the wideness of the vibrato, how much "out of tune." **Keith**: You open up and then you're . . . there's the mystical practice of accepting and opening to maximum stimulation without throwing up the defence, right? **Edward**: What is the defence? **Keith**: Our general sense to preserve our subject-hood. You. Who you are. There's an assault on you as just a person in the world with certainly volume and whatever else. I mean most, maybe 95 percent of people on the planet if the volume gets up to (high), they're just like, "Wait a minute, this is just dangerous to my sensibilities." But then there's head culture and it's like, "No, I've got to get in there. I've got to get inside that thing and let that, all that fear of being hurt or something go away and then I can just get into the field. To me that's what's super interesting about how conscious intention and the inculcation of particular states of consciousness can be in this reception. And how do you encourage that intention in the ceremonial aspect of the work when it begins and you can try to set the tone or the setting such that the observers, the listeners, the participants suddenly, on a body level, understand those assumptions? That we're just going to go for a ride here.

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**Suki**: It's happening and happening and happening and happening and we have no idea how it got that loud. I talked to people who were just like, "It just kept happening." They don't have a sense of it like, "Oh, here's the 'one' chord, and pretty soon there's going to be a 'five,' and then I'll bet there will be a 'four.'" So they follow along. But in a Thingamajigs performance, you're like, "Where do I? What?" It's just now and now and now. And initially my take is, there's no classical musician who's going to play what I'm playing. Who's going to recognize it as part of their canon? "You said *that* was jo-ha-kyū? You with the toy accordion and the guitar on the floor?" It would be unrecognizable. **Dylan**: Sometimes Edward will play snippets of traditional Japanese melodies inside of these big, meterless, textures where they exist in a much different space, a much different setting, and are operating differently than they would in the context in which they were made, or how they were used. **Edward**: It's like taking a little bit of knowledge and offering it into a different situation or context. And the way we understand or embody it is different from the way it was given to us. **Keith**: It also reflects on me a certain kind of Japanese pop-cultural cybernetic application with the ways in which the body and the post-body are articulated through all these anime and postwar trauma. The body creating new bodies, and this sort of *Akira* world of the monstrosity or the augmented body and all that, that can kind of have two pathways. There are really dangerous and terrifying vortices, but then there is also, just like what you're saying, this sort of simple addition of your own inflection into some traditional form of thinking, form of embodiment.

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**Edward**: When I was growing up, I fell in love with *Giant Robo*. I think in English it was *Johnny Sako and His Giant Robot*. And the idea of this hugeness, these *kaiju* (giant monsters) who, from what I understand, represent Nature, the struggle that humans, and the Japanese specifically, have with Nature. Because it keeps destroying their cities. **Keith**: Emrys, my son, is obsessed with the whole kaiju phenomenon, the monster expression from Godzilla to now. And the funny thing about them, speaking of bodies, is that they're giant suits that all these people get inside of. **Dylan**: The extension of the body reminds me of *bunraku* and also this cyborg thread you are talking about as well. **Keith**: Getting back to the art thing and ]MA[. . . For me, it's a way of being in the moment and trying to express the body relationship to the image. That's the object of the instruments: the projectors and the players, and these things that actually take this energy, this magnetic energy or this chemical energy, and then just shoot it around. There's something about just light, and the spectrum of light within the patterning, I guess, and the natural patterns, and patterns that are made by lenses, that are made by the diffusion, diffraction, refraction phenomenon of that, that is always around us. But it can be focused. And so, I put something in the way of the projector when people are expecting it to project an image, and then suddenly it's just doing this thing that looks broken. But after twenty minutes, you realize, "Well, no. It's broken, but it's doing something." And there's a framing around it, that it was carefully made to do this. I try to make this object like a body in space that people can relate to as the corpus of technology. I'm tending it as a dancer.

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**Edward**: I remember Bob Marsh was doing movement, chi gong or some kind of thing, during *Whatchamacallit* I think, the piece with Pauline [Oliveros], and it looked good. He, he looked comfortable. And I think it made the other audience members feel like they could get up and move. Maybe the audience didn't feel they could move just because we were in an inside space, whereas we were talking about being outside and outside is for movement, inside is for sitting. Maybe in Western culture you're there to see something? But, yeah, I don't know. **Keith**: And this is something that I'm constantly interested in in my own artwork, is this inside/outside

dichotomy of like, where? And that gets into that. . . We're talking about the movement of breath. Where is that moment where it's discreetly inside or outside and how do you bring attention to that? And just reading the temperature, the atmosphere. And what is that? The ineffable sense that people can cultivate. How can one read the emotional atmosphere? The dancers, the people, the storytelling, and all these things that have been incorporated in the Thingamajigs context at times. It's like a totalizing performance thing that can just happen in these multifaceted ways. **Dylan**: It does, I mean, there is a thread of animist, in general, a tendency for us to be attracted to and incorporate more animist place, spirit-in-place, spirit-in-this-time type of relationships that we definitely get out of especially traditional musics of other places that still retain some of those aspects. Where we, rather than creating the church and moving that architecture around, we're interacting with the environment that we find ourselves in as a church. **Edward**: No churches started inside either. Show me a church, a way, that was created indoors. **Keith**: Where we can find that mystery and try to just explore that somehow. Stay humble there. Like, "I'm feeling it today, it's just further down in the body." **Edward**: Yeah, and maybe that's how we're like kids again. We don't completely understand but we just love it, and it comes out eventually because you're so interested. And you, like that TV show when you're younger, you just can't stop. You want to figure this out, but you don't have the tools, the knowledge to completely figure it out. And it could be better that way.

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**Dylan**: I remember Karas, from our Pacific Exchange concert in Tokyo, and his mask and drum stuff. He was doing god embodiment and the mask was very large, like kaiju. I also remember playing with him and this is something. . . We've all had this experience, I think, of playing with somebody from a totally different culture and just playing. There was no barrier. He was drumming and I was playing the flute. Nothing. I think one of the things that is so terrifying to the academy about music is that. You just can't explain that. Why does it move so fast? How does it move so fast? Because it just moves so fast. **Edward**: Do you mean, are you referencing, just like two people playing? **Dylan**: Just the understanding, the musical understanding actually at the level of the body, at the level of what it takes for two musicians to play together, moves so much faster than what it would take for us to talk to each other if he didn't understand English, or what it would take for us to explain a million things about our different cultural locations. But the fact that we can play music together. One of the things that is so intense about music is the speed at which it gets into a body and does its work. **Edward**: And I think it's important that it's not one collaboration, but it's this evolution where you're learning as a whole through all the different ones. And some really click right away, some don't, but that it attaches to us somehow. **Suki:** I was hoping you would mention that, Dylan, because you mentioned it a couple of years ago when I was having this ambivalence because of the corner that we turned, which is like all of these sounds and all these traditions are instantly available to us because of our media society now. And it's never been cheaper, never been faster, but to make something of it is where the hesitation begins with me. I want to do it. That's how I'm made. And when you said, "Musicians seem to understand this and seem untroubled by it." Economically, totally troubled. In terms of the moment, of making a song, no problem. My anxiety is not about, oh my god you just copped a riff off a six-hundred-year-old *kotsuzumi*[5] player. They would never see that connection.

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**Dylan**: I went to a bunraku performance in Tokyo and the woman next to me said, "Oh, you know there's this audio thing you can put in your ear and it will translate the story as they're telling it." I was like, "No! I don't want that. I do not want that." And then I'm trying to explain, "I'm a composer. I want. . ." "Crazy American, you want to watch this and not understand a word they're saying?" And I'm like "Yes, that's what I want to do." **Edward**: I think it's our

desire to learn as a child would, right? A child doesn't have that luxury. And maybe this is part of the modernization of cultures. That they can't imagine, they don't even understand, that that would even be something valuable. That you would want to. . . You can just as easily read the story before the performance and get the gist, same with opera. Even with noh, they are speaking a language Japanese people don't understand anymore. I mean there might be a few words so they get a little sense, but it's somewhat similar to us listening to old Shakespeare plays. **Keith**: From my perspective, these things aren't really translatable except through the phenomenon. You can speak about kids and language, and music is its own language, maybe more subtle, but there's this aspect that when things are translated suddenly you've turned over a huge amount of meaning and of relationship to a chain of other people who have intentions and limitations and everything in order to make this mean this for you. Whereas when you are learning a language, you just are saying these things out of order, and there's this kind of holographic aspect of, "Oh, there's all these other meanings that are possible that aren't necessarily linear."

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**Suki**: The original commission was to respond to the *Silence* exhibit at Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive. **Dylan**: Yes, it was. That's interesting because of John Cage's relationship to Japanese culture and philosophy. He studied with D. T. Suzuki, but then he was getting at this lack of ego idea through chance operations and the arbitrary divisions of time, not so much meditation practice. He used clock time a lot, actually, to try to effect that kind of change in audience, or in performers really. **Suki**: I'm not a Cage scholar, but I found when I walked through that exhibit and did a series of field recordings that were all 4'33". . . I realized that it is false. It was acquisitive. And that maybe it was a legitimate criticism. So I veered away from it at the time because I thought, "Well, maybe everything I am doing is false as well." But I can understand that he had a real attraction to it. I mean, I do too.

**Dylan**: The way that I thought about that later on was, because the performers were so far away from being able to do what he [Cage] was imagining, this randomness had to be composed in. Whereas I think what we, as later people in that same kind of trajectory of working in American experimental music, we came at it from a process/practice place. Because we actually trained our bodies in various ways to handle those kinds of discontinuities in composition, we didn't need the stopwatches anymore to get that kind of sound.

**Suki**: I think we were up here[6] when we were first imagining it. It did start here, we spent a day here, and there was real resistance to marking time and I understood it completely, but I didn't know. I do know that programming an intervention to break your habit is an excellent technique no matter what, whether it's food or, or awareness, or a verbal tic. People who are wearing these rubber bands to stop them from doing something they always do. You could see a whole bunch of Cage stuff as being just one big rubber band that keeps snapping at you. There was complacency inside the Western canon, but who's to say there wasn't complacency inside the noh canon? We just don't know how to see it. So I fell back on the jo-ha-kyū structure because I felt it so powerfully, and in the end, to execute it intentionally was a real struggle.

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**Dylan**: So, for me one of the things that definitely affected my body in that performance was the long *ha* section, having to build for that long. Definitely in the last five minutes or so I'm not struggling for air, and I'm not struggling to physically play the instrument, but I'm struggling to keep the energy high, keep it moving, just trying to get more and more out of the instrument and

there's almost less and less coming actually out of the instrument and more breath. So, I'm curious for you, because I know you're playing hichiriki, and it being a double reed it's definitely also a physical as well as an energetic struggle. **Edward**: Yeah, it was certainly the most difficult part of the piece. To hold that energy through the *ha* part before that kind of release goes through. I remember just kind of feeling helpless at some parts because it was just . . . and it was in this huge space right so it felt like we had to really fill it up in some way. And we have these kinds of small instruments and just how to do that. I know that usually when I play these double-reed instruments like hichiriki it's just more about the physicality of it than actually what's coming out of it. **Suki:** I was happy to learn about the ha exhaustion. And I think it relates to forcing the piece into earthly time. Sean had asked us to do a performance that started at one moment and ended at another moment, and inside of that we put a 4'33", which is an even more rigorous homage to time. **Dylan**: We're improvising, and I would say even when we perform just as a band, without this jo-ha-kyū structure, we don't have to stay in those intense spaces. There's nothing keeping us there. Something about the imposition of the time, the time and the imperative to keep the energy building during that time, was pushing on us. I don't know. I can't answer whether that time imposition is particularly coming from an engagement with Japanese cultural arts or if it's coming from a more Western idea of arranging these kind of movements by the clock. I've never heard of that actually in Japanese traditional music. **Edward**: No, I mean, I know gagaku well and usually you would have jo-ha-kyu movements within a piece. Or one piece will actually be a movement of this. And gagaku, it's kind of cyclic, you know. You might be playing something and repeat it twice, and so within the cycle you're able to grow, and the percussion will kind of indicate to build it up. Or there's one person who's helping move that kind of concept of what's happening. Where I think with Western music, we kind of set it in the score.

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**Dylan**: Something that was very attractive to us about gagaku was the pace. That slow, glacial unfolding. And Edward said that according to scholarship he's read they think that it used to be played much faster. **Suki**: Yeah, it was like a jig. **Dylan**: A thousand years ago. **Suki**: It was definitely mosh-pit music.[7] And then everybody is like, man, drinking too much. It's the cosmic photocopier that just over and over and over again is losing information. Every time they played it, they forgot one tiny element and over five hundred years by degrees all of a sudden it's quarter note equals thirty. It just happened that day. You know, "Dylan's not feeling very well. Let's slow it down a little bit."

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**Dylan**: So you've studied with a hichiriki teacher in Japan. **Edward**: Right, Hitomi Nakamura. **Dylan**: And you've also played hichiriki in gagaku music. **Edward**: Right. **Dylan**: And you were talking earlier about these kind of unusual notes coming out. Is there space for that in traditional hichiriki playing or does it tend to be more controlled as far as which specific notes you are playing? **Edward**: Traditionally it's played with specific notes. There is what's called *embai*, which is really the characteristic trait of hichiriki. Which is to bend into the notes and create. . . it's kind of natural because with the hichiriki you can't just play a note like a clarinet, where you have this certain fingering and that note is actually there. There's a lot of sliding into it. But you don't do any kind of multiphonics. You stay within this kind of octave and a half range. So yeah, traditionally it is more limited. **Dylan**: I imagine the bending, though, does lend itself well to the kind of tonal experimentation that Thingamajigs does. It allows you a lot of flexibility. **Edward**: Yeah, our concept of paratuning. That instrument is great. Where *sho*, on the other hand, is just a free-reed mouth organ and whatever notes you play those are going to be the notes that come

out. That's why, in gagaku, sho is the instrument that keeps the tuning. **Dylan**: Now, that tuning is not an equal tuning. **Edward**: Right, it's a Pythagorean kind of tuning. **Dylan**: So, when you play that instrument, we're reacting to that tuning ourselves. **Edward**: Right, that would probably be the base, because that instrument can't bend or change. It's the stubborn one. **Dylan**: In that performance we also had Suki's accordion. Which is an equal, Western-tuned free reed. So we had two free-reed instruments in two different tunings. **Edward**: Two different tunings shimmering off each other.

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**Suki**: You know the *nohgakudo*[8] is so quiet, it's whisper quiet. The way they take their fans, the chorus takes their fans out of their belts and puts them in front of them you're like, "When did *that* happen?" Or they take it away and you know, "Wait, I missed it." When do they pick up the flute? When do they put the drum on the shoulder? You can't. You think you saw it but. . . When I was travelling with Theatre of Yugen and we were at some studio, and they just pulled out a piece of fabric that wasn't even made into a costume yet. But the way they pulled it out and displayed it in that light I just got a very powerful sensation, like, "Oh my god, these people are through and through living artists. Every move they make, every perception, every consideration, the way they prepare the tea, the way they serve it to someone." I thought, "Wow, I'm not there yet." But I certainly felt the power of it and then later, years later, there's something about the way I moved an instrument aside or brought it in front of me that absolutely had to echo that intention that I saw that day back in 2005. The interiority thing. People would see me very ceremoniously move something in front of me and what was it? It was a flower pot. And they're like, "What? You're clowning around." And I'm like, "Just wait till you hear that flower pot." **Dylan**: Well, there's a certain kind of equality. I think that's part of this tension between the idea of colonialism and then the idea of a kind of maybe freedom where we have the sho, we have the hichiriki, we have the flower pot, we have the bamboo instrument that's not a *shakuhachi*,[9] and the electric guitar, and the concert bass drum, and they are all being alternately disrespected, like placed in a Ross baby towel warmer off to the side (the sho) or intertwined (the Korean piri and the Japanese hichiriki) or played with chopsticks (the guitar). **Suki**: Or the big bass drum is just spun, and I walk away from it. **Dylan**: Spun and just crashing, but the flower pot has to be moved very carefully from here to here. It's a little bit of the performative.

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**Edward**: I mean, I think we use Japanese cultural forms just the same way we used made and found materials and alternate tuning systems. It's a way for us to find a language to compose. It's not, "This is what we are." It's just one of the ways we embody that resonance. Just as we embody beautiful tunings and how that resonates, and how we use glass, or bamboo, or projected images as a way to express something, to create an instrument, or to be an instrument for some kind of . . . yeah. **Keith**: So it's about the travel of the body and the spirit. To me, that last part, there's something about intention in the aspect of the durational spiritual reality of having played together (a long time). And then there's this idea of like, sound is thrown around as spirit, and that is a big part of it. The whole phenomenon is thrown around. It's not just the sound. **Dylan**: Creating a state in the body. **Suki**: To create an instant for the audience. And there is no way in a Thingamajigs performance you can get out of the now. It's really hard to remember even the note that just expired.

**Original Live Performance:** Thingamajigs Performance Group, Dandelion Dancetheater, California State University East Bay Inclusive Interdisciplinary Ensemble, May 2013 at Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive

**Original Score:** Suki O'Kane
**Words:** Thingamajigs Performance Group
**Transcription and Re-Composition:** Dylan Bolles

## Notes

1. Japanese double-reed instrument.

2. Korean double-reed instrument.

3. The Korean *taepyeongso*.

4. Professional singer and spouse of Edward Schocker.

5. Small, hourglass-shaped drum used in noh theater.

6. On the same Sonoma County farm where we did this interview.

7. A mosh pit is a space, usually directly in front of certain high-energy rock bands, where fans can dance in a style that basically amounts to slamming themselves into each other. A generational term for sure. We'll see if it lasts!

8. Traditional noh theatre building

9. Japanese end-blown flute.

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# Yoshida Ami's Onkyō and the Persistently "Japanese" Body: Making (Electro)voice Sound

Gretchen Jude

## Resounding Body, Electrified

A woman standing on a low-lit stage holds a microphone close to her lips. Sound (which must be her voice yet resembles nothing that I associate with a human cry) emerges from the speakers. Small pops and wheezes, an almost inaudible, high-pitched tone—these maybe-voice sounds blend mysteriously with the sounds of the other musician, who is performing on a small, electronic device. My experience of this performance is complicated by the fact that I witness it as a video recording via laptop and headphones, over a decade after a live event that took place in a now-defunct venue in Tokyo.

The difficulties in accounting for the effects of this vocal performance indicate the ineffable ways a voice is energized and transformed when it leaves a performer's mouth to emerge from vibrating loudspeakers. Any voice is always already outside the body; there is no vocal sound without the vibration moving past the skin, leaking through and penetrating the boundaries of who we are (as well as who we think are and are thought to be). Accordingly, a voice is both in and not in a body. As listeners, we exist embodied within and across multiple cultural contexts that make it impossible to ignore the multiple materialities of body and machine.

The video recording of the performance described above was by Cosmos, Yoshida Ami's duo with Sachiko M (Cosmos 2003). Yoshida's small vocal sounds, which would otherwise be audible only at an intimate distance, emerge from speakers in the live setting: slow glottal pops, the moist separation of tongue and hard palate, the subtle burble of saliva as air is evenly pushed between bottom lip and incisors. After a silent pause, Yoshida lowers her jaw to emit a tiny high-pitched squeak as her tensed vocal folds quickly and briefly vibrate. In this minimal and methodical performance that strains to exclude all semantic, representational, and expressive content, she drains her mouth of any tendency to sing or speak.

The juicy bilabial hisses, dry squeaks, and wheezes uttered by Yoshida into the amplifying power of the PA system via microphone undergo a strange transformation in juxtaposition with Sachiko M's abstract electronic sounds. Yoshida's voice shifts between the almost disturbingly guttural and the coldly electronic, blending in with the soft clicks and short sine tones of her duo partner's electronic sound-generating device. Yoshida's unemotive, physically minimal performance style, which reflects Sachiko M's quiet gestures as she focuses on her apparatus-cum-instrument work to magnify an indeterminate aural experience that plays in the space between fleshly voice and electronic abstraction. In the performance video, the mike placed centimetres from Yoshida's mouth is an ongoing reminder of the unavoidably electronic character of her vocal work. Examination of various aspects of the context of this performance clarify how voice disembodied and transmitted through technology can be reidentified with bodily and other differences.

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My previous theorizing of what I call plasmatic voice (Jude 2018) facilitates examination of multiple in-between-nesses. Voice emerges as lungs push air past membranes and through resonating cavities, producing vibration as sound waves. The vibrating air moves a microphone's diaphragm, which transduces sound waves into variations in electrical voltage. This analogue electrical signal travels through cables to myriad devices (such as amplifiers and analogue-to-digital converters) for further processing, before being transduced from electricity back into sound waves produced by the vibrating diaphragm of a loudspeaker. Plasmatic voice provides a tool for understanding bodies and technologies as assemblages that blur conceptual binaries and demonstrate that identities are not static but performed.

Plasmatic voice is a concept that I am developing to be able to think about a voice and electricity. Plasmatic voice enables analysis of the sonic agency of humans in combination with the multiple material elements, energies, and contexts that constitute (electro)vocality. The word *plasma* invokes both a fundamental bodily fluid and an extreme state of matter in which electrons and positive ions freely move. Plasmatic voice is the complex intersection of matter, body, and vocal performances utilizing electronic technology. Approaching plasmatic voice as an assemblage allows critical analysis of voice as sounds located in sociocultural structures such as race and gender, without limiting understandings of electronically produced voice—or (electro)vocal performance—to static, essentialized identity categories. Ultimately, the assemblage of plasmatic voice also encourages posthuman thinking, as we begin to account for the complex interactions between individuals, communities, and cultures, as well as the environments and vast networks of machines that surround us.

In this article, I examine the work of Yoshida Ami as a case study in how vocal performance through digital media networks complicates, and is complicated by, understandings of race, culture, and gender. I examine experimental music performances by Yoshida in which she uses a basic audio set-up—microphone, amplifier, and loudspeakers—to amplify small movements of her throat and mouth. I juxtapose her stated aim to create vocal sound devoid of semantic meaning with Western critical writing that relocates Yoshida within the essentialized identity of a Japanese woman. Finally, I suggest that instances of plasmatic voice—that is, human voice that sounds via electricity—may be best understood as transcultural assemblages comprised of human and nonhuman elements.

## Yoshida Ami: Amplifying (in) Context

Critical reception of Yoshida's work provides an example of how an artist's body can provide a metaphorical filter, colouring listeners' perceptions of the voice's bare sound. Since Yoshida first emerged as an artist in the globally influential yet relatively obscure *onkyō* scene in Tokyo in the early 2000s, her music has resisted established or easily identifiable performance categories. This absence of clear genre markers, not to mention lyrics or melodies, allows examination of (electro)voice at its most elemental.

In 2003, Yoshida burst onto the international electronic music scene, sharing the prestigious Grand Prix Ars Electronica for Digital Musics with Sachiko M and Kawasaki Utah for a double album CD release (Astro Twin and Cosmos 2002) that documented two live duo performances: Yoshida with Kawasaki as Astro Twin, and Yoshida with Sachiko M as Cosmos (*Computer Music Journal* 2004, 7–8). This international acclaim came at the apex of the short-lived onkyō movement, in which all three performers were involved. Of her compatriots, she was the only vocal performer; other onkyō artists associated with this largely urban Japanese movement were electronic musicians. The performance I describe at the beginning of this article was recorded at

the 2nd International Amplify Festival, held in Tokyo in October of 2002, on the cusp of that breakthrough.

According to her artist statement on the Improvised Music from Japan (2001) website, "Ami Yoshida strives for a barely audible sound that is perceived as sound itself rather than as vocalization." Central to Yoshida's particular project is amplification and the often-unexamined ways it changes vocal sound. Her process is simple; she uses the PA system to foreground the materiality of the vocal apparatus—lips, teeth, tongue, cheeks, soft and hard palate, nasal pharynx, and larynx.

She developed her so-called "howling voice" style (Improvised Music from Japan 2001) immersed in the milieu of the Tokyo-based onkyō experimental sound scene in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Japanese musicians such as Nakamura Toshimaru and Sachiko M had developed stripped-down techniques of (mis)using basic electronic equipment, such as Nakamura's no-input mixing board.[1] In the performance video described above, Sachiko M uses her no-input sampler without any audio samples, instead engaging the built-in test tones and incidental switch noises. In using instruments' stripped-down self-noise, these musicians aimed to improvise sound without reference to any recognized musical vocabulary, as these "empty" instruments "metaphorize onkyō's incommensurability with historical narratives of musical style and performance" (Novak 2010, 45).

Yoshida applied these musical ideas to her vocal practice, aiming to empty her vocalizations of any association or emotion and abstract them into pure sound—"sound itself." Yet the voice emerging from a body is difficult to strip of meaning, if only the significance of "the particular voice of So-and-so." Moreover, the incidental sounds of a moving mouth evince a visceral response, but one sensed via personal and cultural frames. Through her physical control and aesthetic restraint, Yoshida creates vocal sounds that, because they downplay meaning and emotive expression, exist in tenuous relation to systems of signification such as language and genre. As performer and composer, she then excises those sounds from any narrative trajectory or song structure so that they can be experienced in isolation. The slow pace of the performed presentation of the sounds allows the audience time to notice that what should be familiar bodily vibrations are actually, in the absence of passion or loss of control, quite strange. That Yoshida's mouth sounds become at times indistinguishable from Sachiko M's audio electronics points to her vocal symbiosis with sounding machines and illustrates the usefulness of assemblage as a critical tool. Here, Yoshida's voice can only be heard through the complex materiality of electromechanical networks—that is, as plasmatic voice.

## From Proximal Vibrations to Transnational Networks

What is now referred to as the onkyō movement was a loose alliance of performers playing in Tokyo in the early 2000s. Their shared aesthetic practice developed in a small Tokyo venue called Off Site and became influential in free improvisation and electronic music scenes worldwide. Ethnomusicologist David Novak (2010) describes onkyō as "internationally famous for improvised performances that emphasize emptiness and stillness, and for the extremely sparse use of sound material" (36). Anthropologist Lorraine Plourde (2008) characterizes the movement's hallmark quietness as springing from the physical and sociocultural conditions of the crowded urban spaces of Tokyo—as much locational exigency as cultural specificity. Novak (2010) concurs, saying that onkyō was both a Japanese and a transnational phenomenon, existing as part of the "discursive circulation of popular music between Japan and North America and Europe" (36).

Due to its small size and proximity to neighbours, the Off Site venue encouraged performers to play quietly. Furthermore, the venue's location in the densely urbanized area of Shinjuku meant that musicians had to contend with unceasing environmental sounds during their sets. As Plourde (2008) points out, the cramped conditions in the venue reflected conditions common across Tokyo (274). Onkyō combined a focus on listeners' modes of listening with accommodation of non-intentional environmental sounds coming from outside the venue, requiring a physically disciplined practice of quiet, intensive listening on the part of the audience, and extreme restraint by performers (274).

As Plourde (2008) found in her interviews with Japanese fans, local audience-informants valued this intensive listening practice. They described onkyō as a genre that must be "directly and physically experienced" in order to "'enter the music'" (287). For fans, attending live performances at Off Site was a demanding attentional experience, requiring "concentration, comprehension, endurance, tension, awareness or consciousness" (285). Thus, "the atmosphere and subtleties of the performance become oppressive to the point that it produces a heightened awareness of space and sensation of time" (286).

And yet, as a listener outside of that spatial-temporal context, I can only ever hear this music as a recorded artifact of its original performance, since the musicians involved in onkyō moved on to new aesthetic explorations after Off Site, the movement's physical nexus, closed in 2005. Watching a video recording (whether alone or with others), I cannot experience the physical tension of amplified sounds in acoustic balance with incidental noises from within and outside the performance space. As Plourde (2008) notes, the sonic choices of the musicians and overall character of the music arose under the influence of architectural contexts and performance conditions of live shows that cannot be recreated in mediated listening conditions, underlining the crucial importance of physical locale and co-present embodied listeners (274).

This focus on the material and sonic conditions of the typical onkyō performance serves as a corrective to foreign critics and fans who tended to "elide the material conditions of Tokyo housing, architecture, and the everyday urban soundscape" in linking onkyō with stereotypically Japanese aesthetic elements such as *ma*—links denied by nearly every practitioner's account (Plourde 2008, 273). Furthermore, once the music entered global circulation (both through recordings and in live performances at venues in Europe and North America), its significance once again shifted with the changes in context. Different listening conditions, audiences, and discursive languages foregrounded—and even circumscribed—the Japanese musicians' identities and practice.

Onkyō's international success highlighted (differences in) culture, as media circulation enabled radical decontextualization of this originally site-specific form. Although practitioners of the genre (who themselves tended to resist any genre categorization) repeatedly disavowed the essentialized "Japaneseness" of their sound, this did not deter (Western) listeners from debating the ostensibly "Zen" character of onkyō (Novak 2010, 52). Other international fans defended the artists' right to self-definition, with one commenting on an online discussion board that it is "at least mildly racist to cite Zen Buddhism when the artists have gone out of their way to tell you otherwise" (qtd. in Novak 2010, 55). However, from onkyō's inception, some Japanese artists involved were perhaps more aware of the stakes—as Novak's analysis of the movement's decidedly unofficial moniker makes clear.

The word *onkyō*, the technical term for sound as an acoustic phenomenon, is also a term widely associated with a well-known Japanese brand of high-end audio equipment called Onkyo.[2] As a descriptor, some artists' choice of the term *onkyō* to describe their experimental music movement

indicated an avoidance of genre, musical history, and stylistic markers in favour of the more objective associations of audio technology. This in turn implied a clear and conscious link with twentieth-century experimentalism and free improvisation. However, despite this gesture toward cultural neutrality through the symbol of scientific objectivism, the fact that the term *onkyō* remained untranslated reflects the movement's markedness in transnational contexts. Similar to other experimental music movements, onkyō musicians sought to avoid generic specificity, but the term's "untranslatedness became evidence for its Japaneseness, as an abstract general term for sound was reinterpreted as a signifier for cultural particularity" (Novak 2010, 42). Yet, rather than onkyō being either Japanese or Western, Novak suggests that, as "a transnational coproduction of Japanese cultural difference" (37), onkyō was in fact both Japanese and Western.

Indeed onkyō as a stylistic movement typifies the situation of contemporary experimental music in Japan—a situation that provides the opportunity for productive reflection upon the problems with an international musical community that presents itself as a universal, progressive alternative to established classical music: "Both 'improvisation' and 'experimental music' are presented as ideal intercultural forms, new open-form languages that allow unhindered access for all participants, who could experiment globally in a tabula rasa with no culturally imposed rules. But such visions often overlook historical environments of miscommunication, untranslation, and the brokerage of cultural difference, all of which determine the natural space of creative music making in modern Japan" (Novak 2010, 53).

As audio technology increasingly facilitates global circulation of listening and sounding objects and practices without addressing significant local differences in reception and deployment, the case of onkyō suggests a rethinking of "the mapping of cultural difference onto categories of sound and performance" (Novak 2010, 51). In the case of Yoshida and her compatriots, they were placed in the double bind of being heard as archetypally "Japanese" even as they produced what they themselves understood to be contemporary experimental music—sound often created in collaboration with non-Japanese musicians in international venues. This double bind points toward the persistent underlying Orientalist biases and assumptions of experimental music theory and practice described by musician and music writer John Corbett (2000): "In close conjunction with the rhetoric of experimentation, we find an associated set of tropes clustered around the idea of exploration and discovery. . . . This notion of discovery or exploration helps undergird the idea that the composer is engaging in a value-free, experimental endeavor, even as it allows us to suggest the colonialist impulse submerged in its rhetoric" (166).

Yoshida's work may represent an alternative to the colonialist notion of *exploration,* harkening back to the etymological origins of the word as *sending out a cry into unknown spaces.* Nonetheless, this radical potential is buried in reception of her work that doubly marks her as a "Japanese female" vocalist. These externally ascribed racial and gender identities reinscribe her voice with an ostensible bodily essence. Yoshida set out to distill her vocalizations into "sound itself"—but ensuring that international audiences perceive it as such is not necessarily possible, as exemplified in Aaron Cassidy's 2013 critical reading of her work.

## (Not) Really Listening: Identifying Voice with Body

In the case of Yoshida Ami, the confusion about "Japaneseness" in discussions of onkyō seems to be compounded by her gender. In an essay on noise in experimental vocal performance, composer and audio technology scholar Aaron Cassidy (2013) proposes that vocal noise practice is a transgression of personal identity. Yoshida is among the artists whose work is analyzed to support his argument; yet Cassidy's claim that vocal noise erases individuality is undercut by his

emphasis on Yoshida's ostensibly essential otherness. In this section, I closely examine the argument's contradictions to suggest how the concept of plasmatic voice may be useful in unpacking the complicated relationship of voice and body in increasingly technologized global sociocultural contexts.

For Cassidy, the voice "in its normal state"[3] communicates a vocalist's unique identity (2013, 49). In contrast, a voice can also produce noise, according to the technical definition of noise as sound consisting of random frequency components at equal intensity. Spectral noise may be best exemplified by the white noise[4] of a waterfall. This should be understood in contrast to sound waves that oscillate at stable rates—what is typically described as the sensation of pitch.

Key to this claim are the acoustically noisy voiceless consonants of speech—that is, phonemes such as *s* or *k* which are produced without vibration of the larynx. Such consonants, since they are made in the mouth rather than in the throat, "require very little of the body for resonance" (Cassidy 2013, 49).[5] Following this logic, the performer's bodily identity is sonically present only in voiced sounds, that is, those sounds that originate in the larynx, since such sounds resonate in the internal spaces of the head, throat, and chest before emerging from the mouth (and, to a lesser extent, the nose). To Cassidy's ear, the noise of a voiceless consonant is the same regardless of who enunciates it—as he puts it, "The difference between my 's' and your 's' is minimal" (49).[6] In contrast, the resonating space of the vocal tract, being uniquely sized and shaped in each person, endows each person's voice "its identifiable connection with its emitter," whereas consonantal noises "sidestep this resonance and thus this identification" (50).

Cassidy (2013) asserts that, since the "guttural grinding, clicks, hisses, and grumbles" of experimental vocalists do not engage the resonant spaces of the body, such sounds are not only linguistically but also metaphorically "voiceless"—that is, unidentifiable as to their origin in a specific person's body. Thus, noisy sounds emitted by experimental vocalists result in "performed erasure of identity" (50). In other words, the vocalist whose work foregrounds spectrally noisy, non-pitched sounds elides not just their individual personality but even their own body.

Even as the experimental vocalist's body is on the verge of disappearance, Cassidy reifies Yoshida as "a short Japanese woman" in contrast to his own physicality as a "tall Caucasian male" (2013, 51)—which, despite its (ostensible) categorical difference, can "manage to make similar sounds" (51). Vocal noise is relocated from the consonant-producing mouth to a "microscopically small physical space" that is "tiny, compressed, pressurized [and deep in] the recesses of the throat" (51). With this sudden focal shift, it becomes unclear how Yoshida's guttural noises manage to emerge from a vague and miniscule interior bodily space unscathed enough by her (Japanese female) bodily resonance to sound like Cassidy's (Caucasian male) vocal noise-making.

Furthermore, the significance of the normative categories of race and gender in this passage is reserved solely for Yoshida. Although the nationality of some other artists is mentioned, for example, "British vocalist Phil Minton" (Cassidy 2013, 37), and gender pronouns make clear the artists' (presumed) gender identities, none of the other performers whose work Cassidy analyzes are delineated by race and gender. Thus, the double bind of marked identity categories hinders both Yoshida's innovative experimentation and Cassidy's critical listening.

Despite the ostensibly depersonalized disembodiment of Yoshida's noisy vocalizations, analysis rooted in essentialist identity frameworks cannot avoid reanchoring a voice in its "proper (Japanese female) place." In this approach, even as experimental vocal sound aims to achieve an

"intentional elimination of personality" (Cassidy 2013, 50) through a vocal practice of "'No-one-ness'" (52), Yoshida's noise filtered through such a listening approach ultimately points back to its bodily point of origin marked as other from the listener. The desire to hear ways that "vocalization rejects the limits of the self" (53)—a resounding with the onkyō striving for "sound itself"—is at odds with identity-based critical reception of Yoshida's work. The centrality in some Western discursive contexts of the Japanese female performer's non-white non-maleness illustrates how discourses of bodily identity can cling to any instance of plasmatic voice. Discursive contexts must thus be considered as potentially critical components of the assemblage of plasmatic voice. Decentring identity categories is just the first step in understanding how the concept of plasmatic voice may critically reshape resounding bodies.

## The Limits of Prosthetic Logic

Throughout the development of audio communications technology, audio devices have been described as prosthetic devices that expand fundamental human capacity (Mills 2012). In this prosthetic logic, a microphone, for example, quantitatively increases the power of a vocalist's live performance. When audio technology is analyzed as part of vocal performances, it is seen as something separable and thus optional. The microphone, symbolizing the chain of multiple interventions entailed by electrical amplification, is treated as merely a separable, optional device, distinct from the natural human voice.

Prosthesis in this sense treats the (vibrating) body as a fixed and bounded entity, the function of which can be simply augmented by the addition of devices, without any qualitative change to the nature of either the body or the technology. Media scholar Dianne Currier (2002) takes aim at the view of technology as prosthesis, asserting that "whatever permutations arise from a prosthetic encounter between bodies and technologies, they remain bound within the logic of identity or sameness that structures all binary oppositions" (529). Such a view limits analysis of technology's roles and effects, since the prosthetic equation relies upon "a self-identical and unified self" as its assumed starting point, to which is added a non-self or "'non-body' force or entity" (530).

Thus, prosthetic logic stymies understanding of anything beyond detachable technological modules added to a stable human subject. The diffuse character of audio networks such as PA systems, for example, cannot be accounted for in prosthetic logic. Furthermore, the ways that human vocalists adjust their own voices in response to the lively interventions of a PA system in particular acoustic contexts and architectural spaces (e.g., speaking quietly to avoid the squeal of feedback in a resonant room) go largely ignored. Yoshida's active interactions with amplification systems indicate something more complex—and far more radical—than prosthesis.

Cultural anthropologist Sarah Jain (1999) observes how the trope of prosthesis reifies normative understandings of individual bodies, writing, "If the prosthesis presumes an enhancement to the 'natural' body . . . , then bodies and prostheses are already naturalized rather than being understood as socially constructed" (39). Arbitrarily limiting analysis of experimental vocalists, such that "the only extension of the voice that appears in the repertoire . . . is the microphone" (Cassidy 35), relies on prosthetic logic to naturalize amplification as simultaneously distinct from technologically "modified" (35) voices yet also unremarkably part of the range of an "unadorned" voice (35). These contradictory descriptors (how can voice be simultaneously modified and unadorned?) illustrate how blurry, and blurring, the notion of prosthetic extension can be.

In contrast, understanding (electro)vocal performances through the assemblage of plasmatic voice, we can flexibly foreground the elements that are pertinent to analysis in any given context—including things such as the discursive culture of listeners—beyond the voice of the performer or even the audio technologies used in the performance. Rather than limiting analysis to essentialized categories of structural identity, assemblage theory (mutually informed by complex and nuanced understandings of identity in context) can further analysis of plasmatic voice in performance. Assemblage provides an alternative to prosthetic understandings of audio technology, which normalize the (able) human body and fix it within hierarchical systems of power. In the next section, I examine some fundamental nonhuman elements of the assemblage of plasmatic voice—the basic technologies required to amplify and record, which can be obscured by prosthetic logic.

## Assemblage: Mouth to Microphone to Public Address System

Plasmatic voice approaches (electro)vocal performance without naturalizing the normative human body as the centre of analysis. This follows feminist elaborations of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage, which suggest refocusing analysis on flows and linkages rather than on fixed and preexisting entities. As feminist theorist Dianne Currier (2003) observes, "In each assemblage the particles, intensities, forces and flows of components meet with and link with the forces and flows of the other components: the resultant distribution of these meetings constitutes the assemblage" (325). The scale and configuration of assemblages are variable since there is no presupposition of the preexisting (or enduring) identity of either an assemblage or its components. This allows a flexible approach that engages multiple viewpoints aimed at understanding process, as we inquire into what things *do* rather than what they are: "What productive capacities for connection and linkage, for differing, move things? What becomings do they enter into and how can this movement to be thought as movement, rather than arrested and identified?" (Currier 2003, 332).

Perhaps the best place to start teasing apart elements of plasmatic voice is with the relationship between the two key components of this assemblage—the voice and the microphone. The microphone (sound transducer) provides for the voice (sound source) its key point of entry into any further transductions and electronic sound transformations. Sound studies scholar Brandon LaBelle, in his extended writing on the mouth, passes over what is typically considered voice's typical originary nexus, the larynx, in favour of the oral. This move expands the range of noises for consideration beyond typical distinctions of meaningful speech, expressive singing, and extraneous noise. As LaBelle (2014) queries: "Might the voice be thought of more as a tension—a tensed link, a flexed respiration, and equally, a struggle to constitute the body, rather than a disembodied sound? Not so much an object, but rather a primary production of a body?" (5). The mouth here emits the sounds of embodied/embodying vibration as a call into what exists beyond the body, crying out into the unknown as an ex-plor-ation. But if voice is, by definition, that which humans perceive as a sound from a body's mouth, what vibration is and is not included as part of that sounding body? Media scholar N. Katherine Hayles (1999) argues that the notion of body as a normative discursive construct is in constant interplay with processes of embodiment that people experience and enact. These processes cannot be extricated from hegemonic norms in specific contexts of "place, time, physiology, and culture" (196), but neither can sounding bodies be limited to mere reactions against norms and circumstances.

An utterance flows from the mouth on the breath, existing neither exclusively inside nor outside, yet nonetheless of a body—and potentially involving many others, since a voice's vibrations hail other listening ears. Consideration of both the liminality and the relationality of voice challenges the notion of individual(ist) human identity as bounded and fixed—while resounding with and

echoing back from social categories like gender, race, and nationality: "To utter is to immediately participate, to be enclosed within structures that bind us to others and to which we are held accountable; to modulate these structures, to press in on them as one is impressed, imprinted, enfolded within and against others and the logic of relations" (LaBelle 2014, 185).

One basic inter-component relation in the plasmatic voice assemblage flows between the microphone and the public address system, better known as the PA. The microphone (or mike)—usually handheld but sometimes on a stand—often symbolizes plasmatic voice; in fact, a major American manufacturer of audio equipment—amplifiers, loudspeakers, and microphones—is called Electro-Voice. Held to the mouth, perhaps even touching the lips, the microphone is the link of the nonhuman chain of technology that is physically closest to the human body. This is because, in order to selectively highlight the sound waves made by the voice and foreground the voice in its embedding sonic environment, most microphones must be very close to the mouth emitting the sound.[7]

The microphone vibrates with sound waves, transducing into electrical signal the vibrations that emanate from a vocalist's mouth: "The microphone is a silent device, not producing sound but picking up vibrations with its diaphragm. It is designed to respond to any mechanical vibrations, mostly transferred as air pressure waves, and as long as these sounds are within the limits of its capabilities to respond, the microphone is able to transduce them into electrical signal" (Van Eck 2017, 55). Yet despite its symbolic power, a microphone is only one link in a chain of electronic devices used to produce audio, arranged to facilitate electrical signal flow.

Fundamental to any discussion of voice and electronic sound is the transductive network that makes up the PA, or so-called sound reinforcement, system. The existence of any electronic sound requires a loudspeaker, a transducer that vibrates to produce sound waves: "The loudspeaker is a sounding device. It produces sound through the movements of its diaphragm, which are triggered by the electrical signal received by the loudspeaker. The loudspeaker itself has no way to verify if this electrical current is meant to be turned into sound or not. It merely moves its diaphragm analogue to the current, within the range of its material possibilities. Like the microphone, the loudspeaker diaphragm vibrates according to the limits of its frequency and amplitude range" (Van Eck 2017, 55). A PA system will never exactly replicate the vibrations that shimmer the air in front of its microphone input. Any transducer system will amplify or attenuate certain input frequencies, depending on its material design, even adding frequency components that were not part of the original acoustic sound.

One example of this is the proximity effect. One type of microphone called a dynamic mike disproportionately boosts lower frequencies of a sound source that is very close to its diaphragm, making the amplified voice sound "deeper" than it "really" is. Similarly, due to the noise generated by electrical components within the audio system as a whole, there is no complete silence in a PA system—unless it is turned off. Due to this phenomenon, called the noise floor, any acoustic sound entering the system requires a certain level of amplification just to be heard above the incidental hiss of the system's functioning itself.

In the ninety-nine short, untitled tracks of her 2003 solo release, *Tiger Thrush*, Yoshida delves deeply into what she calls "garbage-like" sounds (qtd. in Gottschalk 2016, 196) of both voice and audio technology, making clear the symbiotic relation of the two in her work. She recorded the album at her home using relatively simple (compared to a professional studio recording) audio equipment. Yoshida's approach avoided naturalizing these devices as transparent documentary media; instead, she overtly utilized the machines' own noisy sonic qualities as ad hoc compositional tools. Although the first few tracks lead me to believe that I am listening to the

tiny, intimate, raw (and perhaps even "natural") sounds of Yoshida's own throat and mouth, within the first minute of the album, Yoshida's unconventional use of amplification, recording, and playback devices bring the electronic apparatus equally into my aural awareness. On track 12, for example, her hypnotic use of looping (repeated playback of short, recorded segments) sweeps away any illusion that I am hearing a fleshly human voice, while at the same time retaining a sonic link to the narrowly focused vocal technique and the limited frequency range of previous tracks.

Yoshida's use of rapid stereo panning—first on track 5 then sporadically later on the album—achieves a similarly defamiliarizing effect, as her laryngeal squeaks and salivary hisses switch suddenly from right to left channel.[8] Yoshida also distorts the recorded sound by increasing the volume sensitivity of the microphone input (as on track 58). In subsequent tracks, the volume level is lower, but (as in the sequence of tracks 66–71) alternating densities of sound, sudden silences, machinic repetitions, and an often intense quality of vocalization result in my peculiar sensation of having completely lost track of whether what I am hearing is extremely quiet or extremely loud. As the end of the album approaches, the sounds again become more sparse and identifiably organic, yet no less engaging. For instance, the three-and-a-half minutes of track 91, which starts as a juicy microphone kiss—which in other contexts might seem ridiculously expressive—continues past the point of dryness, in the last twenty seconds resembling a faint digital blipping.

Throughout the sixty-eight minutes of *Tiger Thrush*, Yoshida engages with not only the apparatus of her sounding body but also the characteristic sounds of the basic audio electronics at her disposal. If her 2003 Cosmos performance with Sachiko M illustrates ways in which vocal sound can blend with (and even be mistaken for) electronic sounds, *Tiger Thrush* is a clear statement that, in assemblages of plasmatic voice, the elements of voice and audio media can only ever sound together.

Carried by electrical currents, plasmatic voice appears unmoored, leaving the body further behind than ever before possible. Yet flesh also inheres in plasmatic voice, not merely the resonating body of the singer, nor even only the resounding bodies of listeners, but also the force of contexts that shape what we know about/as bodies. Add to these components the physical materiality of audio technology: microphone, speakers, cables, wires—all enlivened by the extra-organismic charge of electricity. The assemblage of one's listening to a voice encompasses an audio system, an acoustic context, the vocalist's culture/community and musical/generic practices, vocal and visual semiotic signs such as costumes and movement. Even my own individual embodiment and positionality may be germane to analysis of plasmatic voice.

Even though plasmatic voice flows through a nervous system at the speed of electrical impulses—much faster than sonic vibration propagates through air, flesh, or any other medium—human embodiment still demands a radical localization of listening, such that I not only listen to the sound object as it exists/ed in a time and place distinct from my own, but also attune to my own processes of being as I vibrate in sympathy with sounds that exist in the extensive present. This includes exploring—not in the colonializing sense, but as the older meaning of the term ("sending out a cry") implies.

Voice through audio technology, or what I call plasmatic voice, has multiple effects. Audio recordings shift my relation to sound in enculturated space and time. What happened in a different place and a time now past is made momentarily present in my own sphere, enlivened via electronic mediation. Analysis of the radical expansiveness of plasmatic voice requires a

similar flexibility of thought and attunement to the embodied senses, both encompassing and surpassing notions of structural identity.

## Assemblage and Intersectional Identity: "*Not a Thing, but a Doing*"[9]

Queer theorist Jasbir Puar (2012), commenting on Kimberlé Crenshaw's influential notion of intersectionality (which engages the metaphor of the traffic intersection to illustrate how multiple sociocultural identities interact), reiterates the processual nature of identities in lived experience: "Identification is a process; identity is an encounter, an event, an accident, in fact. Identities are multicausal, multidirectional, liminal; traces aren't always self-evident. The problem of how the two preexisting roads come into being notwithstanding, there is emphasis on motion rather than gridlock, on how the halting of motion produces the demand to locate" (59). According to Puar, the theory of intersectionality posits that "all identities are lived and experienced as intersectional—in such a way that identity categories themselves are cut through and unstable—and that all subjects are intersectional whether or not they recognize themselves as such" (52). Puar argues that identities should thus be considered "events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects" (58). Indeed, many deployments of identity naturalize marked identity, locating it in particular bodies, and thereby reinscribe the systems of oppression that intersectional analysis aims to combat.

Puar's emphasis on identification as a process in time and space helps facilitate understanding of how it is that onkyō artists, for example, identified as Japanese (and female) in some contexts but at the same time rejected labelling of their work as "Zen" or other stereotypically Japanese cultural and aesthetic associations.

Taking identity to be a fixed ontological marker has given rise to a situation in which increasingly fine distinctions between increasing numbers of identity categories result in a "problematic reinvestment in the humanist subject" (Puar 2012, 55). As a result, rigid categories of difference must be increasingly finely parsed, as "'difference' produces new subjects of inquiry that then infinitely multiply exclusion in order to promote inclusion" (55). Puar suggests that engaging the theory of intersectionality alongside assemblage theory may be an effective panacea to the contradiction inherent to identity theory.

Puar points out that Deleuze and Guattari's influential term *assemblage*, translated from the French *agencement*, originally meant *design*, *layout*, *organization*, *arrangement*, and (perhaps most importantly) *relations*. The notion of assemblage as a theoretical term should thus be understood as refocusing analysis, from fixed content to tendencies: "relations of force, connection, resonance, and patterning [that] give rise to concepts" (Puar 2012, 57). The human body as an object is thereby not only "de-privilege[d] . . . as a discrete organic thing" (2012, 57) but also emplaced within relational networks of human and nonhuman agents and forces. Utilizing assemblage theory in performance analysis entails a shift from valuing "what things are" to "what things do" (Currier 2002, 534). Furthermore, since spatiotemporal conditions of varying scales are also part of an assemblage, analysis requires context-specific modes of thinking (Currier 2003, 326). "Becoming," as opposed to "being," also challenges the notion of a fixed or essential self, promoting process-based understandings (Currier 2003, 333–34). In my digitally distanced listening, Yoshida's (electro)voice performs this plasmatic becoming, as she resounds through and with material flows of electronic sound technology, resisting the limitations of both conventional systems of vocal signification and oppressive structures of sociocultural identification.

## Howling Voice, Body to Body: A Postscript

In November 2019, at Tokyo's venerable Ftarri venue, I finally got the chance to hear Yoshida perform live. Compared to the recordings I have listened closely to during the past several years, her glottal screech in person feels unbelievably loud. It sonically resembles a scream, yet is not one, as it emerges and sustains without the crucial expressive components of a scream. The sound is drained of all its usual emotional significance. What is left if complex waves of harmonics that peak into noise as the loudest moments of each exhaled breath emerge from her truly operatic level of vocal fry. The experience brings forth an alarming sense of utter presence, as her voice emerges from a frame that remains completely still and unmoving. Yoshida has complete—and completely unique—mastery of her artistic howls, whose arcs do not fall in pitch or volume as her breath fades through the phrase. Yoshida Ami's howling voice is a guttural scream analyzed under the microscope of audio technology. Her mouth and her microphone invite the resounding openness of our (and others') ears, hearts, and minds.

## Notes

1. This is an audio mixing board set up with cables connecting inputs directly to outputs, producing waves of feedback within the device, which can be manipulated by the performer.

2. The more neutral, general-use term for sound is *oto*.

3. The term is left undefined, but presumably indicating a voice engaged in transactional speech.

4. Even the sound of random noise can be distinguished, depending on the proportions of frequency elements. Different types of noise—white, pink, brown, and grey—all lack periodic oscillation but with intensities of different proportions relative to human sensitivity to sound.

5. This claim is inaccurate, as some languages—standard Japanese among them—utilize the category of voiceless resonants, also called voiceless sonorants or voiceless vowels, in which the vocal tract audibly shapes (i.e., resonates) an unvoiced consonant. One example would be the initial *u* in *sukiyaki*.

6. A claim I resist since, after many of hours of speech therapy at age six to correct a lateral lisp, I know from experience that there actually are many ways to pronounce an *s*—some more sociolinguistically acceptable than others.

7. An exception is the shotgun microphone, which is designed to focus in a narrow, cone-like pattern aimed toward a further spatial field.

8. My first thought upon hearing sound in only one headphone—"Is there something wrong with the equipment?"—hovers at edges of this entire album. As a female who has often had my own technical expertise questioned at concert set-ups, I appreciate Yoshida's boldness in inviting such doubts. I feel she is implicitly thumbing her nose at the hierarchy of technical expertise.

9. Barad (2003, 822); italics in original.

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# Surprising Pedagogy through Japanese Anime

duskin drum

*Dedicated to Darya Dudkina*

A polar bear, a penguin, and a panda ride in a jalopy. A jalopy decorated to distinctly resemble a panda. It is a panda-pomorphized jalopy. Soaring house music plays. The lyrics are a mix of Japanese, English, and Hawaiian. The sequence cuts between the joyriding endangered animals and picnics and their other fun activities. They drive through a hallucinogenic wall of yellow butterflies into a forest and out again, onto an elevated highway over the ocean. Suddenly, the polar bear driver touches a button, and the jalopy transforms into a rocket sled resembling a penguin. The rocket rises through the air and then descends, crashing through ice and glaciers as the music swells to a saccharine crescendo. Happy lyrics proclaim, "mocha a latte like it all the time" (JP 2012). This is the opening sequence to *Shirokuma Café* (Polar bear café; Masuhara 2012), a cute Japanese anime about Panda, a young panda who finds a café run by Polar Bear, a polar bear. Adapted from Higa Aloha's (2006–2013) four-panel cartoon, animals go about their lives in the city like regular human people. The cool calming "normal" everyday lives of animals in the human city contrasts harshly with real situations of endangered animals like polar bears, pandas, penguins, giant tortoises, and three-toed sloths. Watching zoomorphic vehicles driven by anthropomorphized, endangered, charismatic mega-fauna smashing through ice, I realized this is about climate change and denial. Could I teach with this?

At the intersection of embodiment, education, and anime, this essay describes how transcultural classroom encounters with anime can pollinate changes in ecological self-conceptions and thus embodiment. Using examples from teaching with anime in Russia and the United States, I describe how interpretive encounters shifted students' ecological self-sense and conceptualization of embodiment. In the classroom, anime acted as an interpretive device for teaching contemporary thought about ecology, technology, microbes, animal-human figures, interconnection, and interdependence. I present evidence of oddly successful encounters between local Japanese cultural/embodied contexts of anime and its partial connections to globally shared human ecological and technological situations. In these transcultural encounters, the Japanese anime are like bees, pollinating and germinating material and conceptual possibilities that are incipient for the students but not easily possibly without outside pollination.

This essay also contributes to teaching philosophy and social science with transcultural popular culture and demonstrates the significance of popular culture for popularizing scientific knowledge. Exposing students to changing understandings of ecology, microbiology, evolutionary science, and climate science can change their assumptions about embodiment and transform ecological awareness.

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## Anime Shaping Cognition

I have been thinking and feeling with anime or Japanese animation for a long time. Until relatively recently, *anime* referred specifically to Japanese-style graphic animation. *Anime* came to English from Japanese. It is a verbal shortening of *animēshon*, the Japanese loan translation of the English "animation." In English, *anime* came to distinguish Japanese animated movie pictures from non-Japanese "animation," including "cartoons" like those made by Disney, Warner Brothers, and Looney Toons, or stop motion animation like the works of Jan Švankmajer or *Wallace and Grommet*. As Japanese animation techniques and styles have slowly become global, the term *anime* has been loosening to include graphic animation from all over the world, but for the purpose of this chapter, I use *anime* restrictively to mean the technique and style developed in Japan and mostly produced there until the twenty-first century.

My first formative experience, at nine years old, was seeing Studio Ghibli's *Castle in the Sky* (Miyazaki 1986) on the big screen. I was mesmerized by the bright colours and vivid realism in fantastic settings, and I idolized the empowered and inflight child-pirate characters, and in the long term, I remain convinced by the evocative images of technology and nature entwined. The most compelling image in *Castle in the Sky* is the last lonely robot tending and caring for the birds, flowers, and trees. Saint Francis as a robot. Continuing to watch anime, the stories, concepts, and images came to influence how I think and feel. They have played a part in shaping formal aspects of my sentiments, understandings, and imagination. In graduate school, anime offered a handy kit for enlivening my studies of ecological thought, performance, and anthropology of science and technology. I use anime and manga to understand and interpret theoretical academic readings and, further, to connect my own experiences to more theoretical frameworks. Most deeply, I am influenced by brilliant ecological philosopher Miyazaki Hayao and his Studio Ghibli.[1] The success of Ghibli has influenced the anime medium to promote ecological themes (Napier 2001). Ghibli movies like *Mononoke Hime* (Miyazaki 1997), *Spirited Away*, and *Pom Poko* connect not only to contemporary philosophy, phenomenology, and sentimentality but also to a longer Japanese recognition of inherent spirits potent in all things, even technological artifacts (Ito 2018; Wake 2017; Wright 2005).

The pleasure of valuing how anime shapes my thinking and feeling led me to co-create a first-year college course with anthropologist Joe Dumit. In this course, titled Ecology Technology Anime, we taught aspects of ecological criticism, sociocultural anthropology, and feminist science and technology studies using selected anime.

## Anime Embodiments: Fiction, Fashion, and Community

Something about anime fandom enables a different and more diverse communal embodiment than normative political identity modalities. While anime has been an influential mainstream medium for motion pictures in Japan, and recently for a global audience, anime has also been part of "minor key" or "alternative" culture. Anime has distinct styles and aesthetics that have slowly become global.[2] Anime aesthetics affect embodiment not only in Japan. This influence is most obviously seen through costume play and fashion and by acting as a nexus for subcultural social manifestations (Lamerichs 2011, 2013). In graduate school, I joined the screenings of our university anime club. I was wonder-struck by the spirit of the organization and its constituents. It was not just a bunch of mecha or hentai obsessed boys. The UC Davis Anime Club was extremely diverse, weird, queer, and energetic—far exceeding conventional identity and social group categories. Here there were fits for the ill fitted—and extraordinarily careful, but playful care in interaction. Some communities of anime fandom are extraordinarily supportive of

difference. In another eerie and disturbing example of anime affecting embodiment, as a professor teaching anime, I was consulted by police conducting an investigation of teen suicide in Russia—the police wanted to scapegoat anime and video games with anime aesthetics as an essential factor in a series of teen suicides.

## Transformative Pedagogy of Anime

Quite contrary to viewing anime as either frivolous or culturally specific, I argue that anime is globally, philosophically, and anthropologically potent. This essay presents classroom encounters with selected anime that pollinated performative transformations of ecological self-conception and self-enactment. I use *performative* not in its recent popularization to mean fake or cynically unhappy performatives. I mean *performative* in the academic sense of semantic utterances, formal displays, or epistemological methods that have transformative material, psychological, and social effects despite being mostly semantic or symbolic (Austin 1975; Mol 2002; Law 2004). Students were compelled or inspired to utter speech, write formulations, and think thoughts that changed their position, expression, and self-conception within the world, or, perhaps better, our global human ecological mesh. In other words, their sense of embodiment changed.

Contrary to simplistic cultural theorizations of cultural consumption, objectification, and exotic fantasies of cool Japanese culture, I demonstrate how transcultural encounters through media can be transformative. Aesthetically and emotionally potent but imperfectly understood stories, themes, and scenarios cause students to return their gaze upon their own circumstances, refiguring the embodied and ecological experiences of students in their own context without harming Japan or Japanese culture. Enjoyment, even orientalist enjoyment, allows students to get into it. Aspects of particular anime series or films turn into interpretive devices when gaps in knowledge of Japanese source culture allow the interpretive devices to occupy the embodied and ecological awareness of the student, producing a novel experience of their own ecologically and cultural specificity. Not quite understanding the commonsense of the anime, their own commonsense becomes strange, opening up possibilities for change. The decontextualization of anime references to Japanese embodiment leaves open threads of association and correspondence that prompt new connections within local ecological awareness and technocultural assumptions.

After watching *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* (Oshii 2004) and reading Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" (2016) with a seminar at UC Davis, a student asked: "Will man ever realize the dream of perfect integration with a system of control? Will a true cyborg ever exist?" In answer, I stood and said, "Everyone stand up." Almost synchronized, the students all stood up. "That's your answer," I said.

Students might imagine—dear reader you might imagine—we would be studying Japan and Japanese culture. But really the study is of ourselves and our ecological situations or relations. Education is an embodied experience. An experience interconnected with and for the wider manifold of particular ecological relations, known and unknown, creating and capacitating particular lives—within local manifestation of wider mesh of relations. The course provoked students to reflect and transform conceptualizations of embodiment and enmeshment in ecological, including technological, relations. When these changes are precipitated by speech, writing, and semantic thought, I consider them to be performative. Classroom education has the potential to change, modify, and open up students' sensibility of their ecological embodiment. What is taken for granted and what is perceived as causal though ethically important, what is assumed and what is counted, what is valued and what is considered irrelevant can change.

After teaching Ecology Technology Anime at UC Davis, I developed the course into a public lecture series, a massive open online course (drum 2019), and most recently, again, as a seminar. Using three examples from this seminar at the University of Tyumen in Russia, the rest of this essay shows how teaching with anime opened possibilities for changing embodiment and ecological self-situating. First, in an open discussion responding to *Shangri-la* (Bessho 2009), a student described how surprised she was to see little girls and women in charge of everything. Another agreed vehemently. This led to a surprising and intense conversation about gender and power in Russia. In the second case, after watching *Moyashimon* (Yano 2007) and reading Hannah Landecker's "Antibiotic Resistance and the Biology of History" (2016), the conversation turned to winter antibiotic treatments. We realized that our microbiomes were probably impacted by each other's winter treatments, and then a student extended the realization to antibiotics in industrial meat production shaping our microbiomes. In the third case, after reading "Cyborg Manifesto" and watching *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence*, the course final examination caused students to feel how they themselves enact and embody the circuits of disciplinary control. Disciplinary control they normally imagine as social and institutional subjugation.

Every anime selected for the course had global climate and biological issues but also featured tropes and conventions distinct to Japan. The decontextualization of distinct Japanese cultural content enhanced the performative possibilities of transcultural cross-pollination.

## Girls Run Everything

"What I noticed in *Shangri-la* is little girls are in charge of everything… it is so strange."
"Yeah, I noticed that too," replied another student. They marked a salient feature I never noticed before, nearly all notable and powerful characters in the series are women. Looking around the classroom and seeing only one male student, I was compelled to ask, "Well, what about women and girls in charge in Russia? What makes this strange in the anime?" The prevalence of female leaders in *Shangri-la* led to an extended conversation about being a young woman in Russia and seeing a lack of women in positions of political or economic power. After listing Russian female political and business leaders, a student noted that their power and affluence derived from their associations with powerful men, fathers and husbands. While perhaps not a revelation about Russia, the anime opened up a conversation about gender embodiment and power we might not have had otherwise. I believe it was an important collective conversation and acknowledgment because the discussion was in an educational institution environment.

Based on a novella, or light novel, by Ikegami Eiichi, *Shangri-la*—a strange, brilliant, somewhat choppy and disjointed, but fun anime—is the story of Hojo Kuniko, a young juvenile delinquent trying to do right. She is heir to an anti-government terrorist organization fighting against a utopian redevelopment project. The story is set in a Japan overwhelmed by global warming, rising seas, feral genetic engineering, and earthquakes. I originally chose the anime for its delicious treatment of climate change, seawalls, and global carbon markets rather than issues of gender and power.

Initially, no normative female gender roles—mother, grandmother, wife, girlfriend, employee, or mid-level manager—appear in the anime. Even the comforting pickle-making grandmother, Hojo Nagiko, is a master carbon trader and head of an international terrorist organization called Metal Age. In *Shangri-la*, powerful women run everything, partially aided by mostly incompetent and bumbling but cute men and boys.[3]

Hojo Kuniko, the protagonist, is a powerful, brash, kind, and idealistic teenager. The character reminds me of strong young female characters in Miyazaki's work, particularly *Nausicaa* (2012). I do not know whether Kuniko speaks to the empowerment of women within a Japanese media context, but her character design and the fan service of her extremely short skirt hail heterosexual fantasies.[4]

Naruse Ryoko is the main villain. She is the leader of the misguided corporate utopian mega-skyscraper or arcology called Atlas. Ryoko is in charge of sacrificing children for this architectural quest to save Japan. She is totally powerful, a sadistic sexual character dominating a team of talented men and beautiful boys.

The most physically powerful person in the serial is a transwoman named Momoko, who is Kuniko's mother. Momoko is a campy man-hungry transvestite who is an expert in hand-to-hand combat and whips. Despite seemingly written to play on the uncomfortable humour of homophobia and transphobia, her character shows yet another powerful woman character.

Mikuni, a creepy, light-sensitive, weird princess, has mysterious telepathic powers that cause people to die if they lie to her. She is tiny, cute, infantile, cruel, and filled with wonder. Her guardian, Sayako is yet another powerful woman, a doctor and a military commando.

Ishida Karin is a rich orphan/latchkey kid who has become a super hacker and predatory carbon trader. Deeply lacking in sympathy for others, she is infantile, talks to herself through her teddy bear and wants to see her parents who, unbeknownst to her, are dead. She is super powerful, although she has not been outside her birdcage-shaped house for years. Karin has sufficient power through online carbon trading to threaten and crush national economies.

In our class, the representations of women and girls in power in *Shangri-la* became a device for interpreting lived experiences of gender inequity in Russia. The young women in our class were inspired by the exaggerated power of women in *Shangri-la* to new articulations and conceptualization of their positions (embodied) as female in Russian society. I heard talk about Russian culture being intrinsically conservative and reverting to traditional values, including gender roles, though some Russian colleagues argued this conservatism is a contemporary fiction being invented in response to the chaos of the 1990s. Since the end of the Soviet Union, the number of women in positions of economic and political power has dropped (Usanova 2020). Vladimir Putin has empowered a handful of anti-liberal and anti-feminist women in government and media. Whether from emerging conservative fantasies, deep cultural roots, or somewhere in between, male supremacy has been on the rise in Russia. The year before our class, the Russian Duma decriminalized spousal abuse (Usanova 2020), and students were well aware of the many sensational media reports of men murdering their wives. *Shangri-la* triggered a timely conversation in our classroom.

## Antibiotic Treatments and Our Shared Microbiome

Microbes, bacteria, viruses—we didn't care about them much because we cannot see them, but it doesn't mean that they do not have an influence on our lives.
—Darya Dudkina

In this second case, our transcultural encounter with *Moyashimon* (Yano 2007) and Landecker (2016) changed how we felt our shared microbiome. A very peculiar Japanese anime exploring microbes opened us up a to performative reconceptualization of our bodily selves.

In the seminar we, more porous and collective, realized, first, that all of us were subjected to each other's winter antibiotic treatments and, second, that we share in the massive microbiotic modulation of industrial scale antibiotics in meat production. A microbiome is a term for characterizing living ecologies of microorganisms like fungi and bacteria in an environment such as a body or a community of bodies. The students began to feel themselves as microbiomes. I asked, "Did anyone get antibiotic treatment this winter?" Some students raised their hands. "Well, I guess we were all treated. We were all modified—our bacteria changing in communication with each other and their reactions to the antibiotics." There was a subtle shift in the feeling of the room as we settled into the weird intimacy of being fuzzy porous bodies made of and with clouds and wisps of bacteria, fungi, and tiny arthropods. Then a student put together our shared antibiotic treatment with the industrial meat industry. She pointed out we are all thus modulated and affected by the antibiotic feeding of chickens, pigs, and cows. We share a regional, and possibly global, antibiotic-altered microbiome. Landecker's stories of industrial biology changing the biology of nature became part of our self-perception and ecological awareness. We experienced a shift in our conceptualization of embodiment, feeling ourselves as both a microbiotic collectivity and as aspects of the environments and ecology of other beings.

*Moyashimon* is a serial television show about a college freshman, Sawaki Tadayasu, who sees fungi, bacteria, and other microscopic life with unaided vision. Based on a successful *seinen* manga (Ishikawa 2004–2014),[5] the show follows his induction into a university lab obsessed with fermented food, beverages, and terraforming. *Moyashimon* is relentlessly cute. Its opening sequence is a stop motion animation of plushy anthropomorphized yeasts, molds, and bacteria bopping around to a catchy soundtrack. *Moyashimon* is a sitcom about a young man with a special ability and his adventures with his new friends at university. It is also the story of relationships between humans and fungi (or yeast), particularly relationships embodied in food and alcohol. The human characters are academic fermented-food nerds, cute college kids, and sake aficionados. The yeasts and bacteria appear as little guys with cute, squeaky fun cartoon voices. Their voices and figures correspond somewhat to the visible physical characteristics of the microorganism observed under microscopes.

The protagonist Tadayasu grew up in a family business propagating yeast starter for miso—a popular and culturally important Japanese fermented food. The animation starts with Tadayasu arriving at university with his best friend, who grew up in a sake brewing family. Sake is Japanese rice wine—made from fermenting rice with some of the same yeasts as used to make miso. Tadayasu can see microbes with his bare eyes, and the anime audience gets to see what he sees, often humorously juxtaposed with what his friends see. The show plays with the visual irony resulting from the differences between Tadayasu's and other characters' perceptions. In an early episode, Tadayasu walks down a hallway, hands outstretched in front of him. The air is so crowded with floating yeasts that he cannot see where he is going. We see both his crowded view and the humorous view of his friend, who sees Tadayasu walking slowly and tentatively, hands waving, down an empty looking hallway.

*Moyashimon* is an effective way to introduce the social, political, and interpersonal aspects of microbial worlds, microbiomes, and microbial ecologies. Not to mention the microbial terraforming of the planet. Alongside our viewing of *Moyashimon*, we read Landecker's (2016) history of mass industrial production of antibiotics and pesticides from yeast byproducts. Industrial chemicals and medicines are brewed like sake or miso. And she describes how the industrial application of the science of biology has transformed biology on the planet. Antibiotics are from particular yeasts from particular places and soils. When cultivated in massive quantities

and spread all over, they transform soils, places, and bodies. Landecker points to microorganisms developing and trading antibiotic resistance as a measure of this transformation. Landecker's history of antibiotics and pesticides invites the reader to consider their effects at a global scale. Growing and distributing biological biocides is transforming bodies, soils, and the globe.

Culture, particularly food culture, is a complexity of animals, plants, human labour, and the work/metabolisms of microbes, which includes fermentation. Landecker's article coupled with the television show *Moyashimon* works well to connect students' everyday living to the science of the microbiome. This scientific knowledge is still not part of global cultural commonsense (Helmreich 2014). Anime and other lowbrow entertainment are crucial for the slow popularization of new science. *Moyashimon*, a silly and cute anime, works as a modality for talking seriously about biology (Wood 2019).

In *Moyashimon*, there is a special character, a microbial monster. It, he, they first appear gliding down the street as a shambling mass of microbes. In terror, Tadayasu hides, then, out of curiosity, he tracks the monster to its lair. The monster turns out to be a collector and an aficionado of fine sake. He also runs an exclusive and secret sake bar where he later instructs the main characters in the secrets of sake. In the show, this character's particular affect makes him beloved to the microbes who live and thrive with him. In an apt synecdoche for us all, the microbes are like his familiars. In a longer story arch, the germophobic clean freak Oikawa Hazuki becomes a microbial monster herself.

In our classroom, *Moyashimon* coupled with Landecker opened up a new sensibility of our intertwined anatomy and biology. We began to feel and conceptualize a more ecological version of our bodies and health. This is an example of how knowledge can performatively shape our embodiment (Deloria 1999; Mol 2002; Law 2004). This microbial knowledge encounter remains especially poignant because one of the students, Darya Dudkina, tragically and mysteriously died. This essay is dedicated to her. She went to the hospital one day for some follow-up tests and never came back. I do not know her cause of death. Darya's death haunts me. I worry the intimacy and realness of thinking with bacteria and fungi is dangerous. Her father later brought me her last note about our class. The note ended with this postscript: "I found it interesting that there is a monument 'in honor of laboratory animals'—but nobody made a monument for the microbes that helped to create thousands of different medicines and save humans life. It looks like a kind of speciesism."

## Examining Cyborg Discipline

The third encounter took place during our final exam. The students experienced their cybernetic agency in embodied implementation of education discipline. A discipline they formerly understood as simply subjugation. I prepared quite a severe final exam intending to provoke study and review of key concepts. I invited them to prepare one double-sided sheet of paper with notes and an essay outline to be used during the exam. On the day of the exam, I offered them the option to take the whole exam, only the essay section, or skip the exam and be graded on their study sheets. I left the classroom to let them debate and decide. I told them I required a consensus. A heated debate ensued for twenty minutes or longer, as the students grappled with their investments in enacting their own disciplinary apparatus.

The students told me their struggle for consensus produced a revelation about their participation in their own biopolitical discipline, including classroom discipline, all along. The pedagogical twist of requiring the students to collectively chose how to take the exam revealed power and

control to be more distributed than we initially realized. Quite accidentally, I should admit—my main motivation for offering the option to skip the exam and grade the cheat sheets was to watch a bit of anime instead.

We had just finished looking at *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* (hereafter *Innocence*). The film was coupled with Haraway's ever challenging and rewarding "A Cyborg Manifesto" (2016). *Innocence* was a long-awaited follow-up to internationally successful film *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii 1995; Ruh 2016). *Innocence* is a science fiction detective story and, more subversively, a child abuse revenge story. The film is acclaimed for its philosophical writing, successful convoluted plotting, and gorgeous animation. The rare scenes of intense graphic violence punctuate long drawn-out philosophical conversations between two government cyborg police officers named Batou and Togusa. These cyborg detectives investigate a series of murders committed by apparently malfunctioning sex-slave robots. *Innocence* takes place in a world where most people have some neural interfaces to computer networks and services. Everyone is partly cyborg—their bodies an integration of biology and technology. Batou's body, including organs, is almost an entirely manufactured and grown artifact, whereas Togusa has only the minimal information connectivity, basically a smart phone installed in the brain, required for work. Due to cybernetic modification and neural technologies, everyone in this futuristic world is vulnerable to direct instrumental mind and body control. The aspect of mind that makes people autonomous individuals is called their "ghost." Ghosts are vulnerable to destruction, infiltration, and expropriation. The detective story/revenge fantasy in *Innocence* hinges on a conspiracy: orphaned children are secretly imprisoned in medical comas that allow their ghosts to be exploited to provide more authentic emotional texture for commercial sex androids called gynoids.

Haraway (2016) describes social institutions and technologies as techno-cultural circuits. These cybernetic circuits, or systems of interconnected relational feedback loops, shape and control us and constitute our social embodiment. Social institutions such as medical technologies and healthcare, education, and even concepts of personhood can be understood in terms of cybernetic circuits. We are agentive in our cybernetic loops whether we acknowledge and cultivate responsibility or not. People are biological beings modified and shaped by systems of social-cultural circuits. Haraway's manifesto stimulates reconceptualization by introducing semiotic reflection and activating feedback loops implicating ourselves in systems of relational feedback circuits forming, figuring, and conducting us. She initiates a more troubling agentive position in the net of human apprehension. A person is not simply an accidental property of oppression and institutions; rather, they are implicated in operating their oppressions and institutions. Cybernetics, with its language of commands, controls, and feedbacks, is a way of understanding our lack of autonomy while retaining the agentive implications of circuits. "A Cyborg Manifesto" describes a discursive and technically distributed embodiment. In this theory of embodiment, a person or cyborg is a node of partial connection between multiple superimposed partially connected networks. Importantly, these networks, also called social institutions and technologies, are both material and semiotic. The backgrounds and settings of the *Innocence* are a visual history of communication and media technology—the very same devices and artifacts Haraway describes as integrated cybernetic circuits.

In *Innocence,* the director wants us to know he is thinking with Donna Haraway by naming a supporting character "Haraway." She even looks a bit like Donna Haraway. Unlike the real Haraway, Detective Haraway is a chain-smoking police forensic medical examiner. The character, nearly quoting "A Cyborg Manifesto," explains all human reproduction/production of person-like beings, such as children, pets, dolls, is a particular kind of sloppy artificial programming. Every child is a cyborg wired in social feedback circuits.

The original *Ghost in the Shell* film centred on another full cyborg, Batou's former partner Major Kusangi (Ruh 2016). The government owning her artificial body troubles her. Was there any part of her that is truly her own? If we are properties of social technologies and environmental or ecological circuits, do our souls or ghosts have any autonomy or self-determination? What part of myself is my own property? Cyborg figures, according to both the film and Haraway, do not have that mythical self-possession and autonomy of an "enlightened" freeman. Instead, they, we, are strung up like puppets. In the first film, the major achieves a kind of freedom by first destroying the government body and then having transformational, almost-sexual, congress with a fugitive artificial computational intelligence. The only way through the problems of limited autonomy and agency that come with being cyborg is to embrace circuits and attempt to effect agency through them both locally and remotely.

In *Innocence*, Batou muses about the situation of an individual soul and body among the complexities of collective information patterns. He muses about beaver dams, reproduction, and philosophy. Haraway, in the movie, teaches us that making children (and thus, adults) is like making cyborgs. As profanely cybernetic and artificial as replacement limbs and organs, human persons are socio-technically programed artifacts, software circuits in original biological bodies. Togusa is controlled emotionally and behaviourally by his concern for his family. Batou's vision is hacked and manipulated through his habits of care for his dog Gabriel. Emotional care is implicated as vulnerability and formal leverage in social circuits and feedbacks. The children are enslaved to sell their captured spirit to the libidinal desires of powerful businessmen, politicians, and gangsters.

The importance of cognitive feedback loops, reflection, and analysis is emphasized in the movie by scenes of the characters' minds, or ghosts, being infiltrated via their communications cybernetic augmentations. They experience distorted perceptions, hallucinations, and altered emotions. Hacked like this by the villain Kim, Batou and Togusa experience a mental maze in the form of repetitions of an experiential theme. The same actions, encounters, and conversations happen over and over with variations, a horrible repeating virtual reality loop preying on their fears and doubts, until they crack the puzzle. This scene of looping capture, repetition, feedback, and modulation became a focus of our classroom discussions.

Later, I demonstrated the effectiveness of institutional/cultural circuits in the twenty-first century cyborg human by reprising the exercise of asking the students to all stand up. And they all stood up. I explained their easy synchronized acquiescence to my institutional authority in the "please stand up" exercise demonstrates an embodied cyborg experience of being circuited in institutions, architecture, social roles, and power. These circuits can be wireless. Minimal brutal somatic strings are required for almost full cybernetic control, as suggested by the title of Norbert Wiener's terminal book on the subject: *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1988).

The final exam was an example of the cybernetic control described by Wiener, but like Haraway's evocative description, it opened up the imagination and experience/habitus, thereby implicating a partially agentive self in enacting real and imagined oppressions such as disciplinary practices in education. Reading and discussing "A Cyborg Manifesto," reinforced by watching Batou and Togusa break out of a virtual reality mind control loop, the students began to form conceptual tendrils to grasp how the cyborg figure is meant to structure or infuse thought—a progression of exposure and activity leading to a kind of reveal—the tools to conceptualize what happens to a participant in a feedback loop.

In the students' deliberation about how to take the exam—the conflicts and experiences revealed a surprising attachment to the exam. One described the experience as so emotional that she cried at the prospect of not being examined. The exam and classroom were temporarily starkly denaturalized. The students faced their attachment to the devices and manifestations of the disciplining apparatus, the punishing competitive ranking. They were incapable of not taking the exam when offered the option. The exam was crucially difficult to quit entirely because of students' differential preparations—and their possessive need to enact competition, and punishment for those who prepared less. "Fairness" requires enacting inequality.

The concept of circuits brings to consciousness how biopower is enacted and embodied in patterns. Within the manipulative loops in *Innocence*, the trap closes when the viewer realizes "this is a trap"—no exam will ever feel like it did before. The film's characters escape, both the detectives from Kim's loop as well as the children enthralled to the profit margins of enslavement. My students lost their innocence of the cruelty of the exam by becoming co-implicated, much like the imprisoned children who become manipulating murderers to rescue themselves in *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence*.

## Egress: Embodiment Transformed in Interpretive Encounters

Although *Shirokuma Café* seems fun, it is treacherous. The slippery cartoon harmlessness of anime gently opens up analysis, modulates knowledge, and perhaps stimulates changes in experience and ecological self-conception. My class had simple analytical intentions in coupling critical academic readings with appropriate anime, but in practice, the classroom experience exceeded analysis. Our learning expanded to shifting our embodied and ecological awareness. Perhaps you do live in a city and go to cafés in a world where polar bears, penguins, and pandas may go extinct because of humans; maybe only humans can save the other animals from humans.

Thinking with anime in the classroom can be a transcultural encounter that pollinates a felicitous performative learning environment. By *felicitous performative* (Austin 1975), I mean students were inspired to utter speech, write formulations, and think thoughts that changed their position, expression, and self-conception in the world—discursive and semantic formulations that manifested practical and behavioural changes. In other words, our transcultural encounters with Japanese media performatively changed our sense and enactment of embodiment. Further, this performativity was enabled by partial decontextualization of anime from Japanese culture. This happens when mainstream media from one culture is encountered in another as minor key, alternative media. The anime I selected is at once global and Japanese. The partial connection of planetary and global themes connects students to the anime stories, but they can only partly grasp Japanese references and tropes. In the encounter with Japanese anime in Russia, our limited Japanese cultural context opened up possibilities for changing interpretations of our own contexts. Anime acted as an interpretive devices. Thinking with anime invites students to intellectually inhabit these devices. They mentally attend to the known connections and, in the process, apprehend previously unrecognized aspects of self-situation. In the absence of informed understanding of the interplay between anime and Japanese embodiment, our experiences and our ecological situation were reinterpreted or translated. We were provoked into not only intellectual and analytical reinterpretation but also feeling, inhabiting and relating differently.

As Walter Benjamin ([1978] 2007) argues, better translations sacrifice fidelity to the original language in favour of transforming the destination language. Orientalism is basically bad or lazy translation. But it would be foolish to think of translation through a simple good/bad

dichotomy. Every act of translation or encounter with partially foreign media provokes a profusion of possible translations or interpretations. Encountering anime contextualized as ecological pedagogy changed experience. Good translation or performative encounter that exceeds Orientalism, tourism, and consumption, elegantly recalls director and theatre anthropologist Eugenio Barba's articulation of travelling performers bartering with their hosts. Barters are most successful when the visiting performers enable something the hosts need or want but could not achieve without the visitors. Anime encounters can be cross-pollinations like this—visiting interpretive actors from Japan that activate incipient possibilities. In my classes, the anime performing as interpretive actors pollinated and activated changes in our political-economic and ecological self-conceptions.

My program of ecological education was successful, achieving and modulating awareness. My students learned to think big even while acknowledging the locally weird, including the intimate local strangeness to our own (often nonlocal) embodiment and consciousness. While the encounters and performative effects I describe and valorize here could be activated by many different kinds of media, teaching with anime is particularly fun. The pedagogy with anime described in this essay opens up possibilities for teachers at all levels and anywhere in the world (Ruble and Lysne 2010). Each Japanese anime subgenre—such as healing anime, Yuri, magical girl, sports, music, and more—offers a compelling and engaging transcultural archive to teach topics like friendship, family, love, gender, habits, relations, histories, intersubjectivity, law and crime, war and peace, and embodiment and consciousness.

## Notes

1. I am most influenced by the 2012 Miyazaki Hayao manga titled *Nausicaä*. Manga, the Japanese name for graphic storytelling, is very influential and interconnected with the anime industry and fandom. In graduate school, Gretchen Jude and I had a reading group about *Nausicaä*.

2. This decade is global. Netflix has begun producing original anime for a global audience. This globalization develops out of anime's stalwart global fandom, the offshoring of parts of the industry to Korea and Japan, early US television and cable broadcasts like *Adult Swim*, *Speedracer*, and *Robotech* (Newitz 1994), and Disney co-productions of dubbed US releases of Studio Ghibli films.

3. These little girls and women in power are not *per se* a matter of Japanese feminism but may rather be part of genre conventions in *shonen* manga and media. Fan service is an example of these kind of conventions. Shonen has traditionally targeted a young male audience, but manga editor M. J. Beasi (2010) also points to fan service for girls and women in supposedly shonen magazines. Manga and anime do have whole genres and publications called *josei* and *shojo* conventionally dedicated to women and girls, respectively.

4. Fan service (ファンサービス *fan sābisu*), fanservice, or service cut (サービスカット *sābisu katto*) is material in a work of fiction or in a fictional series that is intentionally added to please the audience. The term originated in Japanese in the anime and manga fandom but has been used in other languages and media. It is about "servicing" the fan—giving the fans "exactly what they want" (Wikipedia, n.d.).

5. *Seinen* originated as a publishing term for the demographic target audience of young men.

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# Everting the Theatrical Sphere Like Terayama

Steven Ridgely

We face a curious analytical problem when attempting to apply an intercultural framework to projects by a theatre director like Terayama Shūji in that his work in the 1960s and 1970s was already intercultural from its inception—informed by the decentred rise of global counterculture, aimed at the new international theatre festivals (particularly in Europe), and in constant dialogue with leading figures in New York, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, and London. In this context, the intercultural approach tends to maintain or extend the spirit of the original project rather than reinvigorate it with fresh energy via transcultural adaptation. This is not to say, however, that figures like Terayama were uninterested in crossing cultural borders—my argument in what follows will be that part of the countercultural project involved moving the focus from crossing geopolitical or linguistic borders (which always risks legitimatizing the existence of those borders) toward attention to the fruitful interplay of ideas from across different kinds of bounded cultural zones. One of the crossovers that becomes conspicuous in Terayama's work is his interest in the transformation of spatial relations in performance spaces (and the bodies that inhabit those spaces), particularly between onstage, backstage, and audience-coded realms, which occurs simultaneously with direct reference in his work to figures from mathematics who work in non-Euclidean geometry and related fields interested in the manipulation of forms and spaces. The following is an experiment in testing the possibility for meaningful interconnection between performance culture and the culture of mathematics in Terayama's work.

If we are interested in a pattern of inversions and reversals in the plays of the Japanese countercultural icon Terayama Shūji and his troupe, the Tenjō Sajiki, we can start with the name of the troupe, which refers to the cheap seats farthest from the stage where the roughest, and perhaps most bohemian, members of the audience would sit. The troupe of actors, then, is imagined as composed of rowdy viewers of theatre, the type that enlivened the performances in Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du Paradis*, a film released in Japan as *Tenjo Sajiki no hitobito*, or "the people of the peanut gallery." It was this film from which the troupe took its name.

Terayama's troupe were regulars at Ritsaert ten Cate's Mickery Theatre in Amsterdam during the 1970s, exploiting the space as fully as possible. Their most notorious performance was probably the 1978 play *Nuhikun*, a sort of Mapplethorpe-esque reinterpretation of Jonathan Swift's *Directions to Servants*, in which houseboys and maids are given strict instructions on ways they are to subvert their masters (Terayama 1986c). This would be performed later in both New York and London, but Terayama tended to debut new work in Amsterdam throughout the 1970s. Their first play there, *Ahen sensō* (The Opium Wars), of 1972 locked audiences outside the building until five minutes after the performance was scheduled to begin. Actors then emerged from behind the building with signs saying "Someone lost his name" and "Please help him find his name" (Terayama 1987a, 138). Once inside, actors guided small groups of audience members through the entire interior of the building, conceived as a labyrinth, including the basement and upstairs spaces, as though on a fun house tour.

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We should understand much of this to be an engagement with participatory theatre in vogue at the time, but there were additional inversions here in which the relative civility of urban Amsterdam were displaced by physical jostling of audience members and the distribution of soup laced with sleeping pills—the drug of choice of Japan's countercultural youth.

This manipulation of audiences would continue with the next Tenjō Sajiki play at the Mickery, the 1973 play *Mojin shokan* (Letter on the blind; Terayama 1986b). The title refers to a piece by the French philosopher Diderot in which he makes the case that sensory deprivation can open the door to new kinds of insights. Diderot's case study is a blind mathematician, but Terayama applies the concept to his handling of audience access to lighted and darkened spaces. Major sections of the play take place in perfect darkness—a difficult request given fire codes—with actors striking matches to illuminate their faces as they deliver rapid-fire lines. One memorable exchange of dialogue concerns a boy's naive claim that the total number of seeing eyes on Earth is always the same, which is why those on the opposite side of the world are often sleeping while we are awake—there is a sense that light and dark, seeing and not seeing are held in some kind of cosmic balance as though the law of conservation of matter also applies to vision.

This technique would continue with the third play in the Mickery sequence, *Ekibyō ryūkōki* (Journal of the plague year; Terayama 1986a), based on the Daniel Defoe novel. Here a square stage is cut into four equal segments with curtains, and with the audience seated in theatre-in-the-round style, no particular member of the audience would have been able to see the entire play—we would be particularly conscious of having been denied access to portions of the action. This is matched with a series of images of actors wrapped head to toe in gauze bandages, but which are gradually unravelled so that they can finally see at the end of the play.

Across these plays we see the power relations between drama troupe and audience that are typical of commercial theatre reversed. The paying audience is not treated to perfect access to a piece of entertainment they have paid to see; rather, they are frustrated, or maybe tantalized and seduced, by a performance that forces them to activate as viewers and recognize that here, as in life, they are getting only part of the story. These tendencies are present in Terayama's street theatre performances as well, which always included gimmicks to integrate bystanders into the action.

By the late 1970s, particularly in plays such as *Aohige-ko no shiro* (Duke Bluebeard's castle), Terayama's work actively featured actors delivering lines in a conspicuously hyperdramatized style directly to the audience, but that direct address itself would often be revealed to be just as scripted as everything else (Terayama 1987b). The gambit in *Aohige-ko no shiro* is that we in the audience are located backstage, watching actors prepare to perform the Bartók opera (on a stage located in backstage for them). The inversion of theatrical and plain language thus takes place in a space also inverted. We encounter situations such as the following:

> Stage Director: Who are you?
> Girl: No one, yet.
> Stage Director: yet?
> Girl: I'm becoming.
> Stage Director: Becoming what?
> Girl: The seventh wife of Bluebeard.
> Stage Director: Right. That's good. They settled on you. Got your script? Girl: I do.
> Stage Director: So you must know who I am.

> Girl: Yes, Mr. Nemoto, the stage director. *(opens script)* It's right here:
> "Stage Director: So you must know who I am."
> "Girl: yes, Mr. Nemoto, the stage director. Opens script." Right? (Terayama 1987b, 12; my translation)[1]

Here we loop around out of the script back into the script with this strange twist of self-consciousness of delivering inscribed lines. But into this situation Terayama will throw accomplices in the audience who stand up midway through the play to say something outrageous, or bill collectors who walk onto the stage and demand overdue payment from the actors (called out by their real names), or perhaps an actor commenting on the events from that day's newspaper, all of which begins to erode the typical coding of script to theatre and serendipity to real life. We gradually become aware of the great potential for creative ad-libbing on the stage and of the often-hyperscripted nature of our own work and family lives, where we play-act our roles and often deliver the same lines again and again day after day.

As one seeks language appropriate to describe what Terayama is doing in these patterns, somehow *reversal*, *inversion*, *mutual substitution*, and others all seem to come up short. *Revolution* is clearly overused, but even in its restricted definition of the socially low replacing the high, the high becoming low, that is not really a description of what is happening here. He is following a pattern in which a social critique emerges by swapping out the standard roles—we will find him doing something similar with sexual violence in films by often having older women assaulting younger men (such as in his 1974 film *Den'en ni shisu* [Cache-cache pastoral]). In a sense, the method is familiar. But simply noting the use of a role-reversal technique in his work does not, I think, fully grasp the potency of what is going on. There seems to be a patterned impulse signalling a fundamental transformation of the theatricalized space in Terayama's work that consistently projects the audience onto the stage—that truly seeks to make actors, in the sense of the active party in a relation, out of a passive viewer. Brian Massumi (2015) might suggest that Terayama was creating an "affective intensity" out of the theatrical space in which both the troupe and the audience were given the capacity "to affect, and to be affected" (xi).

We see this in the common exhortation at the end of Tenjō Sajiki plays in which the performers demand that the audience members create their own theatre troupes, as though to return or "pay forward" the favour they just received. We see it too in the iconography of plays such as *Kankyakuseki* (The audience seats) from 1978, in which the poster inverts the title of the play as well as Terayama's name as though we are positioned behind a transparent poster looking through it (Terayama 1987c). The positionality suggested is that of the performers, looking out through the transparent fourth wall at an audience, which would see the mirror image of the actor's positions on stage. The poster design itself reflects the transformation of a viewing audience into that-which-is-being-viewed.

Terayama returns to this positionality question again and again in the 1970s, at times to wonderful effect in experimental film, for example. In a short film called *Nitōjo* (*Two-Headed Woman*), for example, a girl's shadow first tracks her movements as she plays with a hoop and stick, but then parts ways and moves independently (Terayama 2006b). We find ourselves amused at the trick photography but then curious about the apparatus itself, which seems to be revealed near the end of the film as the camera zooms out to reveal the set. Upon further reflection, however, this perspective does not really tell us if what we witness over Terayama's directorial shoulder is the

"front" or the "back" of the shadow play we just witnessed—without further information it could be either.

It is worth noting that films projected onto a standard silver screen are perfectly watchable from the opposite side. Terayama himself will trace this interest in the images on the back of the silver screen to his own childhood, when he lived with his aunt and uncle during high school and spent a great deal of time in their family's large cinema in the northern Japanese city of Aomori. He claims in some writings to have had a room directly behind the screen, perhaps an exaggeration, but he certainly would have had ample opportunity to wander around enough backstage to realize films could be watched from behind the screen, where one can observe a mirror image of what the paying audience was watching from the standard seats.

These anecdotes are charming, and might help to concretize the origin of the idea, but they still do not help us clearly visualize the kind of transformation of space that Terayama's plays at least gesture toward. Here I would like to invoke a figure from the mathematical subfield of topology—the branch of mathematics that explores the "theory of space" and the transformation of form—to suggest a visualization that might get us closer to understanding Terayama's theatre.

Drawing underground theatre together with a somewhat esoteric branch of mathematics might seem analytically acrobatic, a kind of radical juxtaposition of ideas from disparate corners of human experience. But in fact, we find reference to theoretical mathematics in Teryama's work and that of some of his closest collaborators who cross the threshold into an engagement with ideas from non-Euclidean geometry and topology as structural principles applied to artist design by Japanese countercultural artists.

The opening sequence in one of Teryama's 1977 experimental short films includes a puzzling reference to non-Euclidean geometry. *Issun-bōshi o kijutsu suru kokoromi* (An attempt to depict Tom Thumb) begins with the Tenjō Sajiki actor Hino Toshihiko, who has dwarfism, dressed in the black robes of a traditional Jesuit missionary standing among seemingly random items such as an umbrella and a chalk-drawn bird, a dove of peace perhaps, in a gesture evocative of surrealist strategies of collage (Terayama 2006a). The sequence develops with Hino moving large cubes from off camera one by one into the mise-en-scène, spinning them dramatically as he sets them down to actualize "green screen" or "chroma key" video editing technology (still relatively new at this time) via a blue-papered side facing the camera. This allows Hino to create the effect of "building" a giant naked woman block by block—not a static image but a living, breathing, moving woman who giggles and taunts him. As he builds her, he pauses to caress the stacked blocks, and once complete he will attempt to capture her by binding the blocks together with rope. The clever use of chroma key editing is the centrepiece of the project, but perhaps even more surprising is the text of an intertitle used midway through the build, which reads (in my translation) "A Lobachevsky Box has no head." What could this possibly mean?

The woman being built here block by block still does not have a head at this point, so this may partially be a straightforward description of the image at this stage in its construction. But then why a "Lobachevsky" box? Lobachevsky was the nineteenth-century Russian mathematician credited as one of two people to almost simultaneously and independently describe, around 1830, non-Euclidean geometry—the geometry of warped spaces where 2D surfaces are bent instead of flat and the internal angles in a triangle sum to either more or less than 180 degrees. To my knowledge, there is no mathematical object called a "Lobachevsky box," although the concept takes the form of such

named objects as the Mobius strip, the Klein bottle, or Boy's surface. So this box seems to have been an invention of Terayama or his collaborators, possibly signalling the way chroma key is being used in this film to playfully manipulate and layer the spatial relations being represented on the screen. Much of the rest of the film involves efforts to either capture this woman's elusive image or to excise it from the scene, literally cutting, ripping, or crumpling up the blue paper that allows for the visual trick.

It is possible this strange Lobachevsky reference is a form of what we might call "expansion of consciousness lite," a casual gesture toward an M. C. Escher level of mathematical engagement with dimensionality or tessellation that seems to poster so naturally among lava lamps and tie-dyes in hippie culture. There is also a longstanding association between non-Euclidean geometry and the occult, seen especially in the work of H. P. Lovecraft, for example, and the spiritualists of the late nineteenth century were taken with the idea that ghosts might reside in the fourth dimension—so this reference might be read to enhance the gothic mood of the scene, and perhaps more broadly to pressure the pseudorationalist buzzkill of the technocracy.[2] However, what I would like to suggest is the possibility that the engagement with modern theoretical mathematics within experimental literary and art culture in Japan is a deeper relationship—one in which the writers and artists are well informed and are grappling meaningfully with big, new, consequential ideas drawn from math.

Terayama was not the only 1960s counterculture figure toying with these mathematical concepts. Sekine Nobuo was creating and writing about topological sculptures at the same time, Yuasa Jōji was composing music manipulated according to principles from projective geometry. The set designer for the early years of Tenjō Sajiki, Yokoo Tadanori, the well-known graphic designer, also frames an example of his work from the period in terms from theoretical mathematics. Yokoo was commissioned to do the architectural design for the Textiles Pavilion at the 1970 World's Fair in Osaka, and makes a particularly interesting claim about the shape of the building:

> I was in charge of the pavilion design itself. It was my first time doing architectural plans, and the concept was a sort of four-dimensional idea. There is a 4-D theory of the Klein bottle in which the outside is also the inside, so if you were to cut open a hole in the side of a ball, then stick your fingers in it, pinch the far end, and yank it halfway out the hole so that part of it stuck out, that was my design. (Yokoo 2002, 144)

Yokoo is describing the red dome that juts out from the centre of the roof of the pavilion, around which the final design left construction scaffolding in place, complete with carpenter-mannequins still at work on the project.[3] With Yokoo conceptualizing a dynamic geometrical form—one that requires an inversion of the "ball" to fully represent its true form—the static nature of the pavilion is in active tension with its own design. Yokoo's Klein bottle is stuck in the midst of the transformation required for it to exist as a 4D object and is thus literally incomplete or in-process, with the scaffolding signalling not that builders had run out of time or that it was a work in progress, an emphasis of so much 1960s art, but rather the fundamental impossibility of its completion.

Technically speaking, Yokoo is eliding the difference between the Klein bottle and a different problem, that of turning a sphere inside out, but both of these have become the poster children for topology since the 1960s. The Klein bottle does have a smooth transition between its outside and inside surfaces, and it is sort of the 4D big brother of the Mobius strip, both of which are found in topology textbooks as the standard examples of non-orientable surfaces. But Yokoo's folksy description of turning a sphere inside out to reverse the interior and exterior spaces is of particular

interest given the timing (1970) and his proximity to Terayama's theatre work (the Tenjō Sajiki). After tracing the development of this idea within mathematics, the argument will return to Terayama to test the possibility that sphere eversion might help us better understand the way that patterns of inversion and reversal in Terayama's work relate to a broader project of transforming theatrical space.

The topological problem of interest here is called "eversion of the sphere," by which mathematicians refer to turning a sphere inside out. *Inversion* is turning the outside in, and *eversion* is the opposite, turning the inside out—a potentially important distinction here, one we will return to momentarily. Topology concerns properties of objects and spaces that remain consistent even under fairly radical transformation, and this is the area of mathematics and geometry with the loosest set of rules. Objects can be infinitely stretched and surfaces can pass through one another—distance and angle cease to matter. What you cannot do according to the topological rules is tear a hole in a surface, and you also cannot make a crease in a surface under transformation. Which means that the simplest way to evert a sphere, by pulling the north pole and south pole through each other, is against the rules since it would form a crease at the equator.

These circumstances intuitively seemed to suggest that a simple sphere could not be turned inside out within standard three-dimensional space—that you would need more flexibility to do it, which led people to suggest that four-dimensional space, or hyperspace, was needed to evert a sphere. One example of such a claim was published in the essay that won the 1909 *Scientific American* contest for best laymen's explanation of the fourth dimension. Graham Denby Fitch (1909) lists among the many tricks one could do with an additional dimension of space that "a sphere if flexible could without stretching or tearing be turned inside out," which implies that this would be impossible in 3D space (15).

But there was a breakthrough in 1958 by the young topologist Stephen Smale (1959), who proved that sphere eversion is possible in three-dimensional space. Smale's own graduate school advisor rejected this claim on intuitive grounds, but the paper was accepted by the field's leading journal and has not been refuted. The problem was that Smale's article is entirely a text-based proof, offering no help in visualizing this kind of transformation.

In 1966, *Scientific American* would present a visualization of the eversion of a sphere, its cover story for the May issue, with a series of colour images representing the transformation in cross-section, stage-by-stage, but even with these images, the process remains far from intuitive. This was a mathematical problem perfectly suited for video rather than still-image representation. It was Nelson Max, later of University of California, Davis, professor of computer science, who took up this challenge and worked with primitive computer graphics software during the years 1970–1976 to produce one of the first CGI animated films, which for the first time offered a persuasive visualization of the eversion of a sphere, using red for the initial exterior surface and blue for the initial interior surface, and pausing somewhat dramatically at the halfway point in the transition to show the four-fold rotational symmetry that allows the sphere effectively to rotate ninety degrees to reverse the colours and unwind itself by the same process as the first half of the transformation.

Alternative methods for everting the sphere would emerge in later years from several mathematics visualization labs—these seem to operate as public relations projects to communicate the cleverness of theoretical mathematics to a public potentially skeptical of its value. A lab at the University of Minnesota released an impressive alternative morphology using a series of radiator-like baffles or

"corrugations" which each rotate in place to invert a sphere in a video visualization released in 1994 (Geometry Center 1994). Not to be outdone, a mathematics and computer science lab at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign would release another version a few years later in 1998, visualized as a soap bubble so as to optimize the efficiency of the process by minimizing the energy required to evert the sphere (Sullivan, Francis, and Levy 1998).

How might this transformative visualization impact the way we understand Terayama's work? I would like to suggest that as we find these reversals of audience and performer, or of hypertheatrical and conspicuously everyday language, what we are witnessing is primarily an outfolding of the generative, playful, fictional, mystified space of theatre into what was conceived as a hyper-rationalized and oppressively pre-scripted everyday life. The theatrical sphere everts to spill its raucous antiteleological ethos out into the streets, fictionalizing and theatricalizing the everyday. This is quite clearly different than social realist theatre, which might in this context better be understood as an inversion—transporting the tensions and frustrations of work and family life onto the stage for careful dissection.

This eversion visualization might help us to better understand that Terayama was ultimately less interested in reversing the positions of audience and performer than in unifying them as coinhabitants of a common theatrical space, the entirety of which would be brought into new relation with the space outside the theatre by the performance. Rather than allowing the theatricality of the space to end with the conclusion of the play, the eversion carries that marked space into the everyday, back out into the streets after the performance—the point of the project may be the residual effect more so than the impact in the moment. This, I think, might get us much closer to the intended social function of this type of performance.

What I have attempted here is to apply a spatial transformation model to understand the social function of Terayama's performances and to legitimate that choice by noting Lobochevsky's appearance within a film by the same director as well as interest in 4D Klein bottles and other "impossible" shapes by Terayama's contemporary and close collaborator Yokoo Tadanori. The point here is not that the code has now been cracked and we can properly understand a set of Terayama's plays as secretly manifesting a sphere eversion in the mode Smale and other mathematicians proved to be possible (following the rules of topology), but rather that we stand to gain by expanding the storehouse of abstract models we can deploy to make sense of the transformations of space we encounter in a performance. I believe that our collective analytical range is inhibited by an artificially limited exposure to a wider range of forms and mathematical insights on how they can be reshaped, and I am grateful to Terayama and others for hinting that a border-crossing into the culture of mathematics might be necessary to better understand how a performance is structured spatially. This will almost certainly require an expansion beyond the concept of "revolution" (a simple rotation of a 2D object in 2D space) to begin to understand the revolutionary ideas at play in contemporary performance culture.

## Notes

1. For more analysis of Terayama's use of Bluebeard, see Ridgely (2013).

2. Lovecraft's famous monster, the Cthulhu, has a well-known face, but also hails from a "non-Euclidean" planet: "An octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers . . . it was nothing of this or any sane planet." It is later revealed that "the *geometry* of the dream-place he saw was abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathsomely

redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours." See Lovecraft (2005, 176, 192–93). "The Call of the Cthulhu" was originally published in the February 1928 issue of *Weird Tales*.

3. For images of the Textiles Pavilion, see Nihon Sen'ikan Kyōryokukai (1970).

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# Directing Ōta Shōgo's *Elements*: From Form to Body

Peter Lichtenfels

Ōta Shōgo (1939–2007) is one of the most thought-provoking playwrights from late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Japan.[1] Ōta worked in the Japanese theatre scene from the late 1950s. He wrote many plays, was director of the Tenkei Theatre, and then artistic director of the Fujisawa Civic Theatre in Kanagawa Prefecture. In the 1980s, he also began to work at Kinki University in the Theatre Department. His plays pose challenges for directors and actors partly because the scripts have few words, partly because they are rooted in an imaginative development of particular cultural elements, and partly because Ōta focused an intensely critical eye on the processes of theatre, an eye that continually undoes convention and generates unusual dramatic forms. For a non-Japanese company, these challenges are profound.

Ōta's plays are embedded not only in post–World War II experimental Japanese theatre but also in classical forms of Japanese dramatic tradition such as *noh*. Noh is itself founded on the Zen philosophy of Zeami, and aspects of Zen Buddhism inform Ōta's plays—in particular the "elements" theory of materials that includes water, earth, fire/air, wood, and metal. Several of Ōta's "Station" plays open out relations with "water" or "earth" or "sand." Drawing from my own work in the Chinese Daoism that informs Zen Buddhism, I have a Euro-American understanding of the ecologies of happening that this philosophy suggests. It is probably fair to say that much of my own directing, including the dramaturgical collaboration that I have always practised, is infused by this "understanding" and generates resonances for me with Ōta's plays, which are themselves infused with a parallel understanding embodied through his noh training.

In 1994, I directed one of Ōta's plays in tandem with him. We each produced *Plastic Rose* separately, yet with a shared set design, and each production played both in his theatre in Kyoto and in mine in Davis, California. After seeing what my non-Japanese company had done with his play, Ōta handed me a stack of his scripts—some translated into English, some not—and asked me to try to direct them. I do not know why he chose to do this, but there was and is something in his work that resonates strongly with how I make theatre. It may be that the kind of collaborative directing to which I am committed was recognizable to Ōta's own work in theatre. It may be my awareness of the body and its vibration, movement, and energy that was recognizable. This essay studies, through two productions of Ōta's play

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*Elements*, one produced in Davis in 2017 and the other in Bogotà, Colombia, in 2018, many of the insights arising from our different theatre practices, some of the resonances, and three key issues of theatre directing that Ōta explores at a meta level in the play.

My background is in directing shows by, about, and with actors from different cultural backgrounds and with diverse training practices. The study here talks about how we might create a production in one culture that comes from another, and with a group of actors whose members have acting practices that are culturally distinct and particular to their own training. The fact that the productions played in both California and in Bogotà also meant that the directing was working with culturally different audiences. One of the key challenges was not to try to assimilate the difficulties of the play into our mainly Euro-American theatre practices but to honour what we felt was the spirit of Ōta's text. For me, as the director/dramaturge, the spirit of the text came from my memory of Ōta, his temperament, how he moved, how he talked to me, how we spoke about production, and how I learned from him in the 1994 parallel productions. There was an understanding between us that there was no "pure" way of "doing Japanese theatre." Trying to produce something on stage in the spirit of a different culture became instead about a joint confidence that contemporary bodies work within their contemporary possibilities or constraints, and that those bodies, their voices, and their movements are the resources on which transcultural theatre needs to draw before it happens into meaning.

There was a significant element of our rehearsal practice that radically broadened the ways that we responded to the challenges in the play. Ōta is well known for using exceptionally few words in his scripts, a practice based on his comment that most people speak for just two hours a day if their words were put side by side and spend the other twenty-two hours silent. For example, the first scene of *Elements* is one-page "long" yet takes about twenty-three minutes to play. When Ōta does use words, they are not naturalistic. For example, scene 5, which introduces two new characters to the audience, begins with the following page of the script:[2]

*From above, the corpse of a dog drops.*

**5. Birth**

*The direction of the light has shifted in the space. Man 3 and Woman 3 appear. They come to a standstill. Man 3 finds the shovel and buries the dog.*

MAN 3: . . . How do you usually manage to leave the house?
WOMAN 3: How?
MAN 3: Well, you see . . . well, when I put down the receiver, I always wonder. Then I forget . . . I can hear the children's voices in the background, so I always wonder how you manage to get away.

WOMAN 3: I don't tell them that I'm going to a hotel.
MAN 3: Uh-huh. It's not yesterday, is it—?
WOMAN 3: Er, what?
MAN 3: No, I mean, it feels like yesterday or the day before yesterday.
WOMAN 3: Right now?
MAN 3: Aah . . . umm, right now.

*Man 3 starts shoveling sand.*

Looking at a page of this kind of script was exceptionally difficult for the actors I was working with even though they had not had entirely conventional training in Euro-American dramatic narrative scripts. Two members of the cast were dancers (one from Canada, one from Spain), two trained in the Paul Sills tradition of improvisational theatre (both from the United States), one was a physical actor trained in corporal mime (from Colombia), one was a transculturally trained actor (from Colombia), and only one was a conventionally trained US actor. However, I had learned from my work with US-trained actors in *Plastic Rose* that one of the most helpful tasks was to approach the text literally, precisely literally—do just what the text says detail by detail. To begin to engage with *Elements*, I asked the actors not only to read the printed version but also to watch a video record (Lichtenfels 2022) of Ōta's own 2002 production of *Elements*.[3] Using both the visual score and verbal scripts profoundly affected our work. For our productions, we decided to take the visual score and verbal scripts as seriously as the verbal text, and this had an unexpected and deep impact on our theatrical translation. Watching the video of the Japanese production, we were immediately aware of significant differences between those actors and us with regard to breath, gesture, movement, sound-making, rhythm, speed, spatial arrangement, and time—and in particular of varieties of repetition as sensory nodes where things happened in the moment of each performance.

*Elements* features a number of everyday characters whose paths cross as they roam about the city streets. In the play, these ordinary working people act out their lives on a bed of constantly shifting sand on which they work to keep stable. As the ground under their feet undulates like a wave, unexpected objects such as balls, spades, dogs, and nets fall from the sky. The production asks the audience to imagine walking on sand in their daily life and to experience it as a material that slows us down so we do everyday things in extraordinary ways—living life at "sand-speed." This essay will look closely at the dramaturgical detail of the rehearsal process of three scenes in the play: the first scene, "Breakfast"; the fourth scene, "Tender Meat"; and the sixth scene, "Howling at the Moonlight." Just as Ōta's directing of *Plastic Rose* was founded on a sense of a continual engaging with the embodied energies of the people in his company that is difficult to put into words, so it is difficult to analyze the practices of our productions of *Elements*. To engage in the dramaturgy, a term increasingly used to mark the director-in-collaboration, the following account will focus on precisely what was happening with an actor's body in the course of making the production.

At the same time, *Elements* is a play about contemporary urban life, and on a meta level, it is a play about theatre-making and how that making can change the ways we live. The three scenes that this essay will discuss raise issues of the creation of time and space on stage, of the process of rehearsal, and of the appearance of a shared reality on stage. The meta-level strands in *Elements* mean that there are always at least two layers of theatre emerging from the bodies of the actors: the story about people, and the commentary about theatre building. The first scene is infused with this doubleness, which is only an initial set of layers. It often causes critics confusion because it is not usual for a playwright to set up a dramatization of how theatre makes time and space at the same time as making a dramatic and necessarily unfamiliar use of time and space for the story of the play. In the second scene that I discuss, the doubleness involves the "rehearsal" that is in the story of the play, and the writer's dramatization of how rehearsal works—not to mention the performance of a rehearsal in our productions, and my own critical performance, in this essay, of how we rehearsed a rehearsal. The final scene considered in this essay draws attention to the doubleness of theatrical "reality," not only the reality created by the actors, but simultaneously, commentary on how they are doing this.

## Breakfast

The story of the first scene of the play is simply a father (Man1 or M1), mother (Woman1 or W1), and teenage daughter (Woman2 or W2), having breakfast and getting ready to go into their day's work.[4] Ōta repeats the actions of the scene three times so that an audience member has to give up on wanting to know *what* will happen and pay attention to *how* things happen: the detail of the relations among the actors, and between them and the objects on stage. It may be that he is creating a "Japanese" time/space, but for a Euro-American director such as myself, a transcultural production is not interested in the impossible project of understanding what that might be or in producing a Japanese play. Instead, it is important that the time/space he or she is building also opens up on aspects of the contemporary experience of the company making the production. My work was to figure out how to do that with the actors, all of whom had trained in a Euro-American setting, although each had other kinds of training in other media and from other cultures.

The main task set by the verbal scripts and visual scores of *Elements* was to slow the body down. Our work in the two Euro-American productions was to find out how to get the bodies in our particular audiences to also slow down. My process as director/dramaturge was to rehearse with a cast of seven people, all but one with exceptional experience and maturity, who came from different cultures and ethnicities, with different conceptions of gender, and with distinctly different training in theatre practice. There was a way that we did this play transculturally by building it from different perspectives, honouring all those differences, finding energy in the moments of disconsonance. As a company of players, our task in the first scene was to repeat the physical form of the words and the movements from

the video text and come to an agreement about what that form was by feeling how it released the energy flow among us—in much the same way that a dance or a *taiji* form can suddenly become a medium for energy. In the printed script, there are no words, nor suggestions for timing for the first scene beyond "considerably slowed down" (Ōta 2006, 232), so we began by taking from the video score the time it took for each repetition and using it as a frame for the form we were developing. The question became, How do we fill the repetitions of those sequences? It was not about understanding specific social conditions but rather about each actor's need to do the activity within those time parameters. From there we began to develop how the bodies had to breathe, move, inhabit, and expand to fill the time frame, to honour the form. Once we agreed on the form, it was not a matter of "we do this more slowly" but "we do this in this amount of time."

When you work with actors, it is a combination of doing "what I need" as a director/dramaturge and giving the actor space for "what they need." This will differ with the culture, experience, and temperament of each actor. For example, Heather Nolan, playing W1, has a task to do. Her temperament is very much about figuring out what she is doing and being practical, which from moment to moment generate their own rhythms. Álvaro Hernández, playing M1, has a completely different way of working. He never seems to transition into the dreamtime of acting, but is always right there in the present, so the rhythm is heightened yet consistent. When the character M1 walks in scene 1, he is present to the walking—not to the way of walking but to the walking itself. In contrast, when the character W1 undertakes her tasks, she is present to the arrangement of objects on the kitchen table, but there is a sense that the character's body does not want to be there. W1's lack of "body" in this scene is a key part of the actor's body in the video, and Nolan builds that presence of absencing or leaving through her own acting—this character, as we find out, has just got to leave the home.

Ōta directed the video of his 1994 production of *Elements*, and in a sense, using its text as a visual script allowed us to read the play through his eyes and ears as well as his words. While I worked together with all three actors in the scene, we worked in stages. During the first stage, I worked independently with each actor on creating their form. The first focus was on the Mother, or W1, mainly because she is the first character to come onto the stage. We looked at the motions, steps, actions she had to do: laying the table for breakfast and clearing it. We undertook the same process for the Father, or M1, focusing on how this character comes in, throws the newspaper down, buttons his shirt, and ties his tie as he is getting ready for work. We repeated the exercise with the Daughter, or W2, played by Melissa Cunha, and what she does in relation to the Father and Mother: coming in and looking at the Mother, going over to the Father (at stage left), and dragging the newspaper to stage right. Each actor learned their choreography from the video text of the Ōta production, repeating it precisely until the actions became second nature. At points when the camera was not on their character, they would try to feel for the rhythm of the actions in that break in the visual script.

In the next stage, we brought the actors together to play out their movements, attending to the rhythm of their interrelation. This involved both precise attention to when Ōta's actors lifted their gaze, or gestured, or changed pace, and an incredibly detailed awareness of when the choreography for each intersected and diverged. Instead of learning words, the actors were learning the rhythm of their bodily activity in relation to the time frame. As we worked together over a long rehearsal period of several months, the actors began to get a feel for the score, fitting the rhythm of their activity to the point in the score that the other two actors needed to get to. For example, M1 had to finish buttoning his shirt at the exact time that W1 finished laying the table and before she started serving the food. We initially worked with M1 and W1, and once they had developed a synchronicity, we repeated the process with W2, choreographing the exchange of looks, the angle of a face, a gaze.

There were significant technical challenges. For example, W1 is upstage from both M1 and W2, and all three are facing the audience. Neither M1 nor W2 could look at the actor playing W1, yet they had synchronize their actions with hers. The work at this stage was to become intensely aware of each other. Building that rhythm and awareness with each other took a lot of talking and time, and it became a sense not of trust but of rhythmic cohesion, a feeling of shared space and time. If the characters' rhythms got off-key, it took a lot of work to coordinate the three scores. The character of W1 had to do a large number of actions, while M1 had comparatively few, and W2 even fewer. Yet the scene was a modern family cohabiting, each with their own life yet not really communicating even though they occupied the same room. Their actions had to be precisely in tune yet look as if nothing much was happening—getting ready for work, for school, making breakfast. The Japanese production we watched in the video must have had many of same bodily tasks, even if the actors came to them with completely different training and cultural habits.

The third stage offered its own challenges. These focused on how to extend the first iteration or precise "doing" of the scene in four minutes and fourteen seconds into the five minutes and eighteen seconds of the second iteration and the fifteen minutes and thirty-four seconds of the third. We knew from the video that the activities were the same, but the body rhythms for carrying out the activities became different. The focus of concentration changed because one part of the actor had to be in the present of the kitchen activities, and another part had to attend to the slower doing of the activity. As the times to do the activities got longer, especially in the third iteration, the actors in our production learned how to do those activities "as if" they were actual experiences but to draw them out over longer duration. In some way, they were simultaneously in real dramatic time and in unfamiliar time. Again, the Japanese production, while responding with quite different practices, would have been faced with a similar task for the body of each actor.

As the director, I am aware that our audiences in California and in Colombia needed to begin to understand why there was variability in duration. They saw the same activity happening in the second iteration, and there was still that sense in the body of following

"what happens," that relates to the activities we deal with in our daily lives. But by the third and much longer fifteen-minute iteration, they could be asking "why we are seeing something so mundane and habitual over again?" and "why is it taking so much longer this time?" The sensation tears apart the assumptions of the audience, so that they have to actively decide why the repetition is interesting for them. Why isn't it just boring? There is nothing to "get" anymore, so why am I here? They have to get over that sense of dramatic consumption that is so much part of the economics of modern Euro-American theatre, or leave the theatre—at every performance in California one or two people left, but no one left in Bogotà.

For the actors, the extended time of the second and third iterations meant they had to learn a different kind of rhythm for each, but each actor had their own way of maintaining the same energy as in the first iteration. W1 had to have the same focus yet parcel it out, using her hands and the kitchen implements to do so. M1 had to work on how to put on a shirt over five minutes. W2 had to learn to walk incredibly slowly to stage right, dragging the newspaper quickly-but-slowly. Each actor had to contend with the day-to-day physical elements of their actions happening in familiar time. For example, when M1 ties his tie, it falls down just as quickly as it fell in the first iteration—the actor can slow down his movements but not the acceleration of gravity—or though each iteration is longer than the previous one, the music from W2's radio plays at the same speed. These eruptions of familiar time into the dramatization of elongated time were often what made the scene work, precisely because there was real time involved in the extension of time.

The troubled time that resulted meant the actors and audience members were seeing something still "real" in their imagination simultaneous with feeling the unfamiliar opening out of the "time things take." Especially in the final stage of rehearsal, working on the third fifteen minute, thirty-four second iteration, the actors had to work on keeping the intentionality or impulse of their energy for the action yet parsing the moments of their activity differently so that they were each present in "real" time but slowed down in actual time. This turned into a kind of music felt by each of us in the rehearsal, there was a tempo that the actors began to follow. The relationality among the three was sensed, and there was no need to refer to each other physically. Each had their own score, but were co-conducting the actions and temporality of their bodies.

As a director, I sensed that the first time through, the audience members would try to focus on the events or the activities, the story that is happening on stage. What I expected in the second iteration, when the same activities are played out over a slightly longer period of time, is that some of the audience would resist out of a feeling that nothing is happening, there is nothing new, nothing to digest. This "absence" of something "new" creates a confusion or dislocation. The audience does not know whether they like this repetition, nor do they know what kind of play they are seeing. But when they realize that there is nothing new to see, that is what they see. That is when they begin to fill in the spaces of time with

their own seeing, imagination, rhythm. The repetition begins to help them find out how to slow down for the third much longer iteration: to breathe, to engage in another way of seeing that we do not habitually use in our daily lives. When this happens, the seeing, which on the surface is something that happens every day, becomes endlessly fascinating not for what it does but for the time it gives you to attend.

When working on Ōta's plays, I try always to be respectful to the text because its potentiality is elusive. We honoured the text by trying to be literal, attending to the details of the text and whatever affect it had on us, so that what we did was consonant with both the writer's verbal and visual scripts. This developed into a dialogue with these texts, collaborating with the energy in the writer's scripts. In rehearsal, I try to teach myself to attend to the moments that I feel are disconsonant, taking me out of the activity of attending. A director will train to look for those moments, and then, with the actor, reflect on what is happening in their body and have a conversation about why that might be so or not. This is one way that a director builds a relationship with an actor, because the actor, when called to the disconsonant, either trusts you, or, if they do not recognize the feeling, they teach you a new way of responding and you buy into it or not. The process is not about whether it's right or wrong but whether it communicates with you both. And then, the hope is that it will also happen for an attending audience. Drawing on comments from the audiences we played with in both California and Colombia, it seems that at least some of them understood that the scene was not providing answers as much as offering a process. Vision moved from focus into peripheral awareness. The edges of the body became more diffuse. It was as if the body was becoming part of a mixture with other people and things in the theatre, not a solution but intermingling ribbons of colour.

This first scene also prepares the audience for the metatext of the play, here the doubling of Ōta's commentary on dramatic time and space. The performance of elongated time not only draws the audience into a different way of feeling time and space but also into an awareness of the way theatre makes time and space. This awareness may be particularly acute for a Euro-American audience often trained on realist drama, which attempts the illusion of familiar conditions of time/space. Yet we all know that realist drama constructs that familiarity, that is, it is not a "natural" condition. Ōta's texts simply refuse the cultural assumptions of that familiarity, or at least do so for the Euro-American company and the audiences of our production. The meta level of his writing allowed for that awareness of a different space and time to be built in a non-Japanese setting. The scene reminds us of the way that theatre can be an experimental ground for changing our perceptions of the world, and what happens when we do so—in this case what happens when we expand time and its spatial coordinates, and how that changes our inhabitation of relationships.

## God Is Dead

The fourth scene of the play, which has the section we are calling "God Is Dead," involves another such doubling of story and commentary.[5] The story of the scene is that the Daughter, or W2, meets a man, Man2 (M2), who we have previously seen breaking up the breakfast room and burying it in sand. Man2 is a loner, but also lonely, and attempts to draw W2 into a conversation about newspaper articles, including an advertisement for Nietzsche's book *God Is Dead*. He does so initially by holding on to her physically so she cannot run away while he tries to "show" her that he just wants to play with the words on the page. After her initial terror at being grasped and held by M2, W2 gradually gets involved in playing, and through continual repetition of the words, they develop a rhythm and a relationship. At the same time, the scene is a performance of a rehearsal. The lines that are spoken by M2 and repeated by W2 are introduced bit by bit, building on each other, until they make up the complete written blurb in the newspaper—just as if the characters are actors learning their lines. In the actual rehearsal of the production, the work became how to rehearse a rehearsal with a verbal script, and then how to perform the rehearsal of such a rehearsal.

The script subtly connects the two characters before they begin to speak to each other. M2 has buried the destruction of the kitchen under the sand and has buried the newspaper that W2 was reading in the opening scene, to look at it later. When W2 walks along the edges of the sand, she stops to look at it. It's partly a recognition of where she came from, strangely familiar as if her body knows it, but what she sees is not consonant with the memory. M2 sees her staring. He is itinerant, he has no home. She asks him a question, and he tries to draw her into the human contact he needs. At first, he tries to be humorous, reading the edges of the newspaper as if to say "I'm not weird." He smiles, he just wants to play. W2 takes a little step into the sand, but like a child, she keeps her distance. You begin to see how people who do not know each other come into contact. But M2 jumps up nervously, grabs her arm, and brings her over to the newspaper he has left behind him on the sand. This change of rhythm frightens W2, and she mistakes it for someone who is dragging her against her will. Yet he keeps holding her because he wants to play, and his only skill is to keep hold of her hand.

It is at that moment that M2 refers to the newspaper and speaks aloud the title of the review "The Death of God." This bizarre statement, for we do not yet know that it is the title of an advertisement, is both completely normalized yet terribly weird. He repeats "the death of god" again and again until she says it, and he gets her to repeat it after him until she says it to his satisfaction. At this point, he simply says "You see?" There is now a sense of shared understanding, so he lets go of her hand because she has relaxed and they are playing. Together they develop the lines of the advertisement, accompanying them with their bodies, with gestures and vocal intensities and range, and build a synergy to a point where she takes the lines somewhere where he has not gone. She has "played" the lines. She has also engaged in a completely different way with the newspaper she was reading in scene 1. She has finally

read the "script," and this rehearsal has also been about how you learn something from the script. For a writer such as Ōta, the rehearsal is also an insight into his sparing use of words. The scene takes many minutes of many repetitions before the people start playing, start embodying the words. They are speaking a very short script, yet to live it they need to rehearse many of its words many times.

When we rehearsed this scene, we read the visual score of the video to understand the tempo of the scene and its variations in resonance, but since none of us speak Japanese, we did not know the exact timing of word to movement. Taking the video score as a guide, we built a form for the scene, only later realizing that the meta level of the scene is itself about building form in rehearsal. M2 takes the gestures and words, and in the doing of the form, repeating it, he moves his daily situation into something richer, more expansive. When he plays with W2, he teaches her through repetition to find a way of feeling something emerge from the mundane material he uses so that it becomes more than it is in the daily. The form gives the spoken words and gestures a life of their own, beyond the immediacy of survival, so that he and she are creating/absorbing energy. You lose your daily self so you can play with another person, and the activity takes you out of normalized time.

The actor who played M2, John Zibell, is a highly experienced New York actor who specializes in an experimental improvisation that depends on techniques for remaining open to the ways the materials in the theatre ecology can change what happens—and change the actor and the actor's relations on and with the stage. W2 was played by Melissa Cunha, a much younger actor who was working on a graduate degree in drama and acting. Possibly because of the disparity in their theatre experience, the scene took a long time to come into the kind of energy we all felt in the video score of Ōta's production. Our first production in Davis, California, felt as if the form we had created was there so that the actors could do things with it to make things happen. But in the Ōta production, it was clear that the actors trusted the form to do the work for them. It was not until the production in Bogotà, Colombia, that the actors in this scene were able to let the form do its work.

When the form was being used to make something happen, the relationship between the two actors became one in which M2 "teaches" W2 how to repeat and learn. Eventually, W2 "masters" the form and does something unexpected. When the actors finally worked out how to trust the form, they developed a playfulness in which they stayed with a moment in the two scripts (the verbal written text and the visual/oral video text) and waited to see where it would take them. This kind of play asks the audience to go into the process, and if successful, it invites them to lose themselves in a moment rather than try to consume it. There is no "where" to go, so there's "everywhere." For the audience it is another way of feeling what happens if you stay with your self. The actors in the video of Ōta's production become mirrors. They were able to repeat with an apparent lack of difference, or a virtuosity of sameness in the repetition—which is, of course, impossible. But because there is no apparent difference in the form, there is nothing new to see, and you get lost in what you do

see and in feeling what this does to you. You ask what you are looking at in the mirror, and the sameness makes it strange.

For a Euro-American trained actor, foregrounding the difference in repetition, rather than simply letting the difference happen, is a technique often encouraged in rehearsal. Yet the meta level of this scene in *Elements* asks for the play of that happening. Audiences, especially in California, enjoyed the scene, found it exciting, fascinating, titillating, energy-raising. They were probably not going toward the meditative merging of the Ōta production but going to a place where they recognized the virtuosity of difference. One can argue that this is less interesting than the virtuosity of sameness, but it intrigues and involves a US audience. Nevertheless, the audiences for the second production, in Colombia, were also drawn into the more playful activities of the scene, although there was less laughter and more attention to what was happening. It may have been the willingness of those audiences to play that encouraged the actors to leave the virtuosity of difference behind. Ōta is structuring visceral experiences, discomfort, a moment when the audience has no way back except to their body. The difficulty of the iterations of the scene is that you cannot easily interpret them, yet the actor has to act them without knowing what the audience will make of their acting. To put aside this control over what "meaning" is undercuts much of the training of a Euro-American actor and asks a Euro-American-trained audience to do something completely unfamiliar.

## Howling in the Moonlight

If, for my dramaturgy, scene 1 makes present a commentary on the generation of dramatic time and space, and scene 4 offers the possibility of exploring the rehearsal of a rehearsal, then scene 6, "Howling in the Moonlight," has become a way of thinking about how the theatrical "real" can happen.[6] For me, directing is all about the audience, and this scene asks how the fictiveness of the stage and its particular reality work to create something for the audience. The Mother character, or W1, comes into the sand area of the stage and enters the scene. We know she has left her home to walk somewhere, and while she may hope that the walking will change something in her life, she does not know where she is going. Unexpectedly, a ball drops out of the sky. From that moment, she begins to act out her internal feelings, her need and yearning, by building a fictive body on the sand. She kicks the ball gently downstage right, and taking off her coat, she lays it on the ground so the ball becomes the "head" of a person. She goes further, takes her sunglasses out of her purse, and puts them on the ball, and so on until she has created a body. Then she lies beside the effigy she has created.

Heather Nolan acted this process not as if the character thinks the effigy is a real body but as if it gives her a closeness she yearns for but does not have with her family. She lies beside it, holds the sleeve as its "hand," and falls asleep. On some level, it becomes a dream the audience can dream, in between the physicalized yearning of the effigy and her just lying

there. At that moment, Woman4 (W4), played by Caro Novella, comes in. This character does not simply walk into the scene, but her body has been called into the reality that has been created as if the dream is pulling her in. When W4 approaches the sleeping W1, she clearly recognizes where she is going. She realizes who W1 is, and there is a warmth there. Even if the W4 character has been called into the scene, she has an independence, and quite a different energy to W1. W4 smiles, and lays down on top of the effigy, and as she holds W1's hand, the effigy and character become about flesh and blood, and something to build a conversation upon. The action is a reality made on stage for the audience. At the same time, it is about how the actors work with the scripts and scores that they use. They copy the actions and gestures until these become part of their body, they have to dream them, in the sense of a person who learns a language and recognizes that they are beginning to "know" the language when they start dreaming in it. The audience watches this embodiment of some new reality. The stage calls the audience in, and the audience calls their self into it. If they come into the theatre with nothing, they will leave with something. Each person in the audience has their own calling, but there's also a communal sitting or watching.

The story of the scene follows the two women as they reminisce, get upset, remember something from their joint past and start howling as if they are dogs howling at the moon—which makes them feel better. Ōta had previously worked with these two characters in an earlier play, *Plastic Rose*, but this scene plays out at a different point in the women's lives. In *Elements*, they are revisiting a conversation from the past, and while there is some kind of understanding, they are searching for each other at this later age. They do not say "It is you," but ask "Is it you?" Both are trying to find a way to the energy of each other from their younger selves, and each wonders if there is something that will grow between them now or not. If this happens to the characters, for the audience it is about how you tell stories, how you make a reality, and bring it into your life. The scene is slow and not much "happens," but you see "something happening." The actual number of words is small, but they are repeated and repeated, engendering different meanings. For an audience the question becomes: why does this matter now on stage?

From the story, an audience member knows that even when younger, they reached out to each other as women who are alone, trying to find love and companionship. But in the past, it never got to that stage, was never requited. Here, they again try to find the love they have not had. In the past, literally in *Plastic Rose*, they talked about howling at the moon but never did so. Here in *Elements* they do. They get past social constriction, become playful in a space that is both real and not real. As they "become" dogs releasing their bodies to howl in the moonlight, it is animal. The moon is shining, far away. They reach it over distances, and way beyond their social lives, they make a unity. The reality of a "unity" that is appearing on stage for the audience happens all the time in a play, but here the howling is also an enacting of that appearance of theatrical reality.

As a director, I became fond of the different energies of each actor. Heather Nolan is not demonstrative gesturally or verbally, so the internal working of the character is harder to identify. But her work invites you to put your feelings onto her. I can watch her body and make up whatever I learn about her inner impulse. For example, there is so much time for the audience to fill between her kicking the soccer ball and then placing it on the sand. Or, when she takes off her coat, it is not a spur-of-the-moment action, but more a divesting, the actor's body taking off a layer and putting that layer onto the sand so that it generates into a skin or a body as she lays it down. When she laid down her body beside the coat, it was with the same energy that she had laid down the coat. Holding the sleeve of the coat made it feel like an actual body, but not a real body. It was extraordinarily tender, but there was no way of knowing if the actor was tender toward it, so there is space for the audience to infuse the effigy with their own feeling of yearning or need.

Both Nolan and Caro Novella have extensive knowledge and experience of, respectively, acting, and performance and dance. They are also culturally quite distinctive in the way they hold themselves, one being from the United States and the other from Catalonia. Although their bodies carried different energies, they developed a rapport, and a way of working with each other, listening and speaking to each other, that did not involve me. Yet as the director/dramaturge, it was this difference in energy that I was looking for, because it was also the key to the Ōta production of this scene. Nolan acts not by reacting but by "doing." Novella always feels more part of a vibrant current in ongoing living. For me, it was important that when Novella entered, acting W4, the character was leading the scene, and had flesh and blood and sexual energy, while W1 was almost ghostlike. Yet in the video, midway through the scene, this leading-following shifts, and suddenly the body of W1 takes over and becomes more animated while W4 becomes more reactive. There are many aspects, from the actors' backgrounds, training, and experience, as well as from the verbal script, that contributed to this shift, but the visual score of the video was key to our realizing some of the spirit of the Japanese production.

When we rehearsed, we worked again from the outside in as we had with previous scenes. We looked at the video of Ōta's production and repeated not only the corporeal and vocal details of the movements but also their temporality. Each actor was responsible for their character, and then we tried to make sure that the relationship between them scored together into a synchronicity. These were the technical qualities, and as before, we used them to build a form for the scene that we came to an agreement about. Once we had the form, it was a matter of practising it so that it became embodied, so the actor could relax into it, focus their particular energy into the spirit of the movement and the words. Embodiment meant that the form would begin to drive the actions of the actor, and their external expression would become the expression of an internal energy. This process is what I would expect a Japanese actor/company also to engage in, although the technical qualities used to build a form would probably be different.

As with previous scenes, the resonance with Ōta's production lies not only in the distinct energy of each actor but also in the way the actors' energy presences their body. The acting in scene 6 became a mirror for the audience but in a way different to scene 2. In the story, the two women striving for a closeness are like old friends meeting after a long absence who are trying to rekindle a relationship. Their conversation becomes a series of reminiscences as they recall the events of the past and keep missing a recognition of what the other remembers. Unlike scene 2, they are not playing with the virtuosity of sameness but repeating each other's lines as if trying for a unity. For an audience watching for the story, the frustration of the actors plays out the difficulty of their attempt. At the same time, on the meta level of the scene, their conversation does not work out precisely because they cannot achieve the unity they want until they leave their human bodies behind and become animals.

Partly because we could not understand the words being spoken on the video, and because Japanese words are of a different duration and have different qualities to words in English, we had to look to the spirit of the scene yet keep it expressive through a Euro-American body. The "howling" scene in Ōta's production had the same "form," being acted upstage with the actors on all fours, facing away from the audience, but the rhythm that emerged was quite different. We explored the howling through what it was that the actors' bodies wanted to do with the form of the sound and movement. When they were howling, there was a tension in how the backbone was concave because the head and neck were turning up toward the moon—how do you get a lungful, a full throat of sound, with the body extended in a way that compresses the larynx? It is difficult to howl in this position, so there was an effort or odd physicality involved, that we don't experience in our everyday life.

Because they were positioned upstage for most of the howling, with their hind quarters facing the audience, the butt became a physically expressive part of their bodies in the way it moved side to side or up and down. Because the audience saw them on all fours, from behind, it allowed them to imagine what the rest of this strange body was doing. The physical unfamiliarity of the human body and voice in this position helped express the abandonment and joy in each other—doing this sound beyond themselves yet in consonance with each other. In the howling, the two women find the unity they are seeking. They create the reality they yearn for. Although the enaction of that appearance of reality occurs during the howling, all through the scene, there is a theatrical reality that is appearing on stage for the audience. It is as if the actors have made it possible for the audience to see their self, in the process of the characters working on becoming their selves together.

## Resonances of the Body

Directing *Elements* has opened up some new ways of thinking about theatrical process, partly because of the differences between the Japanese training and performance with which we engaged and our own, but also because of the similarities. Attempting here to articulate the theatre practices of the *Elements* company that performed in California and Colombia has

made me far more aware of aspects of time, space, rehearsal, and theatrical "realities" inherent in performance, because it is these aspects that I can recognize working differently, yet similarly, in Ōta's own production. Yet these transcultural resonances arrived from the body of each actor as it found an energy in the words, the sounds, the gestures, and the movements of the video of the Japanese production and the English language translation. In rehearsal, we found ourselves collaborating not around the meaning of the printed script or video but around their forms. And, as with all embodied work, we repeated and repeated the forms until they resonated with breath, movement, vibration, gesture, and could carry the energy that was needed. What is particular about Ōta's *Elements* is the way both verbal and visual texts have inbuilt repetitions that invite this way of meeting transcultural difference.

## Notes

1. Ōta was recognized in Japan as a significant director and was invited to Tadashi Suzuki's first Togo Festival (1982) as one of two Japanese directors (the other was Terayama Shūji) in an international field that included Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, and Tadeusz Kantor among other practitioners. For a more detailed biography, see http://www.glopad.org/jparc/en/node/23029.

2. Script from Ōta (2006, 238) as translated by Mari Boyd, a preeminent scholar of Ōta's work (Boyd 2006) and translator of many of his plays.

3. Ōta Shōgo's *Elements* was written and first produced in 1994. The video used as a score for our production is from a 1994 performance at Spiral Hall (Tokyo), starring Segawa Tetsuya, Shinagawa Tōru, Ōsugi Sazanami, Suzuki Rieko, Tanigawa Kiyomi, Kino Hana, and Andō Tomoko. The video is on disc 3 of Ōta (2008). During rehearsals, in addition to the visual and verbal scripts, we also engaged with Bleeker (2008); Knowles (2014); Massumi (2014); Quinn (1995); and States (1987).

4. This first example looks specifically at the opening repetitions in scene 1, "Breakfast" (Ōta 2006, 231–32).

5. This second example analyzes the opening of scene 4, "Tender Meat" (Ōta 2006, 235–36).

6. This third example focuses on the opening of scene 6, "Howling at the Moonlight" (Ōta 2006, 242–46).

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