



Diffusion of Hip Hop: A Critical Reappraisal of 'Call and Response' in East Asian Street Dance Culture

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博士論文

**Diffusion of Hip Hop:
A Critical Reappraisal of 'Call and Response' in
East Asian Street Dance Culture**

(ヒップホップ拡散の力学：東アジアのストリート・ダンス・カルチャーにおける「コール&レスポンス」の批判的再評価)

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INTRODUCTION

– Cultural Encounters between Kung Fu and Hip Hop in the ‘Streets’ –

‘What We Saw was Kung Fu’

This thesis explores ‘street dance’, one of the four most significant elements in hip hop culture developed from the Afro-diasporic expressive structure ‘call and response’, in the US since the 1970s and spread into East Asian countries since the 1980s, by examining its cultural diffusions and contacts with local cultural elements or practices in East Asia. During its formation, breakdancing, a style of street dance recently named an Olympic sport at the 2024 Paris Games, has found its way into Kung Fu films, a popular entertainment amongst the youths who were fighting against adversities in the borough of the Bronx, New York City, in the 1970s. As b-boy pioneer Kenny ‘Ken Swift’ Gabbert notes, ‘What we saw was Kung Fu’ (quoted in Delgado 2007: n.pag.). Ken Swift’s words indicate that the development of street dance culture resulted from hip hop’s encounter with divergent cultural practices and elements. In this sense, Kung Fu might not be the only disparate cultural practice of which hip hop took note, but it could be a significant one. However, if we agree that hip hop or street dance grew out of this cultural exchange, as Ken Swift notes, then we need to answer the concerns further as to how it synchronised with Kung Fu, and how hip hop developed its possibilities to ‘appropriate’ other cultural practices and local elements and regenerate its ways of cultural expressions. While this study aims to answer these concerns, my thesis unfolds the dissection of ‘street dance’ with its contact with Kung Fu first and, in what is to follow, seeks to investigate the hip hop’s ‘cultural appropriation’ of local practices and elements in East Asian cultural contexts by reappraising ‘call and response’.

With a decadal development in the 1980s, ‘street dance’, together with hip hop culture, became a popular culture and began to ‘travel’ worldwide and arrived in East Asia countries as part of globalisation. Since then, the culture has extended its (bodily) cultural expression by synchronising with other cultural practices whenever it encounters new cultural elements. The synchronisation of hip hop with disparate cultural elements or practices is a cultural transmission process embedded in the ‘call and response’ structure—an Afro-diasporic structure of repeated ‘give-and-take’ from music into other modes of (black) cultural expression, which is synonymous with *ngoma* referring to ‘song’, ‘dance’ and ‘drums’ in Swahili language (see Gilroy 1993: 78; Hickey 2010: 175-76). For example, the nexus between Kung Fu and breakdancing, as I just mentioned, is an obvious example of ‘cultural exchange of bodily expression’ or

‘cultural interplay’ for understanding ‘call and response’, notwithstanding that ‘call and response’ is a musical structure. Kung Fu was a ‘call’ that inspired the b-boys and b-girls to throw their Kung Fu-like moves to the dancefloor as a ‘response’.¹ In other words, they have transformed the martial arts bodily practices into dance in the form of breakdancing. This ‘response’ turned out to be another ‘call’, which could repeatedly generate another ‘response’. The ‘call and response’ structure, thus, manifests as a device for hip hop culture to extend or regenerate its means of cultural expression through synchronisation with local practices into which the culture ‘diffuses’.

In this sense, the diffusion of hip hop results from the black expressive cultural expansion of ‘call and response’ through hip hop’s ‘appropriation’ of alien cultural practices or elements. However, to the extent that ‘cultural exchange of bodily expression’ is embedded in this black antiphonic structure, the Kung Fu-breakdancing relationship doesn’t mean that it only wound up with the causality of a one direction transmission process when two divergent cultures encounter. Nor does it mean that in the process of such ‘cultural exchange of bodily expression’, ‘call and response’ warrant the quality of cultural transmission. Instead, in terms of synchronisation of two disparate cultures, the ‘syncopation’ and the ‘resonation’ of the cultural expression from one side in the synchronisation process are worthy of consideration. This is because their social conditions may contradict each other, even though two divergent cultures will eventually find an alternative way to synchronise. In this sense, such cultural synchronisation is synonymous with the negotiation or dialogue that operates in a temporality shared by two cultures of contrasts permitting or rejecting (in)adequate cultural appropriation, making some concessions to each other, challenging the self-definition and the self-understanding mutually and so on. This depends on the way and the spatiotemporal context they contact. To this point, Charles Taylor’s (1985) essay on interpretive social science can be helpful in understanding how the ‘call and response’ structure operates when hip hop encounters other cultures. Significantly, Taylor’s argument that was developed upon a concept of ‘a language of perspicuous contrast’ focuses not just in one direction, but rather, in an extended ‘two-way’ understanding of both cultures when they encounter one another. Hence, in what is to follow, my thesis borrows this concept to support its theorisation of ‘call and response’ underlying hip hop culture and, with a focus on hip hop’s bodily cultural expression, examine the street dance cultural synchronisation with other local elements and practices in East

¹ The term ‘throw’ is a street dance slang term, which English-speaking street dancers regularly mention when they ‘perform’ or ‘execute’ a dance routine.

Asian social conditions.

Although it is a distinguishable cultural element of hip hop culture that traversed a collection of dance formations developed not only in New York but also in other urbanscapes such as the West Coast of the US, each street dance style is inseparable from a dance music genre. Through the commercialisation of the culture, rap music or hip hop music has become the most notable element in hip hop culture, regardless of the inseparable music-dance connection as the 'call and response' structure warrants. As a result, when it comes to hip hop culture, anglophone non-hip hop fans might not recall the battle scenes in Battle of the Year (BOTY) International, a worldwide breakdancing competition. They might, rather, mention Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999) featuring an original film score by American rapper RZA and hip hop songs by Wu-Tang Clan, Killah Priest and Public Enemy, and Fuminori Kizaki's *Afro Samurai* (2007) based on Takashi Okazaki's manga and featuring RZA's soundtrack, for example. Besides, anglophone non-hip hop fans might come up with some hot rap songs on the list of *Billboard* in the 2000s and the 2010s, such as Jay-Z's 'Empire State of Mind' (2009) featuring Alicia Keys, Flo Rida's 'I Cry' (2012), and Lil Nas X's 'Old Town Road' (2019). Furthermore, perhaps they would also mention some issues of sexist or misogynistic lyrics like that in YBN Nahmir's 'Bounce Out with That' (2018): 'Fuck a bitch and then I put it in a bitch throat / Never give a bitch yo' phone, that's a no-no'. This assumption, however, might only be valid under the premise that those non-hip hop fans listened to English songs and watched music videos frequently without any specific music preference. In any case, these rappers, hip hop singers, and performers in hip hop soundtracks in films and anime, mentioned by the anglophone non-hip hop fans, are examples relating hip hop with a focus on its musical aspect.

By contrast, when talking about hip hop, anglophone hip hop fans might give you some names of underground rappers with whom you are less familiar, such as Kool Keith, Del the Funky Homosapien and Little Brother. Again, these fans might mention racism or sexism if they are concerned with these issues. To this point, you might want to end the conversation here because this is too intense for you. However, if the conversation were to continue, topics such as b-boying and b-girling in Southern Bronx and pop-lock dance from the West Coast might make mention of several legendary figures: b-boy pioneers Crazy Legs and Ken Swift, the locking pioneer Campello, or other pioneer dancers such as Boogaloo Sam and Poppin Pete. Some keywords might be mentioned in such a conversation: the TV programme *Soul Train* (1971-2006), DJ Kool Herc, and last but not most important, Bruce Lee as well as Chinese Kung Fu or Kung Fu films. All point to the fact that hip hop is not only about music but also about 'dance' at least.

‘But how come Bruce Lee? No way!’ You might think that you are so tired that you misheard what your interlocutors said.

Nonetheless, Bruce Lee, especially to many street dancers, is still a legendary figure today. Ken Swift, for example, recalled how Kung Fu became a crucial cultural element in street dance: “[We] saw Kung Fu from the 42nd Street theaters. So those were our inspirations [...] when we did the Kung Fu shit we switched it up and we put this B-boy flavor into it” (quoted in Delgado 2007: n.pag.). Also, Ken Swift testified that his dance move ‘Muggsy’ appropriated Bruce Lee’s Kung Fu moves in director Israel’s Bronx hip hop documentary *The Freshest Kids: A History of B-Boying* (2002). No matter what Ken Swift declared, Bruce Lee and Kung Fu still sound convincingly far from hip hop in terms of African American culture to both the general public and academia, let alone hip hop cultural studies that emphasise rap music more than street dance culture.

Even supposing that Ken Swift’s declaration is not an expression of his fetish for Bruce Lee but rather, a de facto utterance, it is worthy of demanding closer inspection of hip hop’s ‘cultural appropriation’ of Kung Fu, especially in its ‘street dance’ aspects. As I have mentioned ‘cultural appropriation’ so far, my thesis distinguishes the notion of the term from its antonym ‘cultural misappropriation’ referring to negative meanings. Moreover, by addressing breakdancing’s (or hip hop’s) cultural appropriation of Kung Fu, I do not intend to claim that any group of people has the right to possess a given culture. Instead, to borrow Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘binary opposition’ as to the ‘production of meaning itself’ asserted in his essay, ‘The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power’ (2019), this cultural appropriation can be considered the process of hip hop representing itself in relation to the other—namely, Kung Fu (see Hall 2019: 144-45). In other words, the cultural appropriation—i.e., the hip hop’s appropriation of Kung Fu—resulted from the equal contacts of two cultures.

‘Call and Response’ in Cultural Encounters

In this regard, the contact of commodified Kung Fu aesthetics with breakdancing is a ‘call’—in the sense of ‘invitation’ or ‘inspiration’—for the black youths to transcribe Chinese martial arts practice into their dance moves, turning out to be a ‘response’ to the ‘call’. This resulted from Bruce Lee’s image of defeating white villains in his Kung Fu films, thus giving hope to the youths suffering from racism and classism in the US of the 1970s. Instead of tracing back what sorts of distinctive cultural elements have formed styles of street dance to certify the correctness of its ‘cultural appropriation’, it is more worthwhile

to examine how different bodily cultural expressions remain significant, equal and compatible or extendible when street dance culture diffuses into other contexts. In that context, street dance is capable of not only absorbing other cultural elements such as the Afro-Brazilian martial art *Capoeira*—one of the African-derived martial arts sharing similarities with breakdancing—in the New York of the 1990s, but also to synchronise with other local elements through its ‘diffusion’ into the cultural contexts outside the US since the 1980s.

In other words, despite its diffusion, street dance has remained compatible with every distinctive cultural element it absorbed or appropriated. What makes this possible is that street dance culture has developed out of the African-diasporic ‘call and response’ structure, but it doesn’t mean that street dance can diffuse into the contexts outside the US as a result of this structure. As I mentioned above, this black cultural expressive structure manifests as a device for cultural transmission, attested by the spread of a ‘Bruce Lee legend’ and its meanings around the world, as Taiwanese street dancer Kila Chuang posited in a face-to-face conversation on 21 October 2017. ‘Bruce Lee does matter [in street dance culture]’, Kila said. Nevertheless, it would be a big mistake to closure that the development of East Asian street dance culture is completely related to the ‘Bruce Lee legend’ and to assume that the transmission process of hip hop replicates wherever it diffuses. Furthermore, it is inadequate to consider that street dance diffuses linearly from the US context to another. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, the ‘two-way’ perspective is necessary when exploring transnational hip hop’s cultural appropriation and diffusion into another cultural context under globalisation.

In this sense, the Kung Fu-breakdancing connection resulting from hip hop’s cultural appropriation of Chinese martial arts practices that I have illustrated is an example of the way to investigate the ‘cultural exchange’ or ‘cultural interplay’ between two cultural practices in ‘perspicuous contrasts’. To operate the concept of ‘call and response’ to this connection, it would be a ‘call’ from East Asia that has been ‘responded’ in a US way of understanding Kung Fu. Then, this ‘response’ has become another ‘call’—street dance’s bodily expression—to inspire or invite another ‘response’ from another context wherever street dance ‘diffuses’. Not viewed through a specific geographical or linear prism, this thesis intends to dissect ‘street dance’ that has diffused and developed in East Asian social and cultural spatiotemporal contexts by examining hip hop’s contacts with their divergent local cultural practices and elements.

In/Adequate ‘Cultural Appropriation’

Before I dissect the diffusion of hip hop from the scope of its bodily expression—i.e., street dance—

in this thesis, the following three key concepts require clarification: the meaning of ‘cultural appropriation’, Gilroy’s (1993) observation of ‘call and response’, and Taylor’s (1985) concept of ‘a language of perspicuous contrast’. As I have interwoven those concepts above in this introduction so far, my thesis intends to draw on Gilroy’s observation to redefine the concepts of ‘call and response’ and borrow Taylor’s idea of ‘perspicuous contrast’ as a method to examine the diffusion of street dance culture in East Asian contexts. To avoid repetition, I will elaborate my observation and offer my redefinition of ‘call and response’, as well as establish the adoption of Taylor’s idea ‘perspicuous contrast’ in Chapter 1. However, to circumvent the term ‘cultural appropriation’ from being misinterpreted as in the usage of African or Asian essentialist discourses, it is urgent to clarify the meaning of ‘cultural appropriation’ at the outset.

As I mentioned earlier, the meaning or concept of ‘cultural appropriation’, which this thesis tackles, is not to condemn the appropriator for any wrongdoing. However, since hip hop culture became more and more popular, there have been examples in which hip hop artists, critics and their protectors accuse such ‘cultural appropriation’ of not respecting the culture or taking it for granted. The ‘appropriation’ they meant here is synonymous with ‘plagiarism’ or ‘misappropriation’ more straightforwardly. But such an accusation could manifest itself as African essentialist discourses that overemphasise African Americans’ contribution to hip hop culture and ignore the fact that the culture grew out of give-and-take amongst different groups of people and their cultural encounters.

By contrast, scholar and writer Lauren Michele Jackson’s (2019) viewpoint on ‘cultural appropriation’ drives away from this accusation for accusation’s sake. In Jackson’s latest book *White Negroes* (2019), her attempt is not to insult people, who are not black, but rather, to recall the obliviousness of cultural appropriation and provide the readers the abilities to understand such issues and to pay their respect to each culture through social facts and solid research on the affect of ‘cultural appropriation’ whether it is deliberate or innocent. As Jackson points out in her introduction, ‘[a]ppropriation [of hip hop] is everywhere, and is also inevitable’ (2019: 2). Hip hop is called ‘a black thing’ because it emerged in ‘[a] shared poverty and community’ of the black and brown people in neighbourhoods (Jackson 2019: 3). Moreover, ‘[e]arly rap was itself an appropriation of another generation’s sound—funk, soul, disco—repurposed for something different and new. The idea that any artistic or cultural practice is closed off to outsiders at any point in time is ridiculous [...]’ (Jackson 2019: 3). To elaborate on Jackson’s observation, I argue that hip hop culture has developed *in medias res* through ‘cultural appropriation’ by give-and-take, especially from the aspects of its cultural development embedding ‘call and response’ that enable the culture to derive from whatever came

before and continues to extend when it diffuses.

Although Jackson's observation is under the condition '[w]hen the oppressed appropriate from the powerful' (2019: 4), it is applicable to examine the case of Bruce Lee's Kung Fu movements appropriated to form the b-boy moves, the appropriation of Japanese samurai culture in the hip hop film *Ghost Dog* (1999) and the American hip hop anime *Afro Samurai* (2007), or the case as this thesis examines later. The power relationship is doubtlessly crucial, but the inter-appropriation of cultural practice matters even more to the extent of hip hop's or street dance's compatibility. Detaching from the battleground of accusation for power-related 'cultural paradigm,' another attempt of this thesis is to argue that 'cultural appropriation' is a vehicle for one culture to be equal to, to pay respect to, and to understand the other, by looking at several aspects of East Asian street dance through the diffusion of hip hop. However, it is also crucial to note that the stance of this thesis is not to support but to argue against the nationalist appropriation of hip hop and street dance promoted by, for example, governmental propaganda. This is because such 'inadequate' appropriation of the culture, which I read as a means of 'cultural censorship' and will investigate later, could deprive hip hop of its rhythmic embodiment to express or communicate (non-)verbally and of its semantic extension to the 'street'.

To stretch a point, this inadequate appropriation of hip hop would re-enact the history of the deprivation of African slaves' communicative drumming to prevent uprisings in North America in the 17th century. The African slaves who had been deprived of communicative drumming, as tap dancer Mark Knowles (2002: 39) writes, substituted their communication device with 'bone clappers, tambourines, and importantly, hand and body slaps, and foot beats. The most primitive of all instruments, the human body, became the main source of rhythm and communication.' In other words, slavery's substitution of 'drums' with bodily movements implies the relationship between African drumming and 'dancing' in respect to communication. Eventually, the deprivation of African 'drums' resulted in the fruitful creation of means to embody rhythms to substitute the primitive communicative drumming in black cultural expressions such as black social dances.²

With its several centuries of development, the African communicative drumming and even dancing,

² I will elaborate on the relationship between street dance and black social dance in Chapter 5 by drawing on black social dance specialist DeFrantz's observation. Also see the YouTube videoclip uploaded by Duke University (2019).

no matter where it originated, had given birth to various art forms such as tap dancing or jazz, blues and reggae when different ethnic groups encountered each other in the Americas. Despite its late start, hip hop, like these art forms, is also developed from waves of art movements which endeavoured to recapture this Afro-diasporic means of expression. From its formation, hip hop has been ‘re-appropriating’ and transforming the forbidden drumbeats in the past into its cultural expression through its unique ways of embodying rhythms with the latest instruments, including digital sampling or remixing techniques, as well as bodily movements. In this process, the culture has also re-created and ‘re-discovered’ spaces to embody the ‘black beats’ in the urban spaces. As I mentioned earlier, hip hop art forms have assembled in the ‘streets’ in the US urban spaces since the 1970s, especially in the ghettos in the borough of the Bronx, as a counterculture. As a result, hip hop’s ‘streetness’ connotes rebellion against authority, seeking to recapture and ‘re-appropriate’ the deprived drumming mechanism in any kind of its art forms to create new means of cultural expression to embody rhythms. Nevertheless, it is crucial to notice that hip hop’s creation of new cultural expression corresponds to the ‘appropriation’ of new spaces and new materials to practise the regenerated cultural expression. In this sense, finding new materials, including the use of primitive instrument—namely, the ‘body’—as an explicit characteristic of the culture to embody the drumming, would be the key point to differ hip hop and street dance culture from other street cultures or countercultures. What my thesis seeks to deal with, hence, is the dynamics of hip hop diffusion, especially its bodily embodiment of rhythms that results from the culture’s self-criticism of ‘appropriation’ when it develops in the ‘streets’.

Hip Hop’s (Bodily) Rhythmic Embodiments in the ‘Streets’ Matter

Hip hop matters because of its strong affiliation with the ‘streets’. However, to the extent of hip hop culture, the meaning of ‘street’ exceeds our imagination of the streets as infrastructure. Instead, as I tried to theorise above and in what is to follow, the ‘streets’ that hip hop articulates is a space where the culture (re)appropriates the autonomy of rhythmic embodiments—which was once deprived—and at the same time, it regenerates its compatibility by contacting and synchronising with different cultural materials or practices. To put it simply, hip hop has substituted the most important instrument—namely, the drum—with other sound systems in the centre of a black communicative cultural sphere. As a manifestation of ‘communicative drumming’, this sound system, for instance, could be the turntables that DJs play or a portable stereo replaying the rhythmic melodies produced by the musicians with either instruments or the latest digital sampling. As a result, hip hop music relatively relies on instruments to create rhythms less than do other

black musical expressions such as blues, jazz or funk. Despite the commodification of other black music genres, their musical styles are limited by how the musicians play instruments such as drum sets, (bass) guitars, keyboards and so on. By contrast, the use of sampling techniques (known as ‘cut 'n' mix’) resulting from the ‘call and response’ structure that hip hop develops upon makes the music (and the culture, as a package) regenerate constantly and innovatively. In other words, the replacement of instruments differentiates hip hop from other black music genres. This not only changed hip hop’s way of ‘communicative drumming’, but also brought in new means of musical expression and extended the boundaries of hip hop while gentrifying its ‘streetness’.

Furthermore, if the hip hop ethos that developed upon witnessing black expressive rhythmic embodiment is synonymous with (black) American youth’s rebellion against racial discrimination, poverty, societal inequalities and class consciousness, then any group of people who are suppressed and deprived of material resources could utilise hip hop as an expressive device to rework (that is, ‘cut 'n' mix’) hip hop ethos to ‘speak out’ for themselves. An example of this is rap singer Funi (a.k.a Jeong-Hoon Kwak), born as a third generation of Zainichi (Korean residents in Japan). He uses Japanese rap lyrics to comment on Japan’s ongoing societal inequalities that the Zainichi have been fighting against in the civil rights movements in Kawasaki since the 1970s (see Funi and Kawabata 2020: n.pag.). Kwak’s work shows the compatibility of hip hop with social justice struggles. That is to say, hip hop matters because of its compatibility to provide opportunities for those who are lacking in resources to ‘(re)appropriate’ its cultural expression to amplify their (non-)verbal utterance. This makes hip hop different from other black expressive (counter)cultures such as punk, jazz, blues or reggae.

Another determining factor that differentiates hip hop from other popular cultures would be its musical and rhythmic composing techniques (cutting and mixing) which branch out into other means of cultural expression. This determining characteristic grew out of ‘call and response’ that underlies hip hop culture, and its most explicit example would be the inseparable relationship between music and dance, as what I will be presenting in what is to follow. Straightforwardly, the music-dance connection articulates hip hop rhythmic embodiment in another way when a street dancer dances to the rhythms of dance music. Dancing gestures, such as body slaps and foot beats, are the ways the dancers embody the rhythms and even melodies or lyrics. In this sense, their bodies substitute for the ‘drums’, which might be absent in a street dance scene, and function as easily attainable, non-verbal communicative devices. The bodily embodiment of rhythms in a street dance scene shares a similarity with the composing techniques of dance music. For

example, b-boys and b-girls reference the bodily movements of Chinese martial arts in breakdancing. This results from hip hop's cultural practice of 'cut 'n' mix'. I will further examine this example later, but it is crucial to foreground that hip hop's (bodily) rhythmic embodiments in street dance scenes explicitly corresponds to the 'streets' where hip hop diffuses. Due to this, the 'streets', namely, the hip hop or street dance spaces, which I will be investigating in this thesis, is not limited to the scenes where street dancers throw their signatures (dance styles) in a public space with dance music such as that in the corner of the ghetto, an urban street, a park, a station, a dancehall or a studio. Instead, it could also be a dance scene in the digital world—that is, in the media representation of music and dance, including hip hop-themed manga, anime, films, TV programmes as well as hip hop and street dance music videos under capitalistic globalisation and commodification of the culture. This means that the 'streetness' in hip hop's bodily expression might shift from resistance to entertainment or some other claim in some of the East Asian cases that I will examine. Either way, hip hop's appropriation of the digital world and the 'streets' in East Asian cultural contexts, as in the cases I will investigate, manifests the weight of hip hop.

Street Dance Connection in East Asia

So far, I have mentioned the research field of this thesis by addressing 'East Asia'. For the purpose of this thesis, I will narrow my scope to only specific parts of 'East Asia', which this thesis intends to cover cross-culturally. In terms of 'East Asia,' countries such as China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan, as scholar Anne Prescott (2015: 3) defined, should be included in this research. However, my thesis only covers the street dance culture developed in China, Japan and Taiwan due to my engagement with the street dancers, who travel around these three countries, and the limitations of this study. The exclusion of Korean hip hop doesn't mean that it is less important; instead, there is other fruitful research delving into the potential of Korean hip hop music and street dance culture. Some examples include Jerry Won Lee and Chungjae Lee's English essay, 'Show me the monolingualism: Korean hip-hop and the discourse of difference' (2021), and Sue In Kim and Yuri Song's Korean essay, 'The perception of street dance terms and their canonization: focusing on the institutionalization of street dance in Korea' (2019), are relevant, up-to-date ones.

If I were to be asked to name the reason why this research investigates the street dance culture developed in several countries of East Asia, instead of focusing its exploration on a single country, the answer would be pretty straightforward. It is simply because the developments and the booms of Asian hip

hop began in China, Japan and Taiwan during the same period in the 1980s, but their street dance cultural development turned out to be divergent with time lapses in its chronicles. Besides, according to the informants I engaged with, street dancers' understanding of the culture and their routes to attain hip hop knowledge have indicated their interconnection in these three countries. On this account, one of the reasons I gave up the investigation into Korean street dance culture is because I could not develop trustful connections with Korean street dancers. In this thesis, though, I will provide relevant materials, including research, newspaper and magazine articles, personal writings of street dance, interviews, documentaries and even the latest online resources to support my ethnographic statement above in what is to follow. Notably, I also conducted interviews as the primary sources to examine street dance culture developed in these countries while investigating the social conditions. As an example of how I intertwine these materials, I will briefly demonstrate how the several street dancers from China, Japan and Taiwan have interacted, also providing a quick understanding of the contexts this thesis examines as follows.

As various scholars have observed, street dance diffused into East Asia through the spread of breakdancing films (see Condry 2001; Lin and Chuang 2003; Zhang 2010). Street dance, especially breakdancing, came onto the scene in Japan in the early 1980s (Condry 2001: 228), whereas it was not introduced into Taiwan until the mid or late 1980s (Huang 2007: 88; Lin and Chuang 2003: 17). On the other hand, the culture arrived in China in the mid-1980s, but its boom declined due to the general public's negative impression of hip hop (Zhang 2010: 6-7). The second and the third boom of street dance in China began in the 1990s and the 2010s with Taiwanese, Japanese, Hongkonger and Korean dancers' involvement in China (Zhang 2010: 8-9).

The 'travel' of East Asian street dancers across borders has exceeded the cultural encounters of street dance developed in different countries, as Terry Lin, a Taiwanese street dancer and producer, mentioned in my Skype interview on 31 October 2015. Terry pointed out that in Taiwan, locking—a street dance form—for instance, was partially developed with Japanese street dance instructor Yoshikazu 'Yoshibow' Yokota's training method about two decades ago, and even Terry is one of the pioneers who practises street dance with Yoshibow's method. That is to say, part of the street dance culture developed in Taiwan depended on the Japanese understanding of the culture. Street dance has continued to progress with Taiwanese dancers travelling to China and contributing their knowledge of street dance there. Terry has been based in Shanghai to choreograph dance routines for Chinese idols and entertainers since the mid-2010s, and other street dancers such as Yide 'Popping Ed' Tian, Chi-chuan 'A-chuan' Tseng and Kila Chuang are

invited to China to instruct dance lessons today, due to the boom of hip hop brought by Chinese TV programmes such as *The Rap of China* (2017) and *Street Dance of China* (2018). Amongst these Taiwanese dancers, Popping Ed even starred as the hero in the Teochew-Mandarin film *Ying Ge Hun* (2019), who practises folk dance Yingge and street dance, with the heroine played by Taiwanese female street dancer Yan-Jhen ‘Nikki’ Chen. To sum up these backgrounds, the diffusion of hip hop in waves has connected street dancers from different cultural contexts and social conditions. It is, hence, valuable for this research to examine the inter-relationship amongst them brought by the diffusion of hip hop in East Asia.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Mapping Hip Hop in Theory’, first reviews the academic writings and journalist literature to develop the standpoints and the arguments of this research. In the findings, the most crucial emerging trend is that the pre-existing cultural studies of hip hop barely cover ‘street dance’, but they tend to focus on ‘hip hop music’ more. Counter to the pre-existing researches, this thesis explores ‘call and response’ and intends to centre upon the ‘street dance’ aspect more than the musical aspect of hip hop. In this sense, by drawing on Paul Gilroy’s (1993) observation, this chapter then seeks to theorise the notion of ‘call and response’ and redefine it by using three categories—namely, ‘the inseparability of music and dance’, ‘cultural appropriation’, and ‘the diffusion of hip hop’ or ‘extension of street dance’—from the ‘street dance’ aspect. Finally, the chapter specifies the research approach this thesis takes while introducing the method modified from Charles Taylor’s (1985) concept of ‘a language of perspicuous contrast’ to investigate the diffusion of hip hop.

Chapter 2, “‘Bruce Lee Legend’ and Kung Fu Influence in Hip Hop Culture: Dissection of ‘Hip Hop Dance’ through an Aspect of Chinese Martial Arts’, specifies the best-known street dance genre—‘hip hop dance’—and unfolds the anatomy of street dance from the United States in the 1970s, where Kung Fu films and Chinese martial art stars such as Bruce Lee were popular amongst the youth of New York City, and it points out that these figures or icons are the insertions of this research. Through demonstrating how b-boys took to Kung Fu films, this chapter explores how they would alter the visually dynamic moves they had seen on the screen with their creativities and throw these altered moves on the dance floor. However, it is not an accident, as argued in this chapter, that the b-boys appropriated the moves from the Kung Fu films merely because this movie genre was popular then. This chapter hence elaborates why these b-boys took to Kung Fu films in particular by examining the context of New York City’s popular culture in the 1970s. Also,

this chapter explores how they appropriated these dynamic Kung Fu moves and transformed them into hip hop dance moves through the mechanism of ‘call and response’ (that is, ‘cultural appropriation’) by examining Kung Fu films scenes and the dancers’ bodily movements. Significantly, drawing on M. K. Kato’s (2007) standpoint, I argue that the encounter between Kung Fu and hip hop, as representative of a popular cultural revolution, may empower hip hop to confirm its possibilities to synchronise, regenerate and become shareable.

Chapter 3, ‘Japanese Street Dance Culture in Manga and Anime: Hip Hop Transcription in *Samurai Champloo* and *Tokyo Tribe-2*’, elaborates on the dynamics of hip hop diffusion and synchronisation by supporting the examples of hip hop diffusions in manga and anime to examine how street dance culture or hip hop synchronised with local elements in Japanese subcultures. In this chapter, I analyse how hip hop representation in anime *Samurai Champloo* (2004-05), manga *Tokyo Tribe-2* (1997-2005) and its anime adaptation *Tokyo Tribes* (2006-07) transcribe the hip hop elements. The hip hop transcription with an anachronist setting in *Samurai Champloo* (2004-05) in particular depicts protagonist Mugen, an impoverished Ryukyuan ronin samurai, and his journey fighting against a Daikan’s suppression and the Edo shogunate system. I argue that such an anachronistic scheme was intended to transcribe the general context of hip hop into a Japanese backdrop in order to call for the domestic awareness in Japan of racial or ethnic issues such as the recent BLM event held in Japan and the United States. Yet, due to the diffusion of hip hop, manga and anime representation of hip hop is not limited to domestic consumption and awareness. That is, such hip hop diffusion also became another wave of the hip hop movements. In brief, I hence conclude that the diffusion of hip hop into Japanese manga and anime representation creates an alternative way of cultural expression, which is reversible. Furthermore, such ‘cultural interplay’ finally extends the possibilities of the culture to find new elements for its cultural expressions.

In Chapter 4, ‘Hip Hop against Gender Roles: Transformed Yingge Performance under Street Dance Disguise in Chinese Film *Ying Ge Hun*’, I analyse another textual diffusion of hip hop by exploring the film representations of street dance to argue that ‘hip hop is against gender roles’. This is based on a solid example of Chinese director Yi Huang’s film *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). I utilise this film to gainsay the criticism of feminine voices missing in street dance society, as exemplified by the engagement of the heroine Wenqi in the last performance number. The film represents the diffusion of street dance into Chinese folk dance Yingge (‘hero’s song’) by the youths from Teochew, Canton, a southern province in China. That is where the residents were and are suffering from poverty and have had to leave their hometown to earn their livings.

The film also casts Taiwanese street dancers Yide ‘Popping Ed’ Tian and Yan-Jhen ‘Nikki’ Chen, who attends the dance contest TV programme *Zhe! Jiushi Jiewu (Street Dance of China)* (2018). In other words, the representation of hip hop in *Ying Ge Hun* schemes to transcribe the US hip hop context to mainland Chinese social issues such as wealth inequality in the marginalised south. Meanwhile, the film casting also shows its respect to hip hop culture by involving street dancers in its production. Hence, this chapter examines the transformation and the agender expression of hip hop culture from both the fictional representation and the practical street dance scenes in China. Finally, I conclude that hip hop and its practitioners represent a stand against gender roles and that this is furthermore explicit by examining the hip hop transformation and taking note of its diffusion.

Chapter 5, ‘Hip Hop Diffusion from the US to Taiwan: Policing, Transformation and Gentrification of Street Dance’, first reveals the relationships between main ‘street dance’ forms and their musical influences by disclosing their formative backgrounds in the US. Second, I seek to examine this transformed street dance culture in Taiwan and explore the alteration of street dance culture interplays between Taiwan and China through their exchange of dance skills and knowledge. Like Chinese hip hop, the alteration of street dance culture in Taiwan is due to the dancers’ breakthrough of the country’s cultural censorship. This brought fruitful results: the ‘regeneration’ of street dance culture in Taiwan, including Taiwanese street dancers’ efforts to showcase their dance skills in the international street dance competitions and extend the possibilities of hip hop’s bodily and cultural expression. Furthermore, Chapter 5 also explores Taiwanese street dance culture under globalisation by tackling the Olympic inclusion of breakdancing in 2024 Paris and the gentrification of hip hop, as well as contextualising the change of street dancers’ minds to leave China and relocate their dance careers to Taiwan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, I examine the collaboration of Taiwanese rap singers DJ Didilong and Soft Lipa, as well as street dancers such as Popping Ed and Krazybonez involved in the music video ‘Shuige’ (2020), a fictitious, transnational space demonstrating the homogeneity and heterogeneity of hip hop under globalisation. Significantly, I argue that the articulation of Taiwanese hip hop’s self-definition in its (non-)verbal expression turned out to be powerful and remain ‘socially and politically conscious’ both at home and abroad, as exemplified by b-boy Bojin’s breakdancing career.

The Conclusion, ‘Diffusion of Street Dance’, draws on Bruce Lee and his philosophy of Chinese Kung Fu again to reiterate points made in my thesis’s Introduction. It will briefly review the theoretical framework and the research method proposed in this study and turn to review the findings of each chapter.

Besides, it also points out the significance of the study as well as the future of the hip hop and street dance cultural studies. Last but not least, by quoting Gabriel Entiope's *Negroes, Dance, Resistance* (1996), the thesis reminds its readers of the 'social and political consciousness' of hip hop and street dance.

CHAPTER 1

Mapping Hip Hop in Theory

This chapter situates the theoretical concerns of this thesis by reviewing various pieces of literature from different fields of hip hop research. Such fruitful literature has been developed in various fields, for example, from historian's standpoints about African American history, journalist's standpoints about hip hop culture, analyses of the globalisation and commodification of hip hop, gender studies scholars' views of hip hop, East Asian viewpoints of 'street dance' and hip hop and much more. However, most of the literature emphasises the musical aspects of hip hop with a focus on its commodification—that is, hip hop music as 'product' and its 'production'—while only touching on other issues such as racism, class discrimination and gender, instead of the 'bodily practice' aspect. As a result, my thesis aims to explore gaps in the research in these research fields and establish a new standpoint that focuses on the bodily expression of hip hop—namely, 'street dance'—directly, while simultaneously exploring its relationship to dance music genres.

After I review the literature from different fields of hip hop research, this chapter will theorise the relationship between music and dance in hip hop culture by examining 'call and response', the fundamental structure that underlies the culture and generates waves of art movements, including 'musical percussion' (or rhythms) and 'dancing'. This begins with Paul Gilroy's observation that discursively defined 'call and response' as 'a bridge from music into other modes of cultural expression' (1993: 78). In what follows, this chapter unfolds the theoretical mechanism of 'call and response' by specifying its essential elements—songs, dance, and drums (rhythms)—in African-diasporic cultures. Through the theorisation of 'call and response', I argue that music and dance are inseparable, albeit alterable to the extent possible in hip hop culture. That is to say, although music and dance are inseparable in hip hop culture, when the (dance) music changes, the genres of 'street dance' in the culture would extend its bodily expression by synchronisation. In this sense, hip hop's cultural expressions of music and dance hover at a constant relation wherever hip hop diffuses. Nevertheless, the notion of 'call and response' would be limited within the African-diasporic standpoint and could fall into African essentialist convolutions as this chapter unfolds. Therefore, challenging this standpoint, my thesis turns to apply the notion to explain how street dance travels worldwide, and specifically how it diffuses into the East Asian cultural contexts while redefining the meanings of 'call and response' by drawing on Charles Taylor's (1985) concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast'.

This chapter then elaborates on Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' to underpin the idea that the concept is applicable and suitable for redefining 'call and response' as a method to observe

the diffusion of hip hop in East Asian cultural contexts. In other words, my thesis borrows Taylor's (1985) concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' and Glory's (1993) observation of 'call and response' to establish its theoretical framework. Taking a comparative cultural studies approach, I will deploy the theoretical framework developed in this chapter to demonstrate how I attempt to dissect street dance culture that has diffused into East Asian cultural contexts from several different scopes, as I have mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, I will arrange this framework in the following chapters according to their topics and focuses. It is, however, notable that the scopes in the following chapters are an extension of the research and theoretical concerns built upon the various literature reviewed in this thesis as follows.

Literature Review

This review intends to narrow down the notion of 'street dance' from a somewhat larger scale picture of hip hop culture in order to underpin the research concerns of this thesis. That is to say, even though my main research target is 'street dance', an overall understanding of hip hop culture is necessary when reading this thesis. There are two related reasons to explain why this research requires an overall understanding of hip hop culture. One reason is that the existing cultural studies of hip hop have put too much weight on its musical aspects and on the lyrics of hip hop songs rather on than its forms of bodily practice (i.e., the dancing in various styles) or on the visual arts (i.e., the writing or painting of graffiti) throughout its development. After hip hop has developed for a decade, the research on hip hop culture has dazzled the eyes of scholarly studies with hip hop music. Although these studies of hip hop are in different fields such as sociology, literature, linguistics, pedagogy, journalism, anthropology, racism, gender studies and others, most of the cultural studies of hip hop confine themselves to its musical elements. What these studies have ignored is to be able to establish an overview of hip hop culture.

Known as an element of African American youth popular culture, hip hop culture was formed along waves of movement appearing in musical and dance scenes. These were mainly created by the youths from the borough of the Bronx in New York City in the 1970s. Amongst these musical scenes in the waves of movement, hip hop pioneers have created several different means of cultural expression. Like other ways of cultural expression, street dance, for example, is one of the expressions that has significant historical standing, for that the pioneer dancers have sustained the history and the knowledge meticulously. Even so, as journalist Jeff Chang pointed out, street dance is 'the least documented of hip-hop's forms, and the most likely to be decontextualized' (2006: 4). That is to say, hip hop cultural studies would have overridden the dance aspect

of hip hop, and the formation of street dance culture that converged in the waves of hip hop movements might recede from these academic discussions because of their inclinations towards musical and hermeneutic analyses of hip hop, regardless of the relationship between music and dance. My thesis asserts that there is a relationship between music and dance in hip hop culture because street dance is inseparable from dance music. Even though the music element and the dance element of hip hop (and even its other cultural elements) are different ways of expression, hip hop cultural elements such as street dance have interconnected with the music element since the emergence of hip hop. Therefore, to begin with, this chapter briefly reviews the inseparability of music and the cultural elements in hip hop as follows.

Four Fundamental Elements of Hip Hop Culture

Hip hop culture is composed of four fundamental elements—MCing, DJing, street dance and graffiti—that grew out of the art movements since the 1970s not only in the borough of the Bronx in New York City but also across the US, which results in the ambiguity of these cultural elements' terms and definitions.¹ These four hip hop elements appear in the scenes usually surrounded in a music environment with the Jamaican sound system, which plays looping percussive 'breakbeats'. Clive 'Kool DJ Here' Campbell is known for his importation of this sound system (that is, two turntables and one guitar amp) and his creation of looping the breakbeats in a funk, disco or rock music by turning two turntables. Here's creation of turning two duplicate copies of records on turntables at once to loop the breakbeats eventually

¹ This thesis uses the terms MCing, DJing, street dance and graffiti to avoid the ambiguity of their synonyms or spelling variations when referring to these four fundamental elements of hip hop culture. However, these synonyms or spelling variations are broadly used in academia and the hip hop community worldwide, and I refer to them in this thesis according to the context. The following are the variations and synonyms for reference: MCing (*emceeing, rapping, rap song* or *rap music, hip hop music*); DJing (*deejaying, disc jockeying*); street dance (*b-boying* or *b-girling, breakdancing, breakdance, hip hop dance* in their broader sense). However, note that this thesis prefers to refer to the bodily practice in hip hop as *street dance* because of its complicated formation across the US context and its conventional form of address in East Asia. For further details of these four elements and the usage of street dance synonyms, refer to Chang (2005, 90); Kugelberg *et al.* (2007: 17); Lin (2005: 11); Lin and Chuang (2003: 17); Schloss (2009: 59-61); and Wu (2009: 22-27).

turned out to be the birth of hip hop music and culture.

The term *hip hop*, as hip hop researcher Joseph F. Schloss (2009: 5) points out, refers to ‘rap music’—namely, rapping or MCing—which originates from the rhythmic oral performance of rhymes and wordplay by African Americans. This oral performance style was done over a beat and became another representative element in hip hop music apart from breakbeats. Herc’s innovation of creating looping breakbeats brought the sound to a new wave of movement that not only changed the DJ culture, but also shed light on street dance and graffiti. For example, Theodore Livingston, also known as DJ Grand Wizzard Theodore, who incorporated looping breakbeats, created the ‘scratching’ technique by ‘moving a playing record back and forth’ (Swanson 2010: n.pag.).

Likewise, as a new movement of street art, graffiti came out of hip hop culture in the late 1970s Bronx and gave birth to early graffiti writers such as notable Fab 5 Freddy and Lee Quiñones. As Lee Quiñones recalls in a talk in *Rap Is Outta Control* hosted by DJ Eclipse and DJ Riz on air, he once stopped at a scene where a DJ was jamming on the street. When he listened to the hip hop music at the scene with his bag of paints, he felt like he was ‘invincible’ that night. ‘It was a nice exchange,’ he goes on, ‘between the DJs that bring an atmosphere, a feeling just like paintings bringing with colour. [Like that] they bring a mood [...]’ (RapIsOuttaControl 2013). In other words, the paints are to the graffiti writers as the records or albums are to the DJs. Hip hop music gives graffiti writers power and makes them feel as if they are invincible and inspired when they are painting.

On the other hand, breakdance (also known as b-boying or b-girling and breaking), as a new genre of ‘street dance’ at that time, has emerged through the development of hip hop music in the Bronx as well. Breakdance and uprocking in Brooklyn, together with other funk style dances such as locking in Los Angeles, boogaloo and popping in Fresno, became street dance genres in hip hop culture in the 1970s through the broadcasting of the TV programme *Soul Train* (1971-2006). Not limited to the choreographed TV performances, street dancers may interact with the different genres of music and to specific rhythms played by the DJs in each dance scene, where ‘call and response’ functions. As Schloss analysed, the interaction in these dance scenes is ‘not simply one of the b-boys appreciating the deejays’ choices on an abstract aesthetic level’ (2009: 28). Instead, this interaction would be ‘the deejay giving the b-boys the tools to express themselves and the b-boys validating the deejays’ choices by making use of those materials’ (Schloss 2009: 28). No matter how graffiti embodies hip hop music as graphic symbols in terms of visual expression or how street dance embodies dance music as bodily movements in terms of corporal expression, it is evident and

undeniable that they are all inseparable from music. This inseparable relationship between music and other elements in hip hop culture, especially street dance, should be considered carefully. I will clarify this inseparable relationship by theorising the ‘call and response’ structure in this chapter later.

Hip Hop Research in Music and Lyrics Aspects

Since the emergence of hip hop culture, many scholarly studies have focused on the culture’s musical aspects and historical developments while examining rap lyrics hermeneutically. For example, focusing on rap music, Tricia Rose’s classic book *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994) examined the historical development of hip hop culture and demonstrated its impact on the youths. What is significant is the anticipation of many discussions about black female rappers in the final chapter of her *Black Noise* (1994: 146-82), which includes the analyses of lyrics concerning sexism and sexual politics with female rappers’ discourses. Rose’s *Black Noise* is a crucial study of hip hop as it relates to ‘rap music’—an explicit verbal expression of the culture. However, she mislaid the non-verbal, bodily expression terms of ‘dancing’ in her discussion when she brought up the music videos of these rap songs. In effect, the dance usually interacts with the lyrics in the music videos, but it usually becomes an instant and impressive image preceding the lyrics. In this sense, the hermeneutic analysis of lyrics would lack in discussing the inseparable relationship between music and dance. In order to avoid this problem, my thesis will centre upon the ‘dance’ itself while acknowledging the power of the verbal expression of hip hop.

Similar to Rose’s *Black Noise*, David Toop’s *Rap Attack* in three volumes studied the history of rap music heavily, relying on his close contact with hip hop communities. He has interviewed the pioneers of hip hop movements such as DJ and rapper Afrika Bambaataa and rapper Spoonie Gee. His last work of the trilogy *Rap Attack 3* (2000) has updated the first two volumes, *Rap Attack 1* (1984) and *Rap Attack 2* (1991). The trilogy has spanned the history of rap music from the 1970s to 1999, which covered hip hop’s genesis in the Bronx, as well as its globalised commercialisation and nostalgia for the beginning of the movement. Especially in his *Rap Attack 3* (2000), he brought up the phenomenon of the globalisation of hip hop culture. As he highlights, ‘[v]ersions of hip hop were now an established element in the cultures of France, Brazil, Spain, Germany and Japan, a liberation of local languages, a universal voice with which to air dissatisfactions with domestic politics’ (Toop 2000: xxxii). Nevertheless, Toop’s observation of the culture that is centred on the music aspects has very little historical contextualisation. Even so, the history of rap music he carefully documented is valuable material, especially the sections in which he sketched the early

developments of hip hop. By contrast, my thesis will provide an investigation of the street dance culture as it has developed in East Asian cultural contexts in order to reinforce Toop's (1991; 1994; 2000) observation of the culture in the Western hip hop communities. I will do so by examining the cultural interplay between hip hop and other cultural elements or practices in East Asian contexts.

Soki Yamashita's book *Hip Hop Resurrection: Rap Music and Christianity* (2019) studies the history and the relationship between rap music and Christianity in the US. His *Hip Hop Resurrection* has synchronised the African American youths suffering from adversity with the lyrics that provide salvation and share the same religious beliefs that are espoused in African American churches. In his counterarguments against rap music—of sexism, drug abuse, violence, antisocial, anti-religion in the religious tradition of African American churches—Yamashita argued that rap music, which turned out to be a cultural expression to speak for poverty and class consciousness, was the salvation for the African American youths of the hip hop generation. Although his work is written in Japanese, the significance of *Hip Hop Resurrection* is its attempt at providing 'cultural translation' for the understanding of hip hop in Japan and contextualising lyrics with the daily life and religious belief of the hip hop generation. Nevertheless, *Hip Hop Resurrection* also failed to cover the bodily expression of hip hop. In fact, hip hop culture arrived in Japan with the diffusion of breakdancing, but as Ian Condry (2001: 227) pointed out, 'rap albums have become more commercially successful'. On this account, Yamashita's *Hip Hop Resurrection*, as a work to provide 'cultural translation' for the understanding of hip hop in Japan, sidestepped the relationship of rap music with the street dance culture. I will thus examine Japanese hip hop transcription in Chapter 3 of my thesis to provide a more straightforward discussion of how hip hop is 'translated' or 'transcribed' in a Japanese understanding of the street dance culture from the standpoint of both music and dance.

Nationalist and Feminist Hip Hop Discourses

While Yamashita's *Hip Hop Resurrection* (2019) contextualised lyrics with the daily life and religious beliefs of the hip hop generation, some hip hop research intended to move beyond the textual analysis of lyrics and consider hip hop music as 'text' to examine the US society and tackle feminism and nationalism. For example, Charise Cheney's essay, 'In Search of the "Revolutionary Generation": (En)gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism' (2005), analysed and accused the black nationalist (male) rappers in the Golden Age of Rap from 1988 to 1993 of using homophobic and sexist language. She argued that such language in hip hop emerged against the backdrop of American history and was established

upon black nationalist rhetoric thought (Cheney 2005: 284-85). Introducing the concept of ‘rapitivist’, Cheney posited black nationalism from a different angle, in which she concludes that such language of hip hop should be revolted against although the hip hop community is still ‘in search of a revolutionary generation’ (2005: 295).² On the other hand, Layli Phillips, Kerri Reddick-Morgan and Dionne Stephens’s essay, ‘Oppositional Consciousness within an Oppositional Realm: The Case of Feminism and Womanism in Rap and Hip Hop, 1976-2004’ (2005), analyses female rappers and the lyrics from the 1970s to the early 2000s. In this essay, Phillips et al. demonstrated that female rappers had maintained ‘a dually oppositional stance’ within the culture which allowed women of colour ‘to critique the sexism of men of their same race or ethnicity’ and ‘to express solidarity with men of their same race or ethnicity’ who struggle against racism, classism, and raced sexism (2005: 255). Moreover, they argue that these female rappers’ lyrics are at ‘street level’, which redefined the perceived feminism or womanism, and they are actively expanding liberatory hopes for a broad segment of women (and men) in the hip hop universe (Phillips et al. 2005: 273).

Even though Cheney’s (2005) essay tackled ‘black nationalism’ in hip hop culture, both essays reviewed above provide feminine aspects of hip hop by examining rap song lyrics. In contrast, the argument in scholar Carla Stalling Huntington’s book chapter, ‘A Feminist Re-View of Hip Hop Dance’, in *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages* (2007) gainsaid criticism of the missing female voice in the hip hop culture with her insight into ‘street dance’ and separation of gender roles as understood or enacted by Euro American society. Besides, Matthew Ming-tak Chew and Sophie Pui Sim Mo’s essay, ‘Towards a Chinese Hip-hop Feminism and a Feminist Reassessment of Hip-hop with Breakdance: B-girling in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China’ (2019), examines hip hop feminism as it appeared on sinophonic dancefloors in East Asia. Chew and Mo demonstrated that the gender politics of today’s Chinese female street dancers assign a priority to intersectionality, which focuses not on racism, but rather, on cultural inequality (2019: 3). As they defined Chinese hip hop feminism, it is ‘a cultural, intellectual and political movement grounded in the situated knowledge of women in Chinese societies who recognise culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist and mobilise collectives to dismantle (local and global) systems of exploitation’ (Chew and Mo 2019: 3). However, they also pointed out a crucial problem in the research of Chinese hip hop—that is, ‘no existing studies on Chinese hip-hop focus on women’ (Chew and Mo 2019: 4). As such, Chew and

² ‘Rapitivist’ is a compound of ‘rap’ and ‘activist’. For a better understanding of the term ‘rapitivist’, please see Cheney (2005: 5-8).

Mo's essay constructed a signpost for understanding how a feminist assessment of hip hop was based on research on its dance culture. In this regard, drawing on Huntington's feminist observation of hip hop dance in the US cultural context, my thesis includes Chinese hip hop feminism in order to provide a timely new signpost for the studies by examining Chinese hip hop film representation of street dance (see Chapter 4).

Hip Hop Research in East Asia

While Chew and Mo's (2019) essay signposted the current movement of Chinese hip hop feminism by examining the b-girl culture in the East Asian Chinese-speaking countries, some hip hop research has explored the localisation of rap music and street dance culture in East Asian contexts. For example, street dance culture observers I-min Lin and Yuh-Lin Chuang's book chapter, 'Exploration into the Development of Youth Street Dancer in Taiwan' in *Sketch about Youth Culture: On Street Dance and Dōjinshi* (2003), written in Chinese, relies on interviews conducted with street dance peers, some of whom later became famous street dance instructors, from the late 1980s and early 2000s. In this regard, Lin and Chuang's (2003) book chapter contributes a detailed analysis of the understanding for the development of street dance culture in Taiwan, especially their observation of the 'street dance pedagogy'—as actual coursework and extra-curricular activities—on campuses and in dance studios.

Hip hop clubs in senior high schools and universities or the dance studios in Taiwan have become a new 'space' where street dance culture developed under the capitalist commodification of street dance. In updated research, Meng-Hsuan Wu's thesis, 'Black American Dream: Body Politics and Identity Yearning of Taiwan Street Dance under Globalization' (2016), pointed out this phenomenon (see Wu 2016: 93-102). Wu's (2016) thesis is a crucial study of Taiwanese street dance culture, not because she disclosed the 'identity yearning of Taiwan street dance' under globalisation but because her thesis explored how the Taiwanese perception of 'street dance' tangled with globalisation by constructing an epistemology with history depth, global political space and dancing body practice. To do so, Wu (2016) has depicted how the 'transmitting process' from the US to Taiwan occurred through global media. In her conclusion, Wu pointed out that street dance is 'political' (2016: 154). Furthermore, she asked, 'In addition to the dancers' articulation of Taiwanese identity by practising street dance, is it possible for them to contribute to the Taiwanese society and produce broader social meanings?' (Wu 2016: 152). I will seek to answer Wu's question by examining the street dance 'political' trends in today's Taiwan while providing my theoretical framework to support her assertion of the 'transmitting process' of street dance from the United States to

Taiwan (see Chapter 5).

Apart from Lin and Chuang's (2003) book chapter and Wu's (2016) thesis touching on the street dance issues in Taiwan, Hai Tang's (2020) essay and Sakari Mesimäki's (2017) essay, respectively, explored the use of 'diss' in Chinese hip hop and rap music as, as well as the masculinity in Japanese street dance culture. Both of these two essays examined the 'localisation' of hip hop. Likewise, Tang's (2020) essay examined Chinese hip hop music and its indigeneity as shown in the TV programme *Zhongguo You Xiha* (*The Rap of China*; 2017) by analysing the 'cultural translation' and the subjects of the lyrics. The 'diss', in Tang's observation of Chinese hip hop, means the lyrics that the Chinese rappers, for example, rapped in *Rap of China* to show 'a battling attitude among the contestants' (Tang 2020: 145). Although '[Chinese rappers'] rhymes may not have a huge differentiation to compare with the West', their lyrics or attitudes are 'neither aggressive nor rebellious in the same orientation' (Tang 2020: 145). Tang, hence, argued that though rap music articulated to express an aggressive 'ego' in general, in the Chinese altered hip hop culture, the 'diss' phenomena is merely performed for fun, fame and public attention, and thus failed to reach the level of political rebellion (2020: 145). In the 'diss' phenomena, he observed that the rappers would use Chinese and local dialects to connotate their rap lyrics with the local history, traditions and cultural roots, which resulted in their far-reaching transnational hip hop community. Still, Chinese hip hop turned out to be popular amongst young people and generated its fandom with a powerful social force, which accelerated the popularity of hip hop in China (Tang 2020: 146).

On the other hand, Sakari Mesimäki examined street dance culture in the Japanese context in his essay entitled "'It's Us Men Who Make Merry": Performing Masculinity in a Japanese University Hip Hop Dance Club' (2017). In his essay, Mesimäki (2017) demonstrated how young males turn into adults under the masculine Japanese *sākuru* or *bukatsu* (extra-curricular clubs) of street dance and embark on *shūkatsu* (job-hunting) before their graduation from the university. Although his research, conducted through an ethnographic approach, targeted the masculinity of extra-curricular clubs in Japanese society, Mesimäki's (2017) observation in a street dance club has disclosed how street dance culture synchronised with Japan's male-dominant society. It thus provides a reconsideration of how hip hop synchronises with 'local' cultural practices or elements under globalisation. However, such localisations of street dance—or hip hop music, as Tang (2020) examined—require an inevitable process of transcription. In this regard, the theoretical framework of my thesis, which I will develop later in this chapter, seeks to demonstrate the process of hip hop transcription in distinctive cultural contexts. These contexts include the transcribed street dance culture,

for instance, in manga and anime representation in relation to the Japanese society, as well as the film representation of hip hop in Chinese society (see Chapters 3 and 4). In other words, both Mesimäki's (2017) examination and Tang's (2020) analysis in their essays have provided my thesis with an insight into exploring the different ways of hip hop diffusion amongst the East Asian context cross-culturally.

Documentation of Street Dance

Although street dance, as I mentioned earlier, is 'the least documented of hip-hop's forms' (Chang 2006: 4), some research and sources are crucial in hip hop cultural studies. For example, writer and filmmaker Steven Hager's *Hip Hop: The Illustrated History of Break Dancing, Rap Music, and Graffiti* (1984), researcher Joseph G. Schloss's *Foundation: B-Boy's, B-girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York* (2009), and journalist Jeff Chang's *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-hop* (2006) included valuable documentation of street dance culture developed in the US. Amongst the works mainly covering hip hop with a rap music aspect, Steven Hager's *Hip Hop* (1984) documented hip hop with photography depicting the earliest appearance of street dance and graffiti, which makes his work worthy of study. Rather more academic, Schloss's (2009) study is as significant as the Bible in hip hop cultural studies because of his solid and sharp observation of the relationship between street dance styles and music genres to which the dancers dance. Through his personal engagement in street dance events and interviews with the hip hop pioneers from New York, he defines the term *hip hop* in three different but related theoretical aspects—namely, 'the hip hop culture', 'the rap music' and 'the hip hop attitude/generation' (Schloss 2009: 4-7). In his *Foundation* (2009), Schloss argued that hip hop developed from the processes of the street dancer's comprehension of feeling history in their bodies through certain dance music (2009: 41).³ In other words, Schloss's (2009) argument corresponds to Gilroy's (1993) observation of 'call and response', which my thesis will theorise by examining the street dance culture developed in the East Asian cultural contexts.

Moreover, as significant as Schloss's *Foundation* (2009), Chang's *Total Chaos* (2006) came in handy for this research as well. From a journalist standpoint, *Total Chaos* covered the four fundamental elements of hip hop culture with literature and photography. Moreover, *Total Chaos* also includes a collection of essays and roundtable conversations, in which hip hop pioneers such as street dancer Jorge

³ Also see Chapter 1 in Schloss's *Foundation* (2009) for information about the relationship between b-boying/b-girling and dance music.

'Popmaster' Pabon and graffiti artist Cey Adams discussed the art forms of hip hop. Chang's arrangement of essays, transcribed texts of discussion, and photography in this work weighed the significance of *Total Chaos* in academia. Likely, Chang's *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (2005), also resonates with his first book on hip hop. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop* (2005) is a 500-page work based on interviews that offers valuable and detailed historical reviews of hip hop culture. Even though it is a huge work both in volume and in content, Chang suggested that his work is 'a nonfiction history of a fiction' and welcomes other historical versions of hip hop (2005: 3). In fact, what he offered in both *Total Chaos* and *Can't Stop, Won't Stop* have become classic in the cultural studies of hip hop. Nonetheless, hip hop has become a popular culture genre well-known worldwide. Chang's (2005; 2006) documentations of hip hop hence turned out to be insufficient for the academia's need to discuss the globalised and commodified flowing of the culture, especially the diffused street dance, in a panoramic view. My thesis will hence borrow Chang's (2005; 2006) documentation of the culture and offer a more globalised examination of street dance in East Asian cultural contexts.

Globalised and Commodified Hip Hop

Scholarly studies of hip hop did sense and tackle the flowing of the hip hop's globalisation and commodification. Some examples are hip hop researcher Ian Condry's essay, 'A History of Japanese Hip-Hop: Street Dance, Club Scene, Pop Market', in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-hop outside the USA* edited by Tony Mitchell (2001), and scholar M. T. Kato's study *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop: Globalization, Revolution and Popular Culture* (2007). Both Condry (2001) and Kato (2007) embarked on the standpoint of globalisation and tackled the commodification of hip hop in the Japanese and US markets. Even though Condry (2001) observed that hip hop culture arrived in Japan through the circulation of 'street dance products' such as hip hop films, his essay focused on the commodified Japanese hip hop music and discussed the 'professionalism in performance' of DJ in the Japanese hip hop club scenes (2001: 235-36). As I mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, hip hop culture grew out of Afro-diasporic 'call and response' structure. In this sense, to take Mesimäki's (2017) observation of street dance culture in relation to Japanese society into account, Condry's (2001) concrete discussion of hip hop club scenes and Japanese hip hop music's commercialisation lacked the trace of how street dance culture transformed in the Japanese society. I will seek to balance my discussion of Japanese hip hop with a focus on its musical and dance aspects under globalisation in what is to follow in this thesis (see Chapter 3).

As a glimpse into the globalisation of hip hop culture, Kato's *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop* (2007) offers an insight into the interplay of Kung Fu, as a progressive representative of the popular culture, with the stylistic evolution of hip hop and the sound aesthetic of Jimi Hendrix. Although the central issue of his book is about the kinaesthetic qualities of Bruce Lee, he argued that the convergence of popular culture under globalisation might create 'an immediate sphere of freedom' (Kato 2007: 6). This argument is based on Kato's observation of the concrete connection between Kung Fu and hip hop. As Kato (2007) illustrated, this connection is in the 'body' of two distinctive cultures encountered in the 1970s when Lee's films became popular amongst the youth from New York City, intersecting with the emergence of hip hop culture. In fact, Lee's kinaesthetic awareness have inspired the b-boying, a style of street dance, as a new mode of cultural expression in hip hop.

Furthermore, Kato's (2007) argument was based on his sophisticated and passionate understanding of the life, work, and philosophy of Bruce Lee, but hip hop, especially the liaison between Kung Fu moves and b-boying, often became a secondary role in his analysis. Nevertheless, in his conclusion, Kato (2007) repositioned Bruce Lee's Kung Fu aesthetics and hip hop aesthetics under the globalised capitalistic market and aspired toward the convergence and revolution of popular cultural movements by referring to this process as a 'revolutionary carnivalesque' (2007: 207). This central argument in his conclusion strongly supported his observation of the connection between hip hop and Kung Fu. In this regard, Kato's *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop* has provided a convincing analysis of the articulation between hip hop and Kung Fu under globalisation. In other words, even though 'call and response' underlying hip hop culture might have served as an implicit mechanism to synchronise its cultural expression with the Kung Fu elements, Kung Fu and hip hop are two forces of popular cultural movements simultaneously developed in the same background and brought together under globalisation, regardless of their interaction, as Kato (2007) observed. On this account, taking a cross-cultural studies approach, my thesis will also seek to explore this interaction between hip hop and Kung Fu, but my concern will focus on the synchronisation of two distinctive cultural expressions while examining the globalisation and commodification of hip hop (see Chapter 2).

Hip hop and Kung Fu, as Kato (2007) illustrated, converged against the backdrop of the peak and de-escalation of the Black Power Movement, together with the commodification of Kung Fu films. However, the ways of their cultural expression seemingly share nothing in common. How did two distinctive cultural practices, the bodily expressions of street dance and Chinese martial arts, synchronise through 'cultural appropriation'? This is a crucial question this thesis intends to answer. To do so, I will first theorise the 'call

and response' structure that underlies the hip hop culture. Although 'call and response', also known as 'antiphony', in general, is a musical structure that manifests in the European cultural contexts, its concept observed in other cultural contexts differs from that in the West, especially in the Pan-African cultural expressions. Based on this structure, hip hop's cultural expression is capable of appropriating and synchronising the cultural practices which it encounters. As a result, drawing on Gilroy's (1993) observation of this structure, I will theorise 'call and response' in the following section to clarify its definition in my thesis and provide my understanding of hip hop culture that grew out of this structure. In this sense, unlike the literature reviewed above that is lacking the discussion of the inseparable music-dance relationship in hip hop culture, my theorisation of 'call and response' focuses on this relationship, which intends to develop a more comprehensive vision of the structure underlying hip hop culture. Besides, this theoretical framework collocates with Taylor's (1985) concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' to explain how 'call and response' function as a mechanism for synchronisation. That is to say, I will utilise Taylor's (1985) concept as a method to examine how diffused hip hop creates extensions in its cultural expression so as to synchronise with the alien local cultural practices or elements through altering its structure.

Theoretical Framework

As I mentioned above, my thesis borrows Paul Gilroy's (1993) observation of 'call and response' to develop its theoretical framework. In the following theorisation of this structure underlying hip hop culture, I will review its basic concept—namely, the inseparability of music and dance—and I will broaden the discussion of the literature reviewed above. Also, this basic concept is the first definition of 'call and response' in my thesis. Apart from the inseparability of music and dance, I define the concept of 'call and response' by showing its two conceptual characteristics. First, 'call and response' enables 'cultural appropriation' to be in process, as I have discussed earlier in this thesis's Introduction, or for there to be 'cultural interplay' between hip hop and other cultural elements, which results in altered or transformed hip hop outside the US context. This secondary characteristic appears, for instance, in Tang's (2020) discussion of Chinese hip hop, thus generating the 'diss' phenomena. However, Tang's discussion is deficient in further examination of this characteristic and its relationship to the Chinese music-dance scenes.

Second, 'call and response' corresponds to the causality and temporality of 'hip hop diffusion'. This third characteristic is an explicit phenomenon when it comes to the cross-cultural hip hop research. Some examples are Condry's (2001) discussion of Japanese hip hop, Lin and Chuang's (2003) observation of

Taiwanese street dance culture, and Chew and Mo's (2019) feminist analysis of Chinese b-girling. In other words, defining the structure as a mechanism for empowering the diffusion of hip hop complements my theorisation of 'call and response', which draws a clear distinction between my study and the literature reviewed above. In the following sections and chapters, I will enframe the discussion of globalised and commodified hip hop culture with these concepts of 'call and response' in my investigation into 'street dance' within different East Asian cultural contexts.

Needless to say, what I am about to theorise in the following section is my conceptual insight into 'call and response', rather than substantial case studies. In other words, I will use these three concepts I theorise in this chapter to investigate the social conditions in which 'call and response' functions in the musical, rhythmic and dynamic street dance scenes in the following chapters. As such, in the following section, I will begin with combing through the documentation of 'call and response' to examine its theoretical mechanism and establish my conceptual insight into this African-diasporic structure by accentuating its first characteristic of the inseparable relationship between music and dance.

Theorising 'Call and Response'

Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) has examined the inseparability of hip hop music and other cultural elements in Afro-diasporic cultural expression under the African American expressive tradition—the 'call and response' structure. In the case of black expression, 'call and response' (or 'antiphony') is a structure that has been considered 'a bridge from music into other modes of cultural expression', as Gilroy observed (1993: 78). Accordingly, this antiphonic structure enables African Americans to be 'sustained and healed and nurtured by the translation of their expression into art above all in the music' (Morrison quoted in Gilroy 1993: 78). Indeed, graffiti writings and street dance are art forms that, to borrow Morrison's (in Gilroy 1993: 78) words, are expressions of African American youths' 'translation of their expression' from music. However, in the relationship between graffiti writings and hip hop music, the 'call and response' structure scarcely becomes explicit, especially for the observers of the graffiti painting. If anything, it is more conspicuous in street dance scenes, where dance comes into sight while music plays, as Gilroy (1997) demonstrated in his later work, for example. Hence, to theorise 'call and response, I will first explore the inseparable relationship between music and street dance in this structure.

Dance critic Takao Norikoshi's introduction of street dance (or in his words, 'hip hop dance') in *Encyclopaedia of Modern Sports* (2015) particularly highlighted that hip hop music and street dance are

‘inseparable’ from each other, which corresponds to the connection between jazz music and dance (2015: 868). Norikoshi’s (2015) introduction of street dance echoed Gilroy’s (1993) observation of the ‘call and response’ structure, but how it appears in a street dance scene requires further description or image. Africana specialist Kevin Hickey’s (2010) explanation of this structure provides a clearer picture of how it functions in both African culture and African American culture. Depicting the antiphonic scenes, he writes, ‘In Africa, the conversational nature of call-and-response promotes group interaction and a respect for the individual, acknowledged through the attention given to the singer, the musician, and the dancer who “responds” to what came before’ (Hickey 2010: 175). He also embodied its structure by highlighting ‘the inseparability of African dance and music as indicated by *ngoma*’—a word that not only means ‘song’ and ‘dance’ but also signifies ‘drum’ in Swahili, as well as many other African languages (Hickey 2010: 175). Through the lexical analysis of *nogma* in Swahili, Hickey (2010: 175) exemplified his insight into ‘call and response’ with the scenes such as African American churches where ‘ring dances’ or ‘ring shouts’ manifest, and the cultural expressions outside the church such as the African American music genres of jazz and blues. In this sense, hip hop and street dance might also embody this ‘conversational nature’, as Hickey (2010: 175) illustrated the structure. ‘The protean manifestations of call-and-response attest to its continuing value in promoting vitality through the give-and-take between spiritual and physical, oral and instrumental, prescribed and improvised, society and individual’ (Hickey 2010: 175-76). Therefore, ‘street dance’ developed from ‘call and response’ is a set of dual cultural expressions comprising inseparable music and dance.

Likewise, by theorising how sound offers a dynamic model of thinking to be expressed through bodily practices for communication in the reggae sound systems of the dance hall sessions, researcher Julian Henriques’s *Sonic Bodies* (2011) also resonates with what Gilroy (1993) and Hickey (2010) explain about ‘call and response’ structure. He has borrowed Puerto Rican Sociologist Ángel G. Quintero Rivera’s observation about music and dance in the Caribbean to support his theory:

In the Caribbean, before the word, in the beginning it was the drum, rhythm, and movement. In the complex conditions of “encounter” among “migrants” speaking diverse languages, music and dance preceded the first “discourses.” The contribution of socio-cultural identities for Caribbean peoples has been inextricably linked to our sonic forms of expression and communication. (quoted in Henriques 2011: 11)

This observation has not only revealed the structural relationship amongst music, drum or rhythm, and dance, but it has also proved the communicativeness of the ‘call and response’ structure. But what is more

significant is the observation of reggae sound systems in Henriques's work. This is because reggae gave birth to hip hop in terms of its music aspect, and that dancehall has become one of the genres in street dance culture.

When comparing music of the Caribbean to that of Africa, ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik's (1979) view on the movement pattern of African music not only confirmed this inseparable relationship between music and dance, but also explained how the sonic result of African music rhythm pattern cooperates with the 'movement pattern'.

The *body* of the musician or dancer absorbs these patterns until they act as conditioned reflexes, and when they occur externally they immediately produce an inner response just like a reflex. If one has learned to know African music in this way it is very difficult to sit still when one hears it and to suppress an inner response in the sense described. The affective response to the perception of such patterns takes place after the fashion of a reflex. One starts spontaneously to dance. (1979: 228)

Kubik's explanation of this relationship also indicates how the 'call and response' structure functions in a street dance scene because street dance also developed from such an African music rhythm and movement pattern. This is why street dancers dance spontaneously once they learn to follow the rhythms (often the drum beats) in a musical dance scene where the 'call and response' structure manifests.

Furthermore, African American dance specialist Thomas DeFrantz (2004) also explained how the 'call and response' structure functions by extending Paul Gilroy's observation of the structure in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), together with Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). DeFrantz writes accordingly to Gilroy, '[a]ntiphony works best in physical intimacy, in a circle where all can see the other dancers across the way' (2004: 198). This antiphonic circle of the dance is permissive: 'it protects and permits [...]. There are no limits—inside the circle' (Fanon quoted in DeFrantz 2004: 197). As a result, many African American cultural historians believe that African-diasporic dance styles encompass only social dance (DeFrantz 2004: 197). Perhaps this is because 'the circular realm of the social', as in DeFrantz's words, only permits those who know how to respond to what came before within the antiphonic circle. However, DeFrantz has attempted to disclose further possibilities of the 'opened circles' on the stage. When the dance circle is 'open', the change in the circle is perhaps not a loss but rather, a gain or an opportunity 'to document performance and its vital impact on culture in re/formation' (DeFrantz 2004: 199). In this sense, DeFrantz's (2004) argument has tried to amplify the 'call and response' structure, which Gilroy (1993) has theorised, and to switch his observation of dance from an improvised form to a performative form in terms of cultural

expression.

No matter how DeFrantz (2004) put it, his argument, like the equivalent findings of such cultural expression in the studies of Kubik (1979), Hickey (2010) and even Henriques (2011), still relied on the precondition when the inseparability of dance and music manifests in an African-diasporic form of cultural expression. That is, this precondition seems to be in a maelstrom, where the ‘call and response’ structure becomes entangled in an African essentialist convolution. This African essentialist convolution is often tendentious to emphasise the origins of any ‘African American culture.’ Undeniably, African-diasporic ‘call and response’ has become a basic essential structure forming any ‘African American culture’, including hip hop culture. Nevertheless, after ‘call and response’ travelled to the New World with Black slavery coming from different parts of the African continent, the so-called ‘African American culture’ that developed from ‘call and response’ has already become a hybrid culture. This diasporic hybrid culture has further developed into different forms of cultural expression by responding to the local elements in the Americas. The development of this culture progressed, which resulted in the birth of hip hop in the 1970s. Hip hop had come to the conjuncture when its (dance) music and street dance elements were commodified as ‘products’ and began to diffuse into other cultural contexts from the 1980s under globalisation. Hence, the notion of ‘call and response’ requires a redefinition under this conjuncture.

*

On this account, my thesis attempts to theorise and redefine the term ‘call and response’ in three different aspects, which—although they do overlap—are distinguishable from each other semantically. In the first sense of this term, ‘call and response’ refers collectively to the inseparability of music and dance in either a live street dance scene or one that is represented in different media, in which visual, sound and bodily movements—whichever comes first—can ‘call’ and ‘respond’ to one another repeatedly. To some degree, this sense is quite similar to the previous observation of the ‘call and response’ structure in hip hop, but what I want to elaborate on is its dance aspect and relation with music in street dance scenes. These street dance scenes, for example, can be an ongoing street dance battle on a dance floor, or a street dance choreography practised in a dance studio, and even a dance routine performed or represented in a TV show, film, manga, anime, along with other media representation.⁴

⁴ The inseparability of music and dance in a manga representation is somewhat problematic in this sense, in that the bodily practices of street dances are assumed to be more explicit in such representation. However,

Usually as a set of percussive rhythms or a sequence of bodily movements, a ‘call’—although it might be a ‘response’ to what came before, too—provokes one into making a ‘response’ in two ways: One way to respond is by mimicking the sequence of bodily movements made in the previous ‘call’. It is the first step for some street dancers of learning the foundations of a specific dance style. The second way to respond to the ‘call’ would be more advanced, expressive and creative. That is, in most cases, a street dancer will respond to the ‘call’ with their *swagga* (i.e., their swagger, signature or ‘unique style or personality’) by improvised dance moves based on the percussive rhythms of the music they heard, the foundation of a dance style, other elements such as the lyrics of the song played at the scene, which they would contextualise with their personal experiences or feelings, and so on. Either way, this ‘response’ will immediately become another ‘call’ again to ensure the ‘call and response’ structure functions, notwithstanding that it might also fail to ‘call’ for another ‘response’ in some cases.

In such a street dance scene where ‘call and response’ functions, when street dancers ‘respond’ to a ‘call’ with improvisational bodily movements, they might create the ‘response’ unintentionally with inadequate performance of a certain set of dance routines, which would become inefficacious in terms of being able to respond to the ‘call’ came before. Nevertheless, this phenomenon would not terminate the operation progress of ‘call and response’, and it can still be a ‘call’ to provoke another ‘response’ if another ‘call’ has not yet come into the scene. No matter how and where the calls and responses are carried on, the way that music and dance are inseparably related is like the hint of ‘Two Sisters Riddle’ given by the Sphinx in *Oedipus*: ‘There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first.’ If this riddle were to be solved from the sense of street dance culture, then the answer would be ‘call and response’ instead of ‘day and night’. Like the length of day and night that changes every single day within a year, the embodiment of ‘call and response’ in a street dance scene differs according to how music and dance—and even other contextualised elements—are recognised, responded to, represented or cited by the street dancers. Meanwhile, the ‘call’ should not be mistaken as a cause of ‘response’, whereas the ‘response’ should not be understood as a result of ‘call’. Instead, as I mentioned above, ‘call and response’ begins *in medias res* as it

how music and dance in hip hop culture are represented in Japanese manga has turned out to be unique and interpretive. Chapter 3 in this thesis, hence, will have a closer exploration of ‘call and response’ in Japanese street dance scenes and its representation in manga and anime to unfold the argument that street dance diffuses into manga and anime through this Afro-diasporic ‘call and response’ structure.

opens with a preceding inspiration. In any case, the inseparability of music and dance is the most basic but crucial concept, which my thesis utilises to examine a street dance scene.

The second sense of the term ‘call and response’ refers to the deed of ‘cultural appropriation’ generating various (altered) street dance styles in waves of the formation of hip hop culture. Besides, as I have foregrounded in the Introduction, hip hop’s (re)appropriation of the ‘communicative drumming’ in black cultural expression corresponds to its redefinition of the ‘street’ that it occupies and extends with music and dance. This ‘call and response’ resulted from the cross-cultural engagement with some cultural elements, such as rock and funk music, Christian hymns, Native American war dances, Afro-Brazilian martial art *Capoeira* and Chinese Kung Fu, which has converged in the US cultural context. To take Chinese martial arts for example again, its bodily practices in Kung Fu films played in the theatres in Time Square are ‘calls’ for African American youths, and their ‘responses’ to these bodily practices have transformed into some dance moves of breakdance, a style of street dance established in the borough of the Bronx in New York City. In this sense of ‘call and response’, the appropriation of other cultural elements ought to be distinguished from the mechanism of this structure that enables street dancers to create their personal styles upon the foundation of a street dance style. Instead, the deed of ‘cultural appropriation’ embedded in ‘call and response’ contrives to dialogue and synchronise with other cultural elements and treat them equally with respect, stemming from how ‘call and response’ functions as a device for any form of cultural expression in the pre-existing African-diasporic hybrid cultures developed in the Americas. From this standpoint, street dance culture formed under the ‘call and response’ structure is undeniably an African-diasporic hybrid culture. Furthermore, where there is ‘call and response’ functioning in a street dance scene, it would be the ‘street’ where hip hop takes control.

Although it is a commonplace belief that ‘street dance’ is an African American youth culture, the fact that hip hop culture developed from ‘cultural appropriation’ is also beyond doubt. Some aggressive African essentialist discourses have ignored the fact that the base of ‘call and response’ in a street dance scene has begun with ‘mimicry’, and that a dancer’s authority for claiming the copyright of personal style or the origin of a dance style came after many cultural appropriations. An example is the debate about whether breakdance has or has not grown out of the Afro-Brazilian martial arts *Capoeira*. This debate turned out to be a Gordian knot because there are conflicting viewpoints amongst not only hip hop observers, but also among street dance pioneers. Some sided with the camp which denies that breakdance partially grew out of *Capoeira*, such as what Banes (1994: 128) commented on the breakdance and *Capoeira* performance

she saw, and what b-boy Crazy Legs has stated directly, ‘We didn’t know what the fuck no capoeira was, man. We were in ghetto! There were no dance schools, nothing [...]’ (quoted in Chang 2005: 116).

On the other hand, some sided with the camp which posits that *Capoeira* has given birth to breakdance. Researcher Damien Morgan, for example, supported the assumption that ‘breakdancing can have its origins in capoeira’ (2008: 28). However, either supporters or opponents of this assumption have ignored a fact. Namely, it is not a single racial, ethical, cultural inheritance but a collective number of ‘cultural appropriations’ embedded in repeated ‘calls and responses’ that has formed breakdance. Were breakdance to be composed of the Afro-Brazilian martial art *Capoeira*, it would only be one of the cultural elements that breakdance appropriated. Meanwhile, it is not surprising to find that breakdance and *Capoeira* share similar bodily movements since both of their bodily practices have derived from the ‘call and response’ structure. To drive away from the breakdance-*Capoeira* debate, it is worth emphasising that street dance developed out of this sense of ‘call and response’ has turned out to be compatible and shareable in hip hop culture.

Finally, under the condition that street dance can travel, I theorise that ‘call and response’ is a concept that refers to the diffusion of hip hop and the possibilities of extension in street dance’s bodily, cultural expression outside the US context. As a reverse of its second sense, this sense of ‘call and response’ is evoked by the ‘globalisation,’ ‘commodification’ ‘production’ or ‘circulation’ of street dance, but it results in extending the boundaries of street dance culture in several layers. That is to say, when street dance developed out of cultural appropriations ‘travels’—or to be more concrete, ‘calls’—as a cultural product from the US, the ‘responses’ with other (cultural) elements tend to extend the definitions of street dance that have been established so far, regardless of where street dance diffuses. It is important to notice that ‘call and response’ is not limited to a concept of geographical dissemination. Instead, ‘call and response’ corresponds to the diffusion of hip hop in non-geographical scopes, where the possibilities of street dance’s bodily cultural expression extend in spaces, popular culture genres, gender discourses, altered forms of dance styles and the gentrification of dance rituals such as dance battles. Through the diffusion of hip hop, ‘call and response’ is displaced from one context to another, whose cultures or standpoints are to some degree distinctive or at odds. In this regard, it is clear that the displacement of hip hop, at its best, enables street dance to encounter new elements and extend its boundaries further. Even though hip hop does diffuse and street dance does travel as cultural products without doubt, this conceptual characteristic of ‘call and response’, which I intended to theorise, needs further examination. My thesis thus attempts to attest this conceptual

characteristic of ‘call and response’ by exploring the ‘geographically’ diffused hip hop culture, together with its ‘non-geographic’ diffusion into media representations and social conditions in East Asian cultural contexts.

Taken all together in general, the three ways of how the ‘call and response’ structure functions—‘inseparability of music and dance,’ ‘cultural appropriation’ and ‘diffusion of hip hop’ or ‘extension in boundaries of street dance’—in street dance culture overlap, but they are also different in some degrees. Imbricating three conceptual aspects of ‘call and response’ as I theorised above, my thesis attempts to explore the diffusion of hip hop in different scopes in what is to follow. The methodology proposed below is necessary in order to examine how street dance synchronises with new cultural elements when it travels or diffuses into an unfamiliar cultural context, space, or social condition and how its extension proceeds under the ‘call and response’ structure.

Methodology

As I have theorised ‘call and response’ by reviewing its pre-existing observation and redefining conceptual characteristics of this structure above, I intend to clarify the methodology and the approach that my thesis take to examine and reappraise ‘call and response’ in the street dance culture, especially that in the East Asian cultural contexts as follows.

Comparative Cultural Studies Approach

This thesis takes a comparative cultural studies approach to dissect the street dance culture that diffuses into East Asian contexts and also to reappraise ‘call and response’ in the three senses. The bases of investigation in this thesis include previous academic studies, journalist’s writings such as newspaper and magazine articles, unstructured in-depth interviews with several street dancers from East Asia countries, as well as my observation of East Asian street dance scenes. Also, the investigation in this thesis covers the representations of hip hop and street dance scenes in manga, anime, films (including documentaries), and even the representation and discourses in video clips on the Internet. Those bases provide indispensable materials for this study to reveal the historical and contemporary situations of street dance, examine its transformation in dance scenes and events, and demonstrate how the processes of ‘call and response’ work in the East Asian street dance culture. Amongst these materials, the interviews with street dancers and the author’s observation of East Asian street dance scenes, in an ethnographic sense, are indispensable to

understand how and to what extent ‘call and response’ functions in processes, and how street dance culture develops in East Asian cultural contexts.

Meanwhile, drawing on the concept of ‘representation’ proposed by Stuart Hall (2003), this thesis explores street dance from not only the ‘real world’ but also from the perspective of ‘media representations’. Hall states, ‘there *is* a real world outside representation but we can only make it signify and “mean” through representation. Moreover, representations are not reflexive but *constitutive* and therefore have a real, material impact’ (see Procter 2004: 125).⁵ Therefore, the representations of hip hop and street dance scenes in the fruitful representations of different media genres—such as those in films, manga and anime—are also important materials to analyse together with the literature and the ‘ethnographic’ investigation in this study. Together, I use these materials to explore how genres of street dance (non-)fiction, as cultural products, participated in the production and circulation of cultural meanings and eventually extend the boundaries of street dance culture.

However, in relation to the diffusion of hip hop, the synchronisation of hip hop and other cultural elements triggered by the ‘call and response’ structure is a complex process, that to some degree which might turn out to not necessarily be adequate to consider that the ‘hip hop syncretism’ is universal. To avoid this bias, my thesis calls for a comparative cultural studies approach to the cultural practice of ‘call and response’ that has developed in the East Asian street dance scenes, and it hence requires a method to observe this cultural practice and answer the questions as follows. How and to what extent can hip hop’s cultural expression synchronise with other alien cultural elements through ‘call and response’ when it diffuses? In other words, how does ‘call and response’ work to extend the boundaries of street dance when it encounters alien cultural elements? Finally, why is there a certain distinction between, for instance, French hip hop and Japanese hip hop, if hip hop culture has taken and synchronised with these alien cultural materials to produce a fusion of different cultural expressions wherever and whenever it diffused?

To answer these questions, my thesis assumes that the synchronisation of hip hop with alien cultural elements through its diffusion is definitely not a single means of translation or appropriation; instead, it would be a process of the transcriptions or extensions in the self-definition and self-understanding of two

⁵ This thesis conducts the concept of ‘representation’ from *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Hall 2003), which has carefully combed how cultural studies pioneered by Stuart Hall elaborated this concept.

different cultural practices at the same time. In this regard, philosopher Charles Taylor's (1985) concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' might be adaptable. Hence, in the following section, I intend to utilise Taylor's (1985) concept to elaborate on my assumption and establish the methodology of this thesis.

Concept of "a Language of Perspicuous Contrast" Applied as Method

Taylor's essay, 'Understanding and ethnocentricity' (1985) argued that a cross-cultural theory in social science taking an interpretive or *verstehen* view usually ended up with two common errors in social science: assuming that we can represent an alien culture by 'attempting to operate in some neutral "scientific" language' without taking its self-description into account; or 'taking these descriptions with ultimate seriousness', which might result in becoming 'incorrigible' (1985: 123-24). Although the writing in his essay is precisely limited in the case of the relationship between the social scientist and anthropological subjects, Taylor's (1985) argument offers, in this thesis, an insight into creating a new standpoint to examine the synchronisation of hip hop and other cultural elements, which avoids considering hip hop culture as 'ours', and the cultural elements the culture encountered as 'theirs', as in Taylor's (1985: 125) words.⁶ Otherwise stated, his attempt is to theorise how two confronting, different groups of people challenge and extend their self-definitions to understand one another. He writes and proposes:

It will almost always be the case that the adequate language in which we can understand another society is not our language of understanding, or theirs, but rather what one could call a language of perspicuous contrast. This would be a language in which we could formulate both their way of life and ours as alternative possibilities in relation to some human constants at work in both [...]. Such a language of contrast might show their language of understanding to be distorted or inadequate in some respects, or it might show ours to be so [...]. (1985: 125)

What Taylor described here as 'adequate language' is not a language based on any specific group of people that will be merged, hybridised or melded together with others'. Nor is it one to be confused with the situation to be in one's shoes so as to understand another society. Instead, it is a language that is not always adequate

⁶ I will demonstrate how this thesis utilises Taylor's (1985) concept and Gilroy's (1993) observation of 'call and response' to construct the methodology for my analyses of diffused street dance culture and its altered bodily expression by providing a better understanding of Taylor's (1985) essay, especially in Chapters 3 and 4. See these two chapters for details.

yet can be extendible and compatible as an inevitable result.

Drawing on Taylor's (1985) concept here, it is obvious that the embodiment of the 'call and response' structure underlying the inseparable relationship between music and dance in hip hop culture as a mechanism for cultural expression, to the extent of the street dance's diffusion into East Asian cultural contexts, is in 'perspicuous contrast' with the unfamiliar cultural practices or social conditions. In this sense, street dance or other cultural expressions of hip hop would challenge hip hop's self-definition in East Asian cultural contexts and turn out to be compatible and extendible. Behind the diffusion of hip hop, what my thesis aspires to explore is not how street dance moves 'merge' with Taiwanese Indigenous dance moves, nor how *yosakoi*—a Japanese dance style formed with traditional Japanese dance moves and modern music—'hybridised' Japanese folk dance with hip hop elements without taking the danger of ethnocentricity into account. Instead, what this thesis intends to take notice of is to what extent street dance culture turned out to be extendible and compatible in East Asian contexts, by looking at, for example, the story of how Taiwanese street dancers such as Che-ke (哲哥) and Mu (阿穆) of dance crew ABC, Gino (柏青) of TBC or Japanese dancer Yoshibow of Be-Bop Crew have penetrated street dance culture since the arrival of hip hop. These stories have unfolded through a 'perspicuous contrast' to their understanding of street dance. Most of these street dancers came across street dance merely by mimicking the dance moves from VHS tapes through the circulation of films like *Breakin'* (1984) or personal recording of dance performances. Neither understanding hip hop culture nor its ethos, they simply mimicked the dance moves from those videotapes and showcased them either in public spaces or on TV programmes. Although it might be true that the fundamental notion of 'call and response' functioned through 'mimicking', entirely copying others' *swagga* would become inadequate.

Amongst the 'mimicking' of recorded dance routines, Yoshibow, for example, challenged his self-understanding to extend his dance skills and the understanding of the street dance culture. Eventually, as Taiwanese dancer Terry Lin pointed out in our interview, Yoshibow developed his style by propounding an 'up-and-down training method', offering the street dance instructors a new vision on how to give lessons.⁷

⁷ Terry mentioned his connection with locker Ryūji Naitō, whose younger brother is a member of lockdance crew J-SOOS, in my Skype interview on 31 October 2015. With this connection, Terry also had much contact with lockers Hanai and U.U of dance crews Style of Old Skool (SOOS) and Hanai Shinji (花井伸二), which are the lineages of dance crew Be-Bop Crew led by eminent Japanese lockers such as Yoshibow and Yoshie.

The birth of Yoshibow's training method is a case that demonstrates the extendibility of the diffused street dance culture. Furthermore, it also testifies what Taylor (1985) delineated as the concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' as follows.

[The] way in which understanding another society can make us challenge our self-definition. It can force us to this, because we cannot get an adequate explanatory account of them until we understand their self-definition, and these may be different enough from ours to force us to extend our language of human possibilities. (1985: 131)

In other words, Yoshibow has generated his 'up-and-down training method' through his understanding of street dance's self-definition. The training method he founded was designed to help his Japanese students to comprehend the rhythm of dance music better and to be able to catch up with its grooves or flows. In this regard, Yoshibow's method is a way in which he was challenged to understand 'street dance'. Eventually, his method turned out to extend or articulate the possibilities to the extent of street dance's pedagogy. Besides, as Terry mentioned, this method is applicable not only in Japan but also in China and Taiwan. It is also possible to travel even further to where street dance diffuses and where cultural appropriation occurs. In other words, Yoshibow's method turned out to be an explicit example that embodies Taylor's (1985) concept, in the sense that the language (i.e., the bodily expression) or possibilities of 'street dance' were challenged to extend. This thesis, hence, borrow Taylor's 'perspicuous contrast' concept to theorise how street dance diffuses and is diffused into different contexts, especially in some East Asian cases, through the 'call and response' structure.

Drawing on the theoretical framework and the methodology developed so far, my thesis embarks from the anatomy of street dance formed in the US cultural context while deconstructing the unbreakable 'Bruce Lee legend' in hip hop culture grew out of the 'call and response' structure, which enacts 'cultural appropriation' and synchronisation of different cultural elements under globalisation. However, it is notable that this 'synchronisation' is not that the Afro-diasporic expressive bodily practices—namely, street dance—merely merged with Kung Fu moves. Rather, it is a process of extensions in cultural expression of hip hop and other cultural elements, which are in 'perspicuous contrasts'. In other words, this is a process of hip hop culture reaching out to dialogue with elements of Kung Fu bodily practice through 'call and response'. On the basis of my theoretical framework and methodology mentioned above, the following chapters unfold to explore the diffusion of hip hop and street dance culture.

CHAPTER 2

‘Bruce Lee Legend’ and Kung Fu Influence in Hip Hop Culture: Dissection of ‘Hip Hop Dance’ through an Aspect of Chinese Martial Arts

Introduction

This chapter examines how hip hop synchronised two modes of cultural expression—namely, the ‘hip hop dance’ and Chinese martial arts (of Bruce Lee)—in the sense of ‘cultural appropriation’ functioning in the ‘street dance’ senses in New York City, simultaneously deconstructing the unbreakable ‘Bruce Lee legend’ in the hip hop culture. I begin to dissect ‘street dance’ from one of its developmental waves in the US—that the street dance culture appropriated Kung Fu elements. Although this chapter mainly focuses on the ‘hip hop dance’ developed in the Bronx borough of New York City, my insight into ‘hip hop dance’ and its relationship towards Chinese Kung Fu and Bruce Lee clings to the diffusion of hip hop into East Asian contexts. That is, the styles of ‘hip hop dance’ in this chapter are more well-known as ‘uprocking’ and ‘breaking’ (or ‘b-boying’) in most East Asian contexts such as China, Japan and Taiwan. In these contexts, hip hop practitioners use ‘street dance’ as an umbrella term, just as the US media coverage mentions the dance styles developed in the waves of hip hop cultural movement. Meanwhile, ‘hip hop’ in street dance culture in East Asian contexts more often refers to ‘freestyle’, a dance style derived from ‘new jack swing’ (dance) developed after hip hop music commenced in the US.

The reason why the term ‘street dance’ or ‘hip hop dance’ is ambiguous and may refer to several dance styles is that the dance culture developed in waves of cultural movements scattered around in the US since the 1970s with several different modes of cultural expression such as rapping, DJing and graffiti writing which became the aesthetics of hip hop as it is known today. Although the aesthetics of hip hop joined with several waves of cultural movements, they are inseparable due to the fundamental Afro-diasporic ‘call and response’ structure underlying hip hop culture. According to Gilroy’s observation in his *Black Atlantic* (1993), ‘call and response’ would effectuate a shift of black aesthetic from music (or rhythms, to be exact) to other modes of cultural expression (1993: 78). In effect, what the ‘call and response’ structure enables is not a one-directional shift from music to another mode of expression only, but a reversible and repeated shift amongst several modes of cultural expression. This structure empowers hip hop culture to appropriate or synchronise other cultural practices with its own so as to ‘regenerate’ its cultural expression.

Hence, despite the Afro-diasporic origin of ‘call and response’ underlying American hip hop culture, hip hop is shareable, and it transcends race and nationalism. My purpose in this chapter is to provide a chance for hip hop studies to reposition the essence of the culture and to reconsider whether or not its African essentialist discourse is still effective when hip hop diffuses and becomes shareable around the world. Instead of claiming that hip hop belongs to a specific group of people or to a certain race, this chapter seeks to reappraise the shareability of hip hop aesthetics, no matter whether what is shared are their art forms or their social meanings and cultural memories. This is because hip hop culture developed through waves of art movements, which followed the civil rights movement and Black Power movement and was led by the oppressed individuals who were fighting against discrimination based on class and race (see Collins 2006: 3). Besides, its art forms have grown out of the collections of their cultural expressions which have given utterance to the struggles, by referencing, for example, Bruce Lee and his Kung Fu moves and philosophy in some cases that this chapter describes. In this regard, this article also borrows Stuart Hall’s (2019) concept of ‘the West and the Rest’ to emphasise that the formation of hip hop culture is due to the encounter of different cultures that have converged in the US, including ‘Western’ (Euro American) culture, Afro-diasporic expressive culture and East Asian cultures (the ‘Rest’). Examining the Kung Fu alterations in hip hop dance formed in the Bronx, the chapter hence unfolds into two main sections. First, apart from the films starring Bruce Lee or those Kung Fu movies released in the US during the 1970s, this chapter explores what close resemblance we can find between the Kung Fu moves in the films in general and (today’s) hip hop dance, to the extent of their forms that may articulate the ‘Bruce Lee legend’. Second, by tracing the histories and the development of hip hop back, it also explains how and why hip hop exchanged cultural elements and practices with Kung Fu to amplify its cultural expression in hip hop dance.

Exploring Kung Fu in Hip Hop Culture

In the 1970s, when the ‘Kung fu craze’ hit North America, African American and ethnic minority youths, who led new waves of movement following the civil rights movement in the 1960s, developed hip hop culture in the US. Hip hop comprises four main cultural elements—DJing, MCing, hip hop dance (or street dance) and graffiti—which grew out of Afro-diasporic cultural expression through repeated ‘cultural appropriations’ of cultural elements and practices that became involved in the movements. The ‘cultural appropriation’ of Bruce Lee’s Chinese martial arts performance in Kung Fu films, as a result, explicitly manifests either in rap song lyrics or in hip hop dance forms.

For example, Wu-Tang Clan, an American hip hop group formed in 1992, shaped their ethos through appropriating Kung Fu elements on purpose for that their group name ‘Wu-Tang Clan’ refers to *wudang*, a Taiji sect that appeared in Chinese Kung Fu novels from the late Qing period and even the film adaptations since the 1970s. Besides, Wu-Tang Clan sampled elements from Kung Fu films in their rap songs. They sampled and remixed several conversations taken from Cheh Chang’s *Five Deadly Venoms* (1978), Kuo-Ren Wu’s *Wu Tang vs. Ninja* (1983) and Woo-ping Yuen’s *The Iron Monkey* (1977) as a prologue in their rap song ‘Intro (Shaolin Finger Jab) / Chamber Music’ (2000):

I must tell you that the Clan is a danger to the public [...]. But still for many men just to hear of the name fills them with hate and loathing. / But why? They’ve never harmed anyone. / I’m afraid they did, in the past [...]. / There’s something that I would like you to do. First, I’ll tell you about their styles, the poison clan techniques, the five main styles [...]. / Shaolin finger jab! [...]¹

Sampling these lines from Kung Fu films seems inexplicable, but as RZA, a member of the hip hop collective Wu-Tang Clan, explained, these lines from ‘Intro’ (2000) sampled in the rap song represents their life experiences. ‘People were scared of us,’ said RZA. In fact, some of the members served hard prison time, and ‘[t]his sample reflects that mind state’ (RZA quoted in Leckart 2007: n.pag.). Hip hop grew out of the social inequality, economic disparity, cultural diversity and divisions in the US during the 1970s through waves of the social movement opposing class discrimination and racism. On the other hand, Kung Fu or Chinese martial arts served as a ‘weapon’ for rappers to shift their thinking to fight against their adversities.

Likewise, the aesthetics of hip hop, in terms of its bodily movement, embodied the fighting prowess that Kung Fu ensured. Before hip hop became known around the country, Chang-hwa Jeong’s *Five Fingers of Death* (1973), starring Lo Lieh, was a big hit in New York City amongst street gangs (Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Although it was the first Kung Fu film released in the US, it soon became a craze amongst teenagers. It is especially important to note that the gangsters started to dance like the Kung Fu moves performed by the actors in the film. The mimicry of Kung Fu moves in the early street dance battles shaped part of the forms of dance styles such as ‘uprocking’ and ‘breaking’ (see Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Moreover, in 1973, the delayed release of Raymond Chow’s *The Big Boss* (a.k.a *The Fists of Fury*; 1971) in the US also brought

¹ Leckart’s (2007: n.pag.) interview with RZA demonstrated that Wu-Tang Clan’s rap songs sampled the lines from several Kung Fu films. Also note that the sources of the lines and the quotation here are based on the interview.

Kung Fu film to another new perspective. The film starring Bruce Lee became an overnight sensation after its release, receiving critical acclaim. Despite his early death, Lee's kinaesthetic qualities of Chinese martial arts in the Kung Fu films created a boom in the US. Like the rappers adding Kung Fu punch lines to their lyrics, street dancers also began to create their personal dance styles by altering Kung Fu moves. Both Bruce Lee and the Kung Fu moves thus became legends within the hip hop community.

In the case of both music and dance, the appropriation of (Bruce Lee's) Chinese martial arts in Kung Fu movies did extend the possibilities of hip hop's cultural expression. Nevertheless, the nexus between Chinese martial arts and hip hop was not the corollary of their contact. The appropriation of Kung Fu elements in hip hop culture unfolded in the conjunction of the peak and de-escalation of the Black Power Movement, as well as did the commodification of Kung Fu films in the 1970s US. At that moment in time, the waves of hip hop's art movement had just begun in the wake of the chaos in which wounded Black Power institutions disintegrated into gangs after Martin Luther King Jr's assassination. As Newkirk (2018: n.pag.) argued, 'King's assassination provided the necessary conditions for hip-hop to spring forth from the blood of generations that had spilt in street after street'. One of the approaches that hip hop took was to articulate its cultural expression with martial arts practices to the extent of self-defence. On that account, Kung Fu films and Bruce Lee's performance suited the taste of hip hop while becoming more and more popular in the US. Even the youths and gangsters suffering from the destruction of black inner-city life would go to the kung fu movies (see Pellerin 2007; n.pag). Given birth amid the chaos, hip hop turned out to be a 'provocative and dangerous, innovative, flexible, and accommodating' counterculture (Newkirk 2018: n.pag.). Eventually, that hip hop dance synchronised with Kung Fu moves seems merely appropriating the most popular cultural elements during its nascence.

However, in his *From Kung Fu to Hip Hip* (2007), M. K. Kato has provided his insight into the how Bruce Lee's Kung Fu moves, hip hop's ways of expression and rock musician Jimi Hendrix's sound aesthetic appeared as 'a representative of the popular cultural revolution' that created a sphere of freedom which channels and empowers the oppressed voice of individuals (2007: 6). Furthermore, he added:

Thus the millenium sees the signs of convergence of global popular movements and the popular cultural revolution—which hitherto have existed primarily as a parallel universe—on the plateau of revolutionary “carnavalesque.” The eros and passion of revolution released by the convergence enables a temporal, spatial, spiritual, and ontological mass exodus to an alternative society. Such convergence and realization of revolutionary carnivalesque, however, depends on the ceaseless

pursuit of creativity and singularity both on individual and collective levels, which is the very driving force of evolution as hip hop and *Jeet Kune Do* aesthetics exemplify. (Kato 2007: 207)

Drawing on Kato's (2007: 6; 207) assertion, instead of merely sampling, hip hop in alliance with Kung Fu through synchronisation, I argue, could strengthen both of their forces 'as a progressive representative of the popular cultural revolution' and be more powerful to regenerate hip hop's expression of rebellion and 'speak' for itself against the race and class inequalities. As I will present later in this thesis, Chinese martial arts and Bruce Lee's Kung Fu performance shared the same characteristics with hip hop culture and, in particular, its dance styles. In this regard, my analyses go beyond the close resemblance of 'hip hop dance' and Kung Fu moves. Also, I will articulate Kung Fu's percussive fighting prowess and the stylish embodiment of rhythms in hip hop dance, as well as the shared philosophy in two cultures, whose ways of expression are in 'perspicuous contrast' by adopting Charles Taylor's (1985) theory, as I referred to previously.²

The debate of the fusion of Kung Fu moves in hip hop dance is indeed controversial. As Newkirk highlights, 'the question of the birth of hip-hop is a contentious one—as are all questions concerning the geneses of art forms—and full of rich debate on cultural touchstones, waves of influences, geography, visual art and dance, and stories of intrepid pioneers' (2018: n.pag.). Yet, without a doubt, the 'Bruce Lee legend' remains as firm as mountains in the hip hop community. It is because, on the surface, Bruce Lee was definitely 'the best-known nonwhite action hero' but appears as an underdog, who eventually 'conquered oppression' (see Hewitt 2008: 269; Schloss 2009: 52). Still, I am curious why Bruce Lee is a figure that the hip hop practitioners worship so much. Since even the Kung Fu films that Wu-Tang Clan, for instance, rapped about in their songs are not limited to those starring Bruce Lee nowadays, what essential illuminating scenes did the leaders such as b-boy Ken Swift see in the Kung Fu films amid the formation of hip hop aesthetics? If it is not Bruce Lee's performance that encourages black youths, then what did Kung Fu films provide hip hop to articulate its ethos by appropriating Chinese martial arts and creating the 'Bruce Lee legend'? To put it simply, why Bruce Lee? Why does Kung Fu matter for hip hop's cultural expressions? To answer these questions, we need to spring forth from the debate as Newkirk (2018: n.pag.) pointed out. I assume that the answer to these questions, as such, may be found by noting the shareability of the hip hop culture and Kung Fu films, as well as both cultures' accommodating possibilities to mimic, sample, copy,

² Of course, I examine not only hip hop dance but also its inseparable form—hip hop music in what will be following.

synchronise and then create repeatedly when they encounter. In other words, my analyses in what is to follow is not to define the ‘origin’ of hip hop or street dance. Instead, what I seek to assert is that (Bruce Lee’s) Kung Fu aesthetics in the films as such are the result of continuous process of Chinese martial arts’ contact with the West (namely, the US in this case), as Hall (2019: 144-45) argued, especially when Bruce Lee developed his Chinese martial arts philosophy and made Kung Fu performance his career in the US. Although I examine the shareability of Kung Fu and hip hop dance—that is, the homogeneity—on the other side of the coin lies the ‘difference’—or heterogeneity—between them. It is the ‘difference’, or the ‘binary oppositions’ as in Hall’s (2019: 145) word, that turned out to be fundamental to ‘the production of [hip hop dance’s] meaning’. Taking this into account, the following analyses the bodily movements shared in hip hop and Kung Fu aesthetics by exemplifying Hsin Yen Chang’s *Shaolin Temple* released in 1982 and the video clips of several dance pieces for a start.

Sampling Kung Fu Films in Hip Hop Dance

Hsin Yen Chang’s *Shaolin Temple* (1982) was the first Hong Kong production to be shot at the site of the Shaolin Monastery (a.k.a Shaolin Temple) located in Henan Province, China. The film starred Jet Li, ‘a national martial arts champion’ (Yu 2012: 44), who is one of today’s Kung Fu superstars following in the footsteps of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, and who made his pre-eminent debut in China. Before *Shaolin Temple*, Kung Fu films were mainly produced in Hong Kong—the birthplace of the Kung Fu stars. However, as a Hong Kong-PRC (People’s Republic of China) co-production, Chang’s film turned out to be a triumphal success, and it ‘became a pan-Asian hit’ (Yu 2012: 5-6), in which Jet Li thus ‘gained his initial fame from his “authentic” martial arts performance’ (Yu 2012: 44). As such, the Chinese filmmakers began to produce Shaolin-themed Kung Fu films from the 1980s, and some of these films starred Jet Li as well.

Despite his lionised role in Chang’s *Shaolin Temple*, Jet Li gained international stardom by portraying the villainous characters in action movies such as Joel Silver’s *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998) and James Wong’s *The One* (2001) or by Andrzej Bartkowiak’s ‘hip-chop’ film *Romeo Must Die* (2000) later on.³ Although the ‘Chinese Shaolin craze’ of *The Shaolin Temple* is less known in the US than a film with the same title released in 1976 and directed by Cheh Chang, ‘Shaolin’ has already been a decided keyword when

³ ‘Hip-chop’ is colloquial term for a film that combines hip hop with ‘chop-socky’—namely, the Hong Kong Kung Fu films. See Fretts (2000: n.pag.) for details.

it comes to Kung Fu-blended hip hop culture. For instance, Wu-Tang Clan named their first album *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* (1993) by referencing to Kar-leung Lau's *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (1978). In this regard, the term 'Shaolin' must be as significant as Kung Fu within the hip hop community. In effect, Shaolin Kung Fu has gotten more visibility since the 1980s, when hip hop culture began to diffuse worldwide and Kung Fu films waxed popular throughout the US. Released against this backdrop, *Shaolin Temple* is doubtlessly a relevant example to examine to what extent Kung Fu aesthetics could have become a significant reference for street dancers to create their dance styles, regardless of the film's unpopularity in the US.

The storyline of Chang's *Shaolin Temple* is an epitome of Kung Fu films that encourage one to master martial arts to redeem a life of evil or to seek justice for the suppressed. In this regard, Chang set *Shaolin Temple* in a transition period between the Sui and Tang dynasties, when various factions rebelled and divided the territories of Sui. Its storytelling opens with Jet Li starring as Xiao Hu (a.k.a 'Lil' Tiger'), who escapes to Shaolin Monastery after his father 'Shen Tui Zhang', a Kung Fu fighter known for his masterly kicking skills, was murdered by the villain Renze Wang. Rescued by the Shaolin monks, Lil' Tiger is about to embrace the Buddhist faith. The Abbot of Shaolin Monastery names Lil' Tiger 'Jue Yuan', and he asks Jue Yuan to vow to not commit murder. However, Jue Yuan couldn't answer the Abbot because he was still mourning the death of his father. As the scenes go on, Jue Yuan's Kung Fu skills improve day by day in the Shaolin Monastery. Despite the prohibition of destruction of life in the Buddhist faith, Jue Yuan takes revenge under his mentor's guidance to right the wrongs of Wang in the long run.

The aesthetics of Shaolin Kung Fu appear in the scenes when Jue Yuan and other monks in Shaolin Monastery practise the martial arts of Shaolin together. For example, one day when Jue Yuan and other monks are carrying water from the riverside back to the monastery, Jue Yuan is left behind because his physical strength is reduced. Jue Yuan therefore comes upon a dog which chases him back to the monastery. He then climbs up the wall where the dog is not able to reach. Jue Yuan finds out that his master and senior are practicing *shaolin wushu* ('Shaolin fistic play') in the area behind the wall he climbed up to. Those Shaolin fistic plays that Jue Yuan peeks at from behind the wall in the film are some Kung Fu moves such as some Kung Fu footwork and the body flipping up and down or spinning with the actors' heads rotating on the floor. Essentially, the depiction of such fistic plays practised by the monks in the Shaolin Monastery in Chang's *Shaolin Temple* bears a resemblance to those dynamic moves in today's 'hip hop dance'. In this regard, some street dancers even mentioned that they appropriated from Kung Fu films and Chinese martial

arts to create their dance styles and routines.

B-boy Ken Swift, for example, recalled the scene when he showcased in Japan and said, ‘We had to really show the influence of kung-fu, martial arts, of kung-fu movies in a dance piece when we went to the Akasaka Blitz in Tokyo and be in front of Asians. That was strange. We were like, “Yo, we’re inspired by these people”’ (quoted in Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Swift’s words attested that street dancers had ‘appropriated’ Kung Fu elements to create their dance styles. To be exact, perhaps not every dance routine ‘appropriated’ from Kung Fu moves, but at least part of the dancers’ creativities did come from the ‘call’ of Kung Fu films. New York native Eric Pellerin, a hip hop and Kung Fu film fan, who grew up during the formation of hip hop culture, also agrees with Ken Swift’s comments. As Pellerin mentioned, ‘I was breakdancing at the time, and I thought, “This [the Kung Fu moves in the films] looks really similar to a lot of the moves in breakdancing”’ (quoted in Berg 2013: 2). He also writes, ‘B-boys would take certain movements they saw in the kung-fu films and work them into the dance’ (Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Although they haven’t mentioned any specific dance moves, what Pellerin and Swift referred to would be the moves such as ‘headspin’ and ‘flipping’ skills in b-boying. Just as b-boy Ray ‘Lil’ Lep’ Ramos explained, ‘Kung-fu movies were important, because we learned from them. You know Flip [...] he does a lot of flips and they do a lot of flips in kung-fu movies. My thing is my swipes, headspins’ (quoted in Pellerin 2007: n.pag.).⁴



Figure 2.1: A screenshot of the scene from *Shaolin Temple*, in which a monk is practising Shaolin fistic plays by rotating his head on the ground after he flips his body back and forth in the backyard of the Shaolin Monastery. The monk’s ‘headspin’ scene follows after his flipping with a pause, which is equivalent to the Pellerin’s (2007: n.pag.) explanation. Source: Hsin Yen Chang (1982).

⁴ Lil’ Lep is a member of the New York City Breakers (NYCBs), a breakdancing crew that was established in the Bronx borough of New York City.



Figure 2.2: Lil' Lep performing 'headspin' in the first ever hip hop TV show *Graffiti Rock* (1984), in which he begins with footwork. The 'headspin' scene was screenshotted from the archive that was uploaded to YouTube. Source: CollinJamz (2014).



Figure 2.3: Lil' Lep's 'headspin' performed in *Graffiti Rock* (1984). He added innovation to his dance piece, on top of having appropriated from the 'headspin' scenes in Kung Fu films. Source: CollinJamz (2014).

To take the words of Ken Swift and Lil' Lep into account, the resemblance between the Kung Fu moves in Chang's *Shaolin Temple* and the 'headspin' or 'flipping' to be found in today's hip hop dance pieces points to the fact that 'hip hop dance' partially grew out of the popularity of Kung Fu films. However, the street dancers innovated their representations of the Kung Fu moves with creativity. Lil' Lep, for instance, diversified the scenes in which the actors rotated their heads in the Kung Fu films. As Pellerin (2007: n.pag.) explained, the actors usually present headspin scenes 'from a standstill position' (see Figure 2.1), whereas Lil' Lep 'went into the headspin from footwork' (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3).⁵ Lil' Lep's 'headspin' has become a significant foundation dance form in 'hip hop dance'—that is, 'breaking', to be exact. His innovation generates further composition of choreographies nowadays and manifests in dance battles and hip hop music videos.



Figure 2.4: Hok's 'flipping' performance from LMFAO's music video of 'Party Rock Anthem' (2011). Hok flips his body several times in the behind-the-scenes footage, but this 'flipping' scene turned out to be the most precise cut lasting only for about one second in the music video. Source: LMFAOVEVO (2011).

⁵ *Graffiti Rock* (1984) mentioned in the caption of Figures 2.2 and 2.3 is the first ever hip hop TV show screened 29 June 1984. The show is produced and hosted by Michael Holman, the manager of the NYCBCs, but there is only one episode on the air.



Figure 2.5: A screengrab from Chang's *Shaolin Temple*, in which the monk practicing fistic plays is about to flip his body in the backyard. Source: Hsin Yen Chang (1982).

As such, the forms of abovementioned 'headspin' or 'flipping' in recent dance pieces still resemble the monk's fistic plays in the backyard Kung Fu scene of Chang's *Shaolin Temple*. An example is the behind-the-scenes footage of music video by LMFAO performing 'Party Rock Anthem' (2011) (Quest Crew 2011). LMFAO was an American music duo, who produced electronic dance music that is derived from the hip hop and house music. LMFAO's 'Party Rock Anthem' (2011), which features British singer Lauren Bennett and American music producer GoonRock was a catchy pop melody in the dance club.⁶ The dance of funky style in its music video was choreographed by Hokuto 'Hok' Konishi from Quest Crew, an American hip hop dance crew from Los Angeles, California.⁷ Due to the cutting of the music video, some dance performance the crew members displayed at the scenes were deleted or edited for visual effects. However, behind-the-scenes footage that Quest Crew uploaded to YouTube preserved the scenes when Hok and other crew members perform 'flipping' several times (see Figure 2.4). Hok's 'flipping' moves, like Lil' Lep's 'headspin', resemble the monk's fistic plays practised in the backyard of the Shaolin Monastery as depicted by Chang's film (see Figure 2.5). If anything, LMFAO's 'Party Rock Anthem' (2011) had made Quest Crew's Kung Fu-based moves seem more dynamic than the dance pieces that New York City Breakers showcased. From Kung Fu films such as *Shaolin Temple* or Woo-ping Yuen's *Drunken Master* (1978) to Lil' Lep's 'headspin', and

⁶ The lyrics of LMFAO's 'Party Rock Anthem' goes, 'Every day I'm shufflin'.' Like its melody, the lyrics were so catchy that the song turned out to be a smash hit worldwide.

⁷ Hok was born in Tokyo, Japan, but he is of Japanese descent. He grew up in Oxford, England and started dancing from the age of 15. See Anon. (2017) for details of Hok and his dancing career.

to Hok's 'flipping' with LMFAO's dance music, hip hop has been regenerating its cultural expressions by sampling and synchronising with the latest popular cultural elements.⁸



Figure 2.6: Kaku showcasing his refined 'headspin' by rotating with his head first and then holding his body upside down with his hands. What is surprising is that the scene lasted for more than ten seconds. Source: AsiaDanceScene (2016).

No matter how the 'hip hop dance' regenerates or where hip hop diffuses into, the resemblance between hip hop dance and Kung Fu moves is always noticeable, however. After decades of development, 'hip hop dance' turned out to be popular worldwide, and the moves that were possibly derived from Kung Fu films become more refined (see Figure 2.6). In this regard, it is not a surprise to discover that Japanese b-boy Kaku's 'headspin' moves, for instance, outshined the 'head-rotating' scenes in *Shaolin Temple*. Indeed, Kaku's 'headspin' variation dazzled the eyes of today's street dancers and the hip hop community. He has

⁸ In his essay, Pellerin (2007: n.pag.) also mentioned the film *Drunken Master* (1978) starring Jackie Chan. B-boys were fond of the Chinese drunken style fighting as well. I will elaborate on this drunken style that was appropriated in hip hop culture later in this chapter.

showcased the headspin moves in several dance battle scenes, which were best-known from 2015 to 2016 in the street dance community. As YouTuber AsiaDanceScene (2016) commented, Kaku's 'headspin' was 'a compilation of the most difficult, complicated headspin combinations yet'. Street dancers, like Ken Swift, Lil' Lep, Hok and Kaku, have been regenerating hip hop's cultural expression to the extent of creating unique bodily movements by sampling other cultural practices such as Chinese martial arts in Kung Fu films. The resemblance between Kung Fu and 'hip hop dance' is evident if the aesthetics of hip hop and Kung Fu are shareable is considered. Nevertheless, what does the resemblance in terms of their movements or forms correspond to in the making of the 'Bruce Lee legend' in the hip hop community?

Sharing Cultural Practices and Philosophies: Hip Hop vs. Kung Fu

In the perspective of hip hop culture, it seems that either an individual dances or raps, and whether they listen to hip hop music or watch a dance battle, to believe in 'hip hop' means to be assigned to propagation of the 'Bruce Lee legend'. In effect, the legend is a common topic in a conversation within the hip hop community around the world. For example, Taiwanese street dancer Kila Chuang, who works both ways in Taiwan and Japan, suddenly uttered, 'Yes, you see, Bruce Lee does matter!' in our conversation about Kung Fu and hip hop dance, when I brought up the findings in my research.⁹ When I replied to him by saying, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah! But to my knowledge, Bruce Lee was not the first that become a star in the US when Kung Fu films hit in the 70s', Kila was surprised.¹⁰ Kila's words, nonetheless, suggested that the 'Bruce Lee legend' 'travels' around the world through the diffusion of hip hop.

The close resemblance between hip hop dance and Kung Fu moves, as I mentioned earlier, might amplify the cogency of the 'Bruce Lee legend'. However, the hip hop communities around the world perhaps

⁹ Kila is a member of Tribal Crew from Kaohsiung, a city in southern Taiwan. He and Wei-chiang 'Will John' Chien of Tribal Crew are my mentors, who instructed me in developing my dance skills back in Taiwan. Kila came to Japan to take over his father's business in Akashi, a city in the Kansai area of Japan. After having taken over the family business, he works both in Kaohsiung as a hip hop and house dance instructor in Tribal Crew Dance Studio and in Akashi as a trader of second-hand automobile engines. This dialogue is from my notes from a dinner conversation carried out in Taiwanese and Mandarin with Kila on 21 October 2017 in Kobe.

¹⁰ See footnote 9 for details.

began to create this widespread legend after the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu, especially through the exchange of their bodily movements and ways of thinking. In terms of convergence, hip hop's bodily movements would have to challenge its self-definition and extend 'the language of human possibilities', as Taylor (1985: 131) proposed, to synchronise with Kung Fu moves. The process of hip hop-Kung Fu synchronisation, as such, had progressed in the waves of civil rights movements and art movements and challenged the youths to alter their expression of generating hip hop art forms from the 1970s US. Indeed, it is such a process that empowers the hip hop community to articulate the 'Bruce Lee legend' and that warrants the cogency of the legend.

Convergence of Hip Hop and Kung Fu in US Social Contexts

Hip hop and Kung Fu first, as I mentioned earlier, did not converge for their close resemblance to the extent of their ways of bodily expression. Instead, hip hop synchronised with Kung Fu against the backdrops of the popularity of Kung Fu films, the blacks living in high-poverty neighbourhoods characterised by segregation and racial inequality, and the consumption of Asian cultures in the US (white) mass media in the 1970s and the 1980s. That is to say, by tracing back to the US social contexts during the 1970s and 1980s, it is possible to have a better understanding of the reasons why hip hop sought to synchronise with Kung Fu elements in its ways of cultural development then.

In such a conjunction, the first reason points to, as Berg (2013: 2) put it, 'the widespread availability of kung fu cinema on 42nd Street' when the hip hop movement was about to take root in New York's streets. As mentioned above, *King Boxer* (1972) was the first Kung Fu film imported into the country by the mainstream US distributor Warner Bros. with a different title—*Five Fingers of Death*—in 1973. The film had an impact on its urban audience due to the success of Warner's TV series *Kung Fu* released earlier from October 1972 as reported in *Variety* (see Anon. 1973: 12; Lee 2020: 189). Despite the Hong Kong production, the films that brought the 'Kung-Fu craze' started to hit the West following the delayed release of *The Big Boss* (1971; a.k.a *Fists of Fury*) starring Bruce Lee in April 1973 in the US. During the 'Kung-Fu craze', the black urban audiences, usually ghetto kids involved in street gangs, were fond of seeing Kung Fu movies that cope with 'handling of wrongs done to one's immediate family' (Kaminsky quoted in Hewitt 2008: 269). These audiences would imitate the moves they have seen in the cinema and 'throw' (perform) them in their pre-rumble dance, which later formed as the 'uprocking' style of hip hop dance (Pellerin 2007: n.pag.).

On the other hand, audiences from tough ghettos would go to see popular Kung Fu movies because

Times Square movie houses bought inexpensive packages of Hong Kong action movies and played them 24 hours a day at a low price (Vick 2018: n.pag.). Nevertheless, to examine the social background of New York City a little closer, the extreme disparity between the rich and the poor in New York City is similar to that in Hong Kong, where Kung Fu films were produced on a large scale during the 1970s. As Pellerin (2007: n.pag.) pointed out, 'there was a big parallel between Hong Kong and NYC' because the two urban cities are 'densely populated with a large divide between the rich and the poor'. Kung Fu films were produced as 'escapist fantasies for the people of Hong Kong' and eventually provided 'the same purpose for the inner city youth in the United States' (Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Led by these inner-city youth, the hip hop movement developed its characteristic of rebellion against disparity and racism. This characteristic is embodied in hip hop's battle culture, as Pellerin further explained: 'Hip-hop is about battling somebody else with your style, similar to kung fu movies [...]' (quoted in Berg 2013: 2). In this sense, the popularity of Kung Fu films gave birth to hip hop, whereas the hip hop movement also intensified the popularity of Kung Fu films. 'It was sort of a coincidence that [film studios] were purposefully targeting those movies toward a black-Latino audience [...]' (Pellerin quoted in Berg 2013: 2). Eventually, the popularity of Kung Fu films and the extreme wealth disparity in New York City accelerated the development of hip hop movements, and these two factors articulated the hip hop ethos, which gained the attention of American youths.

Finally, hip hop culture became more and more popular in the US, and it began to diffuse worldwide in the 1980s. The diffusion of hip hop relied on the commodification of rap music, hip hop dance and hip hop's other modes of cultural expression. As a commodity, hip hop then turned out to be 'deeply intertwined with the mass media and its needs,' as Schloss (2009: 5) pointed out. In effect, the diffusion of hip hop culture also resulted in the white mainstream media's domination of the culture, which consumes Asian cultures and symbols to a great extent. For example, Thuc Phi's (2008: 302-3) insight into such consumption of Asian symbols in the 'popularised' hip hop culture elucidated white culture's consuming taste. The consumption of symbols such as rapping in an Asian accent or rhyming with Asian female's 'exotic' good looks in rap songs is due to the neo-orientalism market suggesting the 'aura of otherness, fetishism, or mystery,' notwithstanding that its originators are not African Americans (Thuc Phi 2008: 302-3). The popularity of Bruce Lee and Kung Fu films as well as the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu manifestly precedes the popularisation of hip hop culture. Seeing that the hip hop culture has appropriated the elements from Kung Fu films, the white culture's consuming taste began to exploit the potential of hip hop to draw attention in the mainstream mass media. In other words, the hip hop dancers' appropriation of Kung Fu

moves as an Asian symbol attached to hip hop culture accorded with white culture's consuming taste. In this regard, the hip hop culture inevitably amplified its appropriation of Kung Fu films during its formation. After all, as Pellerin mentioned, 'those b-boys [...] might not have a lot in terms of wealth or social power [...]. They would go see the [Kung Fu] films and they would actually replicate certain movements, which not just any average person could do' (quoted in Berg 2013: 2). As such, the consumption of Asian cultures in the US (white) mainstream mass media also has fuelled the articulation of the 'Bruce Lee legend' circulating in the hip hop community.

Embodiments of Rhythms and Philosophies in Hip Hop and Kung Fu

The hip hop community, as I mentioned earlier, articulated the 'Bruce Lee legend' against the sociopolitical backdrop of the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu in New York City in the 1970s and the 1980s. However, in Taylor's terms, the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu means that hip hop would have to challenge its self-definition to first understand Kung Fu and extend its possibilities (see Taylor 1985: 125; 131). In this sense, if hip hop challenged its self-definition and Kung Fu's self-understanding by articulating the 'Bruce Lee legend', then the 'cultural appropriation' of Chinese martial arts altered into 'hip hop dance' would result from the fact that the culture extended the possibilities of its cultural expression. That is to say, to synchronise with Kung Fu, hip hop has to extend its fundamental way of cultural expression and its philosophy. Namely, these are the aforementioned 'call and response' underlying the culture and the philosophy of self-defence in Afro-diasporic culture. Notwithstanding that they are 'perspicuous contrast', these two elements encompassed in hip hop culture shared similarities with Kung Fu and the extensive cultural expression derived from Chinese martial arts.

The first step that hip hop took to extend its possibilities to synchronise with Kung Fu was by discovering their similarities in the embodiments of rhythms in two cultures. These are the percussion in African American music and Chinese opera, as well as that in African American social dances and Chinese martial arts. Either way, the key to the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu is the role of drumming (or percussion) in Afro-diasporic culture and the rhythms in Chinese martial arts together with performative practice.

In effect, the cultural interplay between African American music and Chinese opera dates back to the encounter of African Americans and Chinese labours. African American music developed from the Afro-diasporic cultural expression which relies on drum set to create beats and rhythms. As percussionist royal

hartigan (2008: 256) points out, the drum set has ‘a spiritual heritage traceable to the ancient drum orchestras of West Africa’ where there is a ‘master drummer who directs the dynamic interplay of song, dance and drumming with conversational dialogue’. Known as ‘call and response’ in Paul Gilroy’s term (1993: 78), this ‘conversational dialogue’ is a pattern that hip hop and jazz also emerged from. On the other hand, Chinese opera is a collection of musical theatre developed in different areas in China with elements such as actors, storytelling, poetry, music, drums, dance and martial arts. It was introduced to Mississippi and other southern states by Chinese labourers who were brought to the area to replace African labourers and later became merchants, as royal hartigan (2008: 287) discovered.

When the Chinese labourers encountered the African labourers, the drum set developed upon the ‘conversational dialogue’ reassembled with the influence of Chinese opera. As royal hartigan observed and surmised, the African American drummers were ‘fascinated by the sounds and roles of drums and percussion in Chinese music, especially in opera and theater performances’, and they thus developed a way to compress the drum orchestras into a drum set with alteration to the ‘setup of the multiple-percussion arrangement of the Chinese opera percussion ensemble’ (2008: 287-88). royal hartigan also pointed out that ‘several components of the African American drum set have connections to Chinese percussion’, and this connection manifested in the early jazz drum sets (2008: 288-89). Apart from the multiple-percussion arrangement of Chinese instruments, African (American) labourers, who inherited Afro-diasporic ‘conversational dialogue’, might also be fascinated by the percussion and an actor’s way of stage performance in Chinese opera. This is because in Chinese opera, a stage performer has to master not only singing and acting but also ‘martial arts—like acrobatics and specific physical movements and hand gestures’ (royal hartigan 2008: 287). In fact, what a stage actor often asks is not ‘What is my line?’ but rather ‘What are my beats?’ (royal hartigan 2008: 287). In other words, ‘lines’ are less important than ‘beats’ (i.e., ‘the percussion rhythms’) to a stage actor in Chinese opera. The ‘percussion rhythms’ embodied in the performance on a stage of Chinese musical theatre point to the *kung fu* of an actor in terms of their performance of Kung Fu moves and their skills to perform.¹¹ In this regard, it is the way of expression developed by the ‘percussion rhythms’ in Chinese opera that the Afro-diasporic ‘conversational dialogue’ sought to appropriate.

¹¹ Apart from referring to *wushu* (‘martial arts’ or ‘fistic plays’), the term *kungfu* means *zhaoyi* (‘attainments’) or *benling* (‘ability’ or ‘skill’) in Chinese languages, particularly Mandarin. Most of the time, it is used to evaluate the one’s performance in a specific field.

Likewise, hip hop (dance) grew out of the Afro-diasporic ‘conversational dialogue’ that came across to the ‘percussion rhythms’ found in Chinese martial arts when Kung Fu films became one of the cultural elements that it absorbed to extend its ways of cultural expression. Moreover, this Kung Fu tempo in relation to bodily rhythmic embodiments could serve as a substitute for the deprived ‘communicative drumming’ that hip hop has been seeking to regenerate, as I mentioned earlier. In other words, the fighting in quick tempos is what fascinated street dancers after they saw Kung Fu movies. In practice, the filmmakers of Kung Fu films compose the combat scenes with Kung Fu choreographies in quick tempos. This quick-tempo tradition in Kung Fu films comes from the ‘percussion rhythms’ in Chinese opera—or from the foundation of Kung Fu itself, to be exact. As Pellerin (2007: n.pag.) put it, the choreographed combat scenes in Kung Fu films have more resemblance to dance than to actual combat. Therefore, black youths from New York City could appropriate the Kung Fu moves and throw them on the dance floor with their alteration to the moves.

Pellerin’s (2007: n.pag.) description of the resemblance between the combat scenes and street dance, on the other hand, indicates that hip hop and Kung converged in the coherence of their ways of cultural expression, which embody the ‘percussion rhythms’ in two distinctive bodily movements. Ron Wheeler’s essay, ‘Is Kung Fu Racist’ (2008), co-authored with David Kaufman, stated that the ‘percussion rhythms’ in Kung Fu inspired dance culture and its embodiment of rhythms in the Afro-diasporic culture (Wheeler and Kaufman 2008: 293-94). They took an example of his personal experience to elaborate his argument as follows.

Strange as it may sound, I believe that it is the importance of dance and rhythm in black culture that gives African Americans a predisposition for gung-fu. My own master understood this. When I was about to take my test for the Small Controlling Tiger form, Sifu Chin asked me if I could dance. Dance? Sifu repeated the question. I answered yes. I knew how to dance. Was I any good? Yes, I told him, I guessed I was. He was not interested in my guesses: was I good or not? So I had to reply that I was a very good dancer. “Good,” Sifu said, “then you will have no problem doing gung-fu.” I must have looked at Sifu Chin as if I thought he was crazy, because he began to explain himself. He told me that all Chinese martial arts are based on rhythm, and that they stress the continuity of movement and are performed in dance-like patterns. (Wheeler and Kaufman 2008: 293-94)

If Wheeler’s words are taken into account, it is evident that both the martial arts represented in the Kung Fu films and the moves performed in the street dance scenes as in the videoclips mentioned above shared some

rhythmic patterns. Besides, even some street dancers did notice this connected relation of rhythms between hip hop and Kung Fu. For instance, as Pellerin (2007: n.pag.) mentioned, dancers like Luis ‘Trac 2’ Mateo practised *Shotokan Karate* for two years for that many ‘early b-boys studied karate’; yet, most of the rest just ‘imitated the movements they saw without any formal training’.

In effect, the ‘percussion rhythms’ in Kung Fu moves are audible through the sound effects of whipping in the films. Likewise, the ‘beats’ or ‘rhythms’ in the background music are visible through hip hop dancers’ bodily movements when they dance. Moreover, a set of hip hop dance routines become ‘reversible’ and ‘audible’ when the routines are created to be danced to another type of dance music. In this sense, the music and dance of hip hop, or the ‘percussion rhythm’ and its embodiments are inseparable. The ‘reversibility’ of music and dance in hip hop culture developed from the aforementioned ‘call and response’ structure. The ‘call and response’ structure underlying hip hop culture has served as a tool for hip hop dancers to extend their bodily movements by creating alterations to the Kung Fu moves from the movies they see.

Nevertheless, the process of creating Kung Fu-like dance moves not only challenged the self-definitions of hip hop but also forced hip hop to extend its possibilities to understand the Chinese martial arts philosophy of self-defence. That was not an easy task. In reality, in the 1960s, when civil rights and Black Power movements galvanised the African Americans into self-defence, African Americans began to get interested in Kung Fu, but ‘they did not find a ready welcome in the Chinese martial arts’ because ‘[v]iolence, segregation, and a certain ethnic pride kept the Chinese Americans somewhat insulated’ (Wheeler and Kaufman 2008: 292). Later on, in the 1970s, practising Chinese martial arts became a sensation during the ‘Kung Fu craze’. Although the young street dancers gained the ideas from Kung Fu moves and threw them into dance floors by ‘expanding their ideas for movement’ (Kwon quoted in Pellerin 2007: n.pag.), their understanding of Chinese martial arts philosophy at this point was incomplete. Absorbing the combat forms without its philosophy from Kung Fu films could misappropriate the Chinese martial arts. This is because ‘the African American [hip hop] aesthetic of interplay between performer and audience [in a dance (battle) scene] [...] lends itself uneasily to parallel with martial arts. Performance is often a low priority for martial artists, as is interplay with spectators who may witness their skill’ (Hewitt 2008: 277).

That hip hop could eventually parallel with Chinese Kung Fu is because it saw the values in the martial arts shared with its own, as Hewitt (2008: 266) pointed out:

martial arts training values self-expression within a defined structure; martial arts strives to promote internal strength and self-respect as well as physical skill; and martial arts schools

encourage the student to ground his or her achievement within the martial arts tradition and to create a strong sense of mutual respect between the individual and the martial arts community.

In other words, Kung Fu philosophy provides a tactic for an individual to achieve self-respect by training their inner strength and victory by practising their physical skills but with one's own body denying the use of weapons for self-defence (see Hewitt 2008: 266-67). These values paralleled hip hop's ethos—namely, 'self-expression' in terms of creating one's style as 'weapon' to self-defence and 'self-respect' in terms of paying respect to other's self-expression, including one's self. Besides, as Hewitt (2008) pointed out, these common values shared in hip hop and Kung Fu could be 'approached by acknowledging Bruce Lee as a movie star whose films inspired many fans to train' (2008: 266). Therefore, hip hop has created the 'Bruce Lee legend' to avoid the misappropriation of Chinese martial arts, and as the consequence of hip hop's understanding of Chinese martial arts philosophy.¹²

However, the Kung Fu films that hip hop pioneers or hip hop practitioners of the younger generation referenced are not limited to those movies starring Bruce Lee. For example, *Drunken Master* (1978) starring Jackie Chan, mentioned earlier, is also a Kung Fu film well-known in the hip hop community. Luis 'Alien Ness' Martinez testified that he created 'drunken' signature moves from *Drunken Master* (Schloss 2009: 45). Like the Kung Fu films starring Bruce Lee, *Drunken Master* was inspiring. According to Penelope Padmore (2004: 81), martial artists would 'shift their way of thinking and discover abilities they didn't realize they possessed. Being intoxicated may have originally been a metaphor for achieving an altered state of consciousness in which a new level of fighting prowess is attained'. To take Padmore's (2004) words into account, that Jackie Chan being drunk gains power to defeat opponents enlightened the young moviegoers to establish a better mental status to combat frustration and confrontation (see Schloss 2009: 45). In this sense, hip hop's understanding of Chinese martial arts philosophy is far complex than legendising Bruce Lee. Instead, it is a process of 'achieving an altered state of consciousness'. Therefore, the 'Bruce Lee legend' as a tactic of hip hop to develop the culture's philosophy is lenient, inspiring and educational.

Drawing on Thomas Green (2003: 131), Schloss asserted that 'b-boying is similar to *all* African-

¹² I am also referencing Charles Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' (1985) here. That Kung Fu has parallels in hip hop (or vice versa) does not mean that there exists a complete translation of both culture's ways of expression. Instead, they would have to challenge themselves to do so, and they would find their possibilities extended eventually, but they will never be the same.

derived martial arts' such as *engolo* in southern Angola, Brazilian *Capoeira* and *ladja* of Martinique (2009: 118-120). They are not the same, however. As Schloss (2009: 52) highlighted, that the hip hop dance culture 'combines physical discipline with philosophy in a sophisticated way' resulted in the connection between hip hop and martial arts training. In other words, what made hip hop dance different from other African-derived martial arts was that hip hop dance has developed its philosophy and traditions of 'battle' through synchronising with Kung Fu philosophy to the establishment of the 'educational lineages'. In this regard, the appropriation of Chinese martial arts philosophy enabled hip hop dance to alter its Afro-diasporic philosophy and extend possibilities to create a sophisticated educational system.

As Schloss observed, the hip hop dance educational system that developed is similar to Kung Fu schools, and it 'not only offers a traceable educational lineage, but often a strong, accomplished mentor' such as Trac 2 to Alien Ness, and Kwon to Tiny Love (2009: 52-53). The educational lineage is not merely a teacher-to-student transmission; instead, a mentor could have more than one student, and they would 'encourage and critique' one another (Schloss 2009: 54). In the educational lineage, as Schloss (2009: 55) put it, 'the relationships between the members, as well as the contexts where the relationships are forged, the other things they do together when they are not b-boying, all become encoded in the way the dance is performed'. He also asserted that the philosophy of this lineage which allows dancers to express themselves in both choreographed and improvised ways, is similar to jazz improvisation (Schloss 2009: 55). However, to examine the philosophy that hip hop synchronised with Kung Fu philosophy, together with how the culture embodies the resemblant 'percussion rhythms' found in Kung Fu through hip hop dance, it is evident that hip hop has extended its possibilities to regenerate so far. The convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu could be the first cultural interplay that empowers hip hop culture to become shareable wherever it diffuses.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the 'cultural appropriation' of (Bruce Lee's) Chinese martial arts from Kung Fu movies in 'hip hop dance', by retrieving the process of the convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu in the conjunction of the peak and de-escalation of the Black Power Movement, as well as the commodification of Kung Fu films that brought the 'Kung Fu craze' into US in the 1970s. The appropriation and synchronisation with Chinese martial arts enabled hip hop to regenerate its cultural expressions with other cultural practices. Besides, such cultural appropriation in terms of the cultural interplay of hip hop and Kung Fu aesthetics liberated hip hop culture from the African essentialist discourses and authorised the culture to

transcend race and nationalism. In this sense, instead of merely sampling, hip hop, which developed from Afro-diasporic ‘call and response’ structure, in alliance with Kung Fu could strengthen their force ‘as a progressive representative of the popular cultural revolution’ as in Kato’s (2007: 6) term, and the culture thus would be powerful by creating its own realm—namely, the ‘streets’—to self-express.

Born from the art movements following the civil rights movements in the 1960s, the pioneers who led the waves of the hip hop movement were fond of Kung Fu. This resulted in the pioneer b-boys such as Ken Swift, Lil’ Lep and Trac 2 throwing their alteration to Kung Fu moves they saw in the films to the dance floor. However, ‘hip hop dance’ and Kung Fu moves shared no common language in the first place. Instead, what made it possible for these two distinctive bodily movements to converge and synchronise are the backdrops of the popularity of Kung Fu films, the blacks living in a high-poverty neighbourhood characterised by segregation and racial inequality, and the consumption of Asian cultures in the US (white) mass media in the 1970s and the 1980s. As such, ‘hip hop dance’ and Kung Fu moves converged, to the extent of ‘bodily forms’ in the dance pieces of b-boy Lil’ Lep’s ‘headspin’ and b-boy Hok’s ‘flipping’ which resembled the fistic plays practised by a monk from the monastery in Kung Fu film *Shaolin Temple*. On the other hand, in terms of ‘percussion rhythms’, ‘hip hop dance’ derived Afro-diasporic percussive music that resembled the Chinese opera’s percussive performance influenced by Chinese martial arts practices. Finally, hip hop legendised the Kung Fu superstar Bruce Lee and synchronised with his Chinese martial arts philosophy by articulating the ‘Bruce Lee legend’ within its community to develop its sophisticated educational philosophy. Significantly, this has enabled the culture to sample, cut and mix, synchronise and then create repeatedly, and empowers the hip hop culture to become shareable.

CHAPTER 3

Japanese Street Dance Culture in Manga and Anime: Hip Hop Transcription in *Samurai Champloo* and *Tokyo Tribe-2*

Introduction

This chapter explores the manga of Santa Inoue's *Tokyo Tribe-2* (1997-2005) and Tatsuo Satō's anime adaptation (2006-2007), as well as the anime of Shin'ichirō Watanabe's *Samurai Champloo* (2004-2005) as two different entry points for understanding the diffused hip hop culture in Japan, that is, by examining their fictitious street dance scenes that correspond to the contextualised 'real' world. As early as the 1980s, street dance (or breakdance to be exact) became a craze in Japan when Charlie Ahearn's *Wild Style* and Joel Silberg's *Breakdance* were released in 1983 and 1984, respectively. The release of *Wild Style* was 'the seminal moment for breakdancing in Japan', while *Breakdance* brought 'the first of several breakdancing booms', as early street dancers practised outdoors by mimicking the dance routines in films or videos (Condry 2001: 228-29). Although the Japanese focus on hip hop culture switched from dance to rap music later, hip hop dance and music are inseparable. Either way, their popularity at the time had no parallel with manga and anime—another subculture that quickly reflected popular trends in Japan—which had not yet extended its understanding to dialogue with this subculture that had developed against the backdrop of American racial or ethnic segregation.

Although the cultural interplay between hip hop and Japanese manga or anime appears naturally in the music video of Nicki Minaj's 'Chun Li' (2018) that appropriates Japanese anime's explosive effects, and American hip-hop-themed anime *The Boondocks* (2005-2006) created by Aaron McGruder today, the two subcultures, hip hop and Japanese manga or anime, had sought an 'adequate language' to dialogue with or understand each other at first sight. This chapter hence develops a framework for reading cross-cultural hip hop-themed manga and anime by drawing on Charles Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' (1985) and Paul Gilroy's (1993) observation of 'call and response'. This framework offers insight into a reading of the diffusion of hip hop into manga and anime as a process of double-sided cultural extension that is based on the interplay of multiple, endless 'cultural appropriation.' The chapter therefore explores how Japanese manga and anime transcribed hip hop elements and paralleled the 'real' world with graphic representation, while the cultural expression of hip hop diffused into the narratives of manga and anime, and in return, triggered the activism of today's Japanese youth. Examining the ongoing social movements in

Japan, the chapter unfolds into two main sections. First, this chapter explores to what extent *Tokyo Tribe-2* and its anime adaptation understand hip hop culture through their representation of dance scenes reflecting the Japanese context. Second, it examines how *Samurai Champloo* advances its understanding of the culture through its transcription of street dance elements today against the Japanese historical background.

Exploring Street Dance, Manga and Anime

Street dance, together with the most important elements of hip hop culture, such as DJing, MCing (rap music) and graffiti, were originally developed in the United States mainly by African American youths in the 1970s.¹ While Latino, Caribbean American youth and even Asian-Americans contributed to the formation of hip hop, echoing Bakari Kitwana's (2005) comments, African-American youths are, 'the hip hop generation.' In Kitwana's definition, this culture still reflects one of the generation's worldviews, which is that Blacks are 'continu[ing] to be discriminated against in often subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways' (2005: 13). The most explicit example is that '[m]ore so than any other racial or ethnic group, African-Americans remain segregated from whites in housing' (Kitwana 2005: 13). In other words, hip hop culture developed through waves of the movement of Black groups fighting adversity, and grew out of the collection of cultural expressions that have given (non-)verbal utterances to their struggles.

Including street dance, the cultural expressions of hip hop began to travel around the world in the 1980s. Following that, '[m]embers of different cultures [would] pick up styles and statements [of hip hop culture] [...]' and 'recast [the] culture to give it meaning within their own context' (Nanda and Warms 2014: 296). Taking this cross-cultural trail, street dance as one element in the 'package' of hip hop culture, rapidly diffused into East Asia in the mid-1980s. Since then, not only dancers but also members of different cultures around the world began to embrace this 'package' of culture, and diversified its cultural appearance and meanings with local elements—including those of Japan.

Manga and anime culture in Japan, for example, crossed over to hip hop culture and started to depict

¹ As mentioned earlier, when referring to these four fundamental elements of hip hop culture, I use 'MCing, DJing, street dance and graffiti', regardless of their synonyms or spelling variations. See Jeff Chang (2006: ix-xv) and Joseph Schloss (2009: 59-61) for more details. Note that I refer to the physical/dance movements of hip hop as 'street dance' instead of 'hip hop dance' or 'breakdance'; this has to do with the understanding of the dance culture in the Japanese context, which I will elaborate on later.

hip hop scenes beginning in the 1990s. Such cultural crossing has embodied the ‘interchange between Japanese and U.S. youth culture’ (Nanda and Warms 2014: 296) or the ‘black-Japanese cultural interaction’ (Anderson 2007: 258). The birth of manga, in effect, was to provide ‘cheap entertainment [...] to temporarily escape from the harsh realities of life experienced after World War II’ (Rees 2013: 81). Furthermore, through appropriating Japanese manga and anime, contemporary artists have been able to ‘reinterpret this visual medium by constructing alternative realities, blurring the lines between realities and fantasy’ (Rees 2013: 82). Hence, like hip hop culture, manga and anime also provide a space for their readers to escape from their struggles by mirroring their harsh social experiences.

However, on depicting hip hop, Japanese manga and anime creators did not ‘pick up’ or ‘translate’ the American hip hop generation’s struggles to overcome racial segregation or their impoverishment due to racial inequality. Instead, they transformed the violent American gangster scenes into a surreal world that represented the atmosphere of Japan’s hip hop scene. Santa Inoue’s manga *Tokyo Tribe-2*, for instance, has represented some dance scenes in Japanese dance clubs, with Japanese representations of violent gangsters. Yet, this manga work also faithfully reflects the contextual atmosphere that the hip hop practitioners experienced in Japan, where the club goers could enjoy the music but not ‘dance’ at all. Even so, Inoue’s *Tokyo Tribe-2* doubtlessly is a milestone of manga to the extent of its hip hop theme, because it reflects not only on the ‘real world’ atmosphere of Japan’s hip hop scene but also on evolving trends in Japanese hip hop.

The milepost of *Tokyo Tribe-2* notwithstanding, manga researcher Kentarō Miwa, drawing on manga specialist Fusanosuke Natsume, warns that it is easy to fall into the trap of reading manga or anime as a ‘transparent’ medium that ‘reflects the trend of a society or the general public like a mirror’ (Miwa 2014: 16). To gainsay Miwa’s standpoint, Japanese cartoonist Miki Tori’s 2019 speech on manga and anime offers a strong discourse on how these are related to popular trends in Japan, and of which Japanese youths are fond of (2019: 247-48). In this sense, it is interesting to trace the development of hip hop culture in Japan since the 1980s. However, the way in which manga and anime appropriated hip hop implied that they also ‘appropriated’ what hip hop addressed culturally, racially, ethnically, and politically. The articulation of political or cultural issues in Japan underlying these hip hop scenes in *Tokyo Tribe-2* are more than a representation or ‘social reflection’ of the hip hop trends in Japan only, as Tori contends. I argue that in adopting ‘the perspective of social reflection,’ which Miwa criticised, hip hop-themed manga or anime are characterised by drawing attention to social issues in the ‘real’ world within its fantasy scenes. Said otherwise,

I regard manga and anime as ‘transparent’ media that parallel social issues between fantasy and the ‘real’ world.

This significant ‘characteristic’ of hip hop-themed anime can also be found in Shin’ichirō Watanabe’s *Samurai Champloo*. Slightly different from the anime adaptation of *Tokyo Tribe-2*, *Samurai Champloo* is an anime that has transcribed hip hop elements into the Tokugawa-Edo period’s art scenes, with anachronism as well as anachronism—i.e., the temporal and geographical misplacement in the sense of twisting the Tokugawa-Edo period’s historical backgrounds by including the Ryukyuan protagonist Mugen, for example. What is different from the ‘sans-dance-scene’ of *Tokyo Tribe-2* is that *Samurai Champloo* widely transcribed several styles of street dance into a samurai background.

This setting of *Samurai Champloo*, however, invites criticism for being ‘postmodern eclecticism’ or ‘cultural hybridity,’ while striking both the readers and the critics with the thought that ‘Watanabe is up to something else’ (Benzon 2008: 271). Indeed, critics such as Anderson (2007) and Condry (2005) both commented on *Samurai Champloo*, arguing that Watanabe’s anachronistic and anachronistic *mise en scènes* are obvious attempts to draw attention to excluded minorities in Japan. Anderson pointed out that the cultural expression of hip hop which derived from suppression corresponds to the ‘play’ of suppressed chōnin (townspeople) from the ‘pleasure quarters’, who produced Ukiyo-e painting in the Edo period (2007: 659).² *Samurai Champloo*, from her viewpoint, perfectly embodied the black-Japanese cultural interplay. But Anderson did not go further by looking at the contemporary Japanese context. Condry, on the other hand, noted that *Samurai Champloo* has ‘[drawn] attention to discrimination against minorities, such as Okinawans and Ainu’ (2005: 53). Yet, Condry did not specify *how* the fantasy of *Samurai Champloo* triggered their audience or readers to pay attention to the ‘contemporary’ real world from which it takes reference. No matter how the critics viewed it, *Samurai Champloo* was a success in the Japanese diversification of hip hop culture. Thus, it is worthwhile to compare how it differed from *Tokyo Tribe-2* and how the setting of *Samurai Champloo* advanced the representation of hip hop after Inoue’s manga had set a milestone by previously doing so.

If Inoue’s *Tokyo Tribe-2* was a milestone of manga in Japan, which made manga’s fictitious world appear to resemble hip hop, then Watanabe’s anime *Samurai Champloo* advanced the possibility of Japanese

² Chōnin (町人) means the townspeople, including merchants trades people, and artisans, whose social classes were beneath Samurais and farmers in the Edo period.

manga and anime to diversify hip hop elements in order to foreground what hip hop has in effect fought against so far. However, from the arrival of hip hop until Inoue's representation of Japanese dance clubs and Watanabe's hip hop/street dance transcription, there was apparently a prolonged interval of decades until hip hop elements were represented by manga and anime after Japanese youths took up street dance. This long interval resulted from the 'language' that the two different cultures 'speak', which will be further discussed in this chapter through the examination of the Japanese social context. Yet, even though manga and anime approaches in *Tokyo Tribe-2* and *Samurai Champloo* succeeded in contributing to the Japanese understanding of hip hop culture, how the two distinct cultural expressions provided an 'adequate language' for 'cultural interplay' remains unclear in the existing manga and anime research or hip hop culture studies. I hence arranged the theoretical framework of my thesis to examine how Japanese manga and anime create an 'adequate language' for such cultural interplay with hip hop culture as follows.

The Language of Perspicuous Contrast: Hip Hop vs. Japanese Manga/Anime

To dissect how hip hop-themed manga and anime won great popularity from the fans of different background, Charles Taylor's idea of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' in his chapter 'Understanding and Incurability' (1985) can be useful.³ Taylor has designed an 'interpretive approach' (or '*verstehen* view') to avoid two common social science errors: assuming that we can approach an alien culture from a purely objective standpoint (1985: 123); or 'taking [the agent's] description with ultimate seriousness' but turning out to be 'incurable' (1985: 123). By contrast, Taylor argued that as we challenge 'their language of self-understanding, we may also challenge ours' (1985: 125). In this sense, when applying his principle of perspicuous contrast to the hip hop-themed manga or anime, Japanese manga and anime represent hip hop culture. In Taylor's words, it would be the result of 'an alteration in [their] self-understanding' (1985: 130) in relation to the Japanese transcription (or representation) of hip hop that might be 'distorted or inadequate in some respects' (1985: 125) at the beginning, while at the same time challenging the self-definitions of manga or anime. However, Taylor's argument notably focuses not just in one direction but in an extended 'two-way' understanding of both cultures when they encounter one another.

To this point, the diffusion of hip hop into manga and anime also gains the possibilities of

³ I have abbreviated my discussion of Taylor's idea here. Please refer to Chapter 1 for a full discussion of his idea and my application of Taylor's concept for this research.

extending the self-understanding of hip hop culture. This refers to the ‘call and response’ structure—an African-diasporic cultural expression—as Paul Gilroy (1993) observed in his *Black Atlantic*.⁴ To put it simply, ‘call and response’ structure enables the culture to synchronise its cultural expression with other cultural practices in terms of the alteration of its self-understanding. By appropriating the cultural practices of Japanese manga and anime, hip hop cultural expression can be more extensive, too. Therefore, the meaning of hip hop would be extended, whereas the genres of manga and anime would have more possibilities to the extent they become hip hop-themed manga or anime.

Tokyo Tribe-2: The First Hip Hop Representation

To name several hip hop-themed anime is not a difficult task. For example, there are *Afro Samurai* (2007) directed by Fuminori Kizaki and *The Boondocks* (2005-06) created by Aaron McGruder, both produced in the US, as well as *Tokyo Tribes* (2006-07) and *Samurai Champloo* (2004-05) in Japan. Yet, the hip-hop-themed manga is quite limited. Except for Inoue’s *Tokyo Tribe* series which was originally printed in Shodensha’s street fashion magazine *Boon* in the issues from November 1997 to May 2005, it is hard to find any other manga, especially that date back to the 1990s.

This makes the *Tokyo Tribe* series a significant milestone for manga in the hip hop genre. As a ‘b-boy manga’ serial, *Tokyo Tribe-2* (1997-2005) is significant because it had been adapted for anime, film and even musicals, all depicting the daily life of youths in the fictitious city of ‘Tōkyō’, including its elements of violence, crime, murder, sex, love and friendship. The plot of *Tokyo Tribe-2* is set after the five-year Shivuya riots, where several tribes—meaning gangs—are based in different areas of the relatively convivial Tōkyō, scenes of which duplicate real urbanscapes in Tokyo. Apart from the similarity of urbanscapes, what is significant about Inoue’s *Tokyo Tribe-2* is that he enriched the readers’ understanding of hip hop by adding ‘magazine-like’ columns at the end of each volume, which included interviews, introductions of hip hop street culture, song lists, topics or neta (materials) about rap music, and so forth.

Achieving similar levels of popularity as its original manga version, producer Tatsuo Satō’s *Tokyo Tribes* (2006-07) was animated with equal parts of violence and hip hop cultural elements. Several hip hop

⁴ Based on Gilroy (1993), I have redefined the concepts of this structure in Chapter 1 and argued that it is more extensive, when it comes to hip hop diffusion. In brief, I utilise the concepts to examine Japanese hip hop and street dance from the aspect of hip hop-themed manga and anime here. Also see footnote 5 below.

groups such as Kool G Rap & Young Chris's 'The Extravaganza' and Japanese DJ Muro's 'So Cool' (both in DJ Muro 2006) added the flavour of Japanese hip hop to anime. Yet, hip hop music is not the only element that manga and anime appropriated from hip hop culture. The club 'dance' scene from Episode 42 of the manga and Episode 6 of the anime were also meant to reveal a space where the DJ and clubgoers practised 'call and response.'⁵



Figure 3.1: Kai plays music, while the clubgoers enjoy his performance. But they are not actually 'dancing'. This scene corresponds to Satō's anime adaptation in Episode 6. Source: Santa Inoue (1997-2005: 65).

⁵ To apply the concept of 'call and response', the street dance scene in a dance club is a space where DJs 'call' by playing music and clubgoers 'respond' by dancing to the music. This 'response' would also become a 'call' for another dance, and the music would even be reversed by this 'response'.



Figure 3.2: Instead of ‘dancing’, the clubgoer in yellow sways to the rhythms of songs played by Kai. Source: Tatsuo Satō (2006-07).

This ‘antiphonic’ club dance scene is controversial, however, as it opens with Iwa and other members from the Shinjuku Hands tribe attending a club event held by Musashino Saru tribe. When the members of Hands come into Club Jenna to attend Saru’s party, the protagonist Kai is playing music on the stage with a turntable. Soon after, the corpse of a member of Hands tribe is sent to the club by the Wu-Ronz tribe. This provoked the Hands tribe to leave Jenna and seek revenge. The scene in the manga version focused more on the DJ playing music and the clubbers enjoying Kai’s selection of hip hop (see Figure 3.1). Nevertheless, apart from the same depiction in the anime version, the scene also shows the clubbers swaying to the rhythms of songs played by Kai (see Figure 3.2). In other words, despite it being called ‘b-boy manga’ (and thus ‘b-boy anime’), Inoue’s work and Satō’s anime adaptation have hardly depicted street dance elements in their representation. Why did both manga and anime not include fictitious hip hop dance scenes such as those practised by street dancers in Yoyogi Park and Hokoten (a Tokyo pedestrian paradise) since the 1980s (see Condry 2001: 228-29)? This question, hence, leads to the club scene controversy, although the club scene is the most likely fictitious space in both works for observing how hip hop music is related to the street dance culture in Japan. In fact, in both the manga *Tokyo Tribe-2* and its anime adaptation, the ineffective ‘call-and-response’ dance scene is considered for reasons that contextualise the Japanese club scenes related to legal problems and the music industry, and the Japanese manga kai’s (comic world) insights into the popular cultural trends.

First of all, the development of hip hop culture after its arrival in Japan is the crux of hip hop manga representation. As a big fan of hip hop and a manga writer, Inoue claimed that no one but he could make

manga and hip hop become grounded in Japan in his interview (Wada 2017: n.pag.), because he had seen how Japanese hip hop culture developed. Inoue’s experience and knowledge of the culture testifies to his *Tokyo Tribe-2* being the first solid representation of Japanese hip hop, not to mention the anime adaptation *Tokyo Tribes*. The depiction of the scene in Club Jenna must have been based on Inoue’s personal experience in Japanese dance clubs. As Ian Condry, who has captured the environment of Japanese dance clubs and reviewed the development of Japanese hip hop culture, has pointed out, although ‘rap albums have become more commercially successful’, hip hop culture was introduced through ‘breakdance’—a street dance genre—to Japan in the first place (2001: 227). However, it turned out that what Japanese clubs have provided hip hop practitioners with is not a ‘genba’ (actual site) for dancing to music, but rather, echoing Condry (2001: 235-36), a site for ‘professionalism in performance’ or a gathering to exchange the latest information on the music industry (see Figure 2.3).



Figure 3.3: The clubgoers admire Kai’s performance by saying, ‘Haven’t listened to the music Kai played’, and ‘I like this music!’. Source: Santa Inoue (1997-2005: 66).

Secondly, dancing was strictly prohibited in the Japanese dance clubs under the Fueiho Law. More specifically, the clubs that provide drinks or foods and ‘let the guests dance’ were obliged to apply for a proper license, and to close at midnight or before 1 a.m., according to the Fueiho Law (Isobe 2012b: 14). This law was promulgated in Japan in order to prevent dance halls from becoming hotbeds of prostitution since the Allied Occupation in 1948, and had applied to ballroom dance schools as well as dance clubs until October 2014, when the Cabinet approved a bill to amend it. What triggered this amendment was a petition by the citizens’ group Let’s Dance, which related to a 2010 incident in a club in Amemura, Osaka, where a college student died in a fistfight. After that, the Fueiho Law’s policing of dance clubs became harsher than it had been (see Manabe 2015: 251-52). As a result, the citizens’ group Let’s Dance sided with several members of the National Diet, lawyers, musicians, (street) dancers, and it collected 176,000 signatures to lobby the Diet to amend the law. Despite the recent amendment, the regulation, as a means of policing Japanese dance culture, had restrained street dance culture’s development in the club scenes since its arrival in Japan, resulting in the growth of the Japanese hip hop music industry.

In reality, dance clubgoers did dance. But this was not in contradiction to music critic Ryo Isobe labelling Japan as ‘the country where you can’t dance’ (2012a: 4-5). Instead, ‘[the club owners] could not let [their guests] dance without a license’ (Isobe 2012a: 5). It exposed a ‘loophole’ in the law, which is visible in the lyrics of Japanese rap singer Haruo Chikada’s song ‘Hoo! Ei! Ho!’ (1987); a punchline meant to be pronounced like Fueiho in Japanese (Isobe 2012b). Chikada’s song thus provided a cynical view of the Fueiho Law and suggested that the Japanese authorities had turned a blind eye to ‘no-license’ dance clubs; the lyrics of his song go, ‘Just close the door, and you won’t be found out / You won’t be found out’. Many club owners actually risked running their clubs without a license by claiming that they ‘let [the guests] listen to the music instead of letting [them] dance’ (Isobe 2012b: 14). The Fueiho Law impacted everyone who was involved in club culture, but despite this (some) clubs exploited this loophole, and dancing could continue. However, Inoue’s manga and anime story left the club scene ‘policed’, thus reflecting the reality of the restrictive Fueiho Law.

Isobe (2012a; 2012b) has accused the policing of clubs under the Fueiho Law of restraining the development of dance culture, while Condry (2001) has observed that a hip hop dance club is a ‘genba’ for professional information exchange. Their viewpoints explain why the emphasis on musical choices and the representation of hip hop culture through rap music carried more weight than the dance scenes in *Tokyo Tribe-2* and its anime adaptation. And such representation also articulated the self-description of Japanese

manga kai.

Tokyo Tribe-2 was produced in an atmosphere where many manga writers vied for supremacy in the Japanese comics world (manga kai). Inoue's production of the *Tokyo Tribe* series, released in the 1990s, was an unprecedented attempt to help manga meet hip hop culture at the crossroads. As critic Angela Drummond-Mathews (2010: 75) posited, Inoue's *Tokyo Tribe* series 'features Japanese gang members who are wrapped up with hip hop culture'. Drummond-Mathews (2010: 74-75) also argued that *Tokyo Tribe* was a production of Japanese manga which absorbed American culture. But why had Inoue not come up with this idea to write a hip hop-themed manga earlier if the 'notorious' American culture had already arrived in Japan by the 1980s? There definitely was a 'prolonged interval' between the arrival of hip hop in Japan and manga's representation of it. Japanese cartoonist Miki Tori's talk touching on the Japanese manga world in the 1980s evidently answered this question. Tori (2019) focused on the quarrel within the manga kai and how the trend of popular culture and subculture were represented in the manga kai from the 1970s to the 1980s. This sequence of the quarrel within manga kai turned to a new trend in that some cartoonists 'dealt with the subculture [materials] but not with the real music, real fashion or real manga' (Tori 2019: 247-48). Regardless of its popularity, hip hop culture as a theme in manga was thus drawn into this combat to vie for supremacy in manga kai. Nonetheless, in the mid-1990s, the manga industry had reached its peak, and Japanese cartoonists again turned to catering to the readers' favour.

As a result of this change, Inoue grasped the taste of the readers and decided to create a hip hop-themed manga to promote hip hop music as the trackmakers do, although he said he felt 'a bit reluctant' to do so in the beginning (Yoshihashi 2009: n.pag.). His reluctance might have been related to his uncertainty about dealing with his hip hop culture despite his career as a manga creator. Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' (1985) supports Inoue's conjecture. To write a hip hop-themed manga, Inoue first had to enhance the possibilities of manga spaces for understanding and representing hip hop culture. To do so, he added columns in *Tokyo Tribe-2* and started writing manga based on his knowledge and insights into Japanese hip hop culture. As mentioned earlier, these columns broke the established practice of manga and altered its understanding of hip hop culture. In addition to his representation of Japanese hip hop, based on his insights, he also provided possibilities for manga to extend its cultural expression to increasingly synchronise with that of hip hop culture. Although there was already a 'prolonged interval', these approaches indeed made Inoue's *Tokyo Tribe-2* successfully conspicuous and popular.

The various genre adaptations of *Tokyo Tribe-2*, which are also popular, enabled opportunities to

reread this manga text and to reconsider the specific dance club scene depicted by Inoue with the atmosphere of Japanese dance clubs in the 1990s and the policing of dance culture. Manga such as *Tokyo Tribe-2* might have drawn attention to violence and caused Japanese youths' rebellious and violent behaviour.⁶ However, by rereading *Tokyo Tribe-2*, the violence that Inoue tackled on purpose could be seen as more meaningful. Despite the lack of a street dance scene in *Tokyo Tribe-2*, Inoue's depiction of the dance club Jenna is a metaphorical space that he created to express the 'reluctance' of what Japanese hip hop culture was confronting at the time. In this sense, his *Tokyo Tribe-2* not only extended manga's self-understanding so as to understand hip hop culture, but also negotiated what Japanese hip hop and its dance culture were struggling with in the 'real' world. Inoue's creation of Japanese hip hop-themed manga provided an understanding of hip hop cultural expression, which was thus an epic achievement. As a beneficial result of Inoue's manga, the musical adaptation *Tokyo Tribe*, for instance, has involved Japanese street dancers such as Umebo and Go Ueki in choreographing the dance routines—that is, explicit 'call and response' scenes. All through the rereading of this work, each of its adaptations reproduced an alteration of Japanese self-understanding and enhanced the possibilities for cultural exchange. Hence, *Tokyo Tribe-2* which generated meaningful anime and other genres' adaptations was indeed a milestone in manga.

Samurai Champloo: Hip Hop Transcription

A follow up to Inoue's contribution, Shin'ichirō Watanabe's *Samurai Champloo* anime television series (2004-2005) has made a further contribution to representing Japan's hip hop culture, as it transcribed hip hop elements into a set mixed with a contemporary view of the world from Japan's Tokugawa-Edo or Traditional Period (1603-1867). According to Miki Tori, remaking manga into anime for a television drama or movie has been a trend since the 1980s (2019: 248-49). In the 1990s and the 2000s, the remakes accelerated, and Satō's anime adaptation of the hip hop tale *Tokyo Tribes* rode this wave. Meanwhile, *Samurai Champloo* first appeared as a hip-hop-themed anime production and was adapted as a two-volume manga written by Masaru Gotsubo at its release in 2004.

⁶ This is based on Leheny's (2006: 49) argument, in which he commented on Kazuhiro Kiuchi's manga *Be-Bop High School* (1983-2003). This manga models the protagonists Hiroshi Kato and Toru Nakama after street dancers Yoshibow and Seiji of a Japanese pioneer dance crew Be Bop Crew, but it did not reflect these two street dancers' street dance backgrounds.

To the audience's surprise, the characters in *Samurai Champloo* speak in the tones of today's Japanese youths or use loanwords in their dialogues, and they beatbox or battle each other in the Japanese martial arts style as if they are dancing. These contemporary usages of Japanese language and hip hop elements are discoverable in every episode of *Samurai Champloo*. In Episode 8, for example, the characters use the youths' Japanese language such as *nanpa* (flirt) as well as loanwords such as *hanii* (honey in terms of 'sweetheart') and *biggu* (big in terms of 'important') in their conversation. These usages are Watanabe's way of breaking the stereotype of the 'jidaigeki' (samurai drama) whose characters speak in an archaic manner. Also, the opening of the same episode begins with a beatbox performance of a samurai carrying his sword as if it is a microphone. Throughout the anime series, the samurai characters make hip hop music beats visible by doing dance moves. These seemingly unnecessary 'add-ons'—including the language use, the rap music, and street dance elements—were apparently Watanabe's intended devices to transcribe hip hop elements into the Japanese understanding of them in *Samurai Champloo*.

These cross-cultural transcriptions in Watanabe's *Samurai Champloo* not only fascinated (and still fascinate) audiences, but also attracted the attention of critics and scholars. As critic Rose Bridges commented, *Samurai Champloo* assembled four main elements of hip hop culture, such as using the Japanese hip hop soundtracks by Nujabes and DJ Tsutschie, 'graffiti art in the opening sequence,' 'the fight choreography that resembles breakdancing,' and scene changing 'with "record scratch" sound effects' (2017: 11-12). Bridges' comment accords with critic Jiwon Ahn's (2013) and Ian Condry's (2005) interpretation of the term 'champloo' in the anime title. Condry noted that this term literally means 'Okinawan stew' which refers to 'cultural remixing' (2005: 53). Meanwhile, Ahn pointed out that the term is an Okinawan loanword in Japanese, meaning 'something mixed' or referring to 'a popular local dish (*champurū*) created from stir-frying all sorts of different ingredients' (2013: 365). That is, the term, on one hand, indicates that hip hop elements are scattered throughout the anime through samurai appropriation and transcription of the Japanese culture (Bridges 2017: 12-13). On the other hand, this term 'can be understood as signifying the show's eclectic approach to representing time and space in its diegetic world' (Ahn 2013: 365). In this sense, Watanabe's *champloo* schemata—namely, anachronism and anapopism as mentioned earlier—avoided cultural misappropriation and enabled the anime to diversify the appearance of hip hop culture against a fictional, Japanese historical background.

Likewise, critic William L. Benzon argued that *Samurai Champloo* overstepped certain bounds by subverting postmodern interventions to Japanese culture and national identity (2008: 273-74), by pointing

out that the anime is ‘culturally eclectic’ (2008: 271). However, Benzon fell into the pitfall of defending ‘national identity’ introduced into the ‘narrative through anachronistic gesture’ (2008: 273). Benzon’s argument raised the question: Why does Watanabe’s *Samurai Champloo* turn out a successful hip-hop-themed anime through the extended Japanese understanding of hip hop, although the backdrop of the traditional samurai world and that of hip hop culture are quite a contrast? This question can be answered by returning to Taylor’s (1985) ‘language of perspicuous contrast.’

Based on Taylor’s theory, since hip hop cultural expression is outside the range of language available to Japanese graphic representations, the way in which manga and anime represent hip hop culture is to neither depict the culture that developed in objective reality with their defined expression nor to merely reframe hip hop cultural expression as it is into their fictitious world. Instead, the alternative approach, as Taylor proposed, is to develop a language of contrast by the discovery of the obvious differences between hip hop cultural practices and manga or anime interpretations of it. This alternative language requires an alteration of self-understanding in the first place so that it can extend the understanding of both cultures. Inoue’s *Tokyo Tribe-2* stopped short at the first step, whereas Watanabe, by using anachronistic and anapostopic schemata in *Samurai Champloo*, further advanced this alternative language for the two cultures.



Figure 3.4: The scene illustrates the battle between Mugen and Jin, where Mugen performs his swordplay-breakdance movements. Source: Shin’ichirō Watanabe (2004-05).

There is no exact translation for hip hop elements in a Japanese cultural setting. Watanabe's schemata of using anapopism and anachronism in *Samurai Champloo* was his approach to transcribing hip hop culture into a fictitious, Japanese historical setting. These schemata seemed to hybridise two slightly distinct cultures into one Japanese narrative by objectivising hip hop culture. However, that was not Watanabe's intention. Instead, hip hop elements and the Tokugawa historical background in *Samurai Champloo* are such a 'perspicuous contrast.' Watanabe framed them in an anime representation so as to transcribe hip hop culture into an alternative language and in doing so, he provided a fictitious space for the understanding of hip hop and anime culture.



Figure 3.5: Mugen flips over and performs a windmill move. Source: Shin'ichirō Watanabe (2004-05).

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show typical examples from scenes in *Samurai Champloo* that illustrate the use of such alternative languages for hip hop and manga or anime. These are the street dance scenes, that is, the physical/dance movements of hip hop that correspond to Japanese martial arts. The most explicit is from Episode 1, when the protagonists Mugen and Jin, a rōnin (masterless samurai), first meet in the teahouse where the heroine Fuu works, and when Mugen battles the Daikan's (local magistrate's) subordinates. In the teahouse, Mugen attacks Jin for mistaking him for a Yagyū swordplay master raised by the local magistrate, and they begin to battle with swords. While they are fighting, the scene runs with breakdance music. Mugen's action is skilfully depicted with a mixture of Japanese martial arts swordplay and his windmill breakdancing moves (see Figure 3.4). Such windmill moves are also seen before the Daikan orders his subordinates to decapitate Mugen and Jin for their crime of accidentally killing the magistrate's son Shibui Tomonoshin.

Nevertheless, as soon as the subordinates come toward him, Mugen flips over using windmill moves and kicks them away (see Figure 3.5). Then, Jin cuts the rope tied to his wrist with a subordinate's sword and sets Mugen free, and they begin to battle. The following scene again illustrates the combination of breakdance moves and Mugen's swordplay with a percussive beat background music. Both the Mugen vs. Jin battle scene and the battle scene against the Daikan's subordinates are framed in a 'call and response' structure. Namely they combine the inseparability of music and dance, as well as the interactions between swordplay and the physical movements of hip hop. As an alternative language, these scenes clearly demonstrate how *Samurai Champloo* has successfully altered the understanding of breakdance.

This is not to say that breakdance is the only dance style that Watanabe intended to transcribe. Rather, his version of breakdance is only one of his understandings of street dance culture, which is related to the term 'hip hop dance' or 'street dance'. Street dance, as an umbrella term, may refer to the following two categories: (a) uprocking, hip hop dance (or breakdance, b-boying and b-girling) that emerged from the Bronx in New York City; and (b) the funk styles including popping, locking that came from the US West Coast (see Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009: 59-61). Notably, these dance styles, as hip hop cultural historian and activist Jorge Pabon (2006: 25) commented, are 'performed best with [their] appropriate musical influences'. However, from his viewpoint, 'hip hop dance' would be a more suitable umbrella term to refer to these dance forms. Regardless of Pabon's view, Yoshito Sekiguchi posits that the term 'street dance' emerged in the US when the dance styles of the West Coast came to New York (quoted in Arikuni 2018: 44).⁷ In the Japanese context, sutoriito dansu (street dance) turned out to be more common and well-known after several dance booms (see OHJI 2001), because, as street dance scholar Akihiro Arikuni (2018: 46) pointed out, street dance appeared abundantly with its promotion on Japanese television from the 1990s and the Internet from the 2000s. Watanabe's hip hop-themed *Samurai Champloo* was one example of its appearance on television. This physical movement of hip hop was intended to transcribe not only 'breakdance', but also the various street dance styles well-known around the world.

As such, street dance elements are widely used in *Samurai Champloo*. Apart from Mugen's swordplay breakdance moves, he also exhibits breakdance moves in the opening scene of some episodes, as

⁷ In this sense, the call name of the dancers would be 'street dancers' in general. When a dancer is specified by the dance style they practise, their call name would be b-boy/b-girl (breakdancer), popper (popdancer), locker (lockdancer), etc., as common usages in Japan and the US.

does Fuu. Furthermore, Bunta Ogura, a minor character playing a flunky, makes the wave move (a routine movement of popping) in Episode 8, when he sees Fuu in a restaurant. The wave-move scene is humorously represented, albeit short, in the anime. Either way, these street dance scenes demonstrated by samurai manifest Watanabe's extensive understanding of the corporal expressions in hip hop culture.

In other words, the cultural expressions of 'breakdance' differ from that of swordplay, and they rarely share anything in common. However, Watanabe's rendition of street dance through Mugen's breakdancing swordplay manifests Taylor's 'language of perspicuous contrast'. The scene of Mugen's breakdancing swordplay distorts the understanding of both cultures to a certain extent. But Mugen's breakdance moves emphasise the self-description in street dance culture as embedded in the 'call and response' structure, while the transcription of dance into swordplay is a process of challenging self-description in Japanese martial arts. As a result, this scene indeed illustrated what Taylor further delineated in his theory: the alternative language generated by one culture to understand another would challenge both cultures' self-definition and extend 'the language of human possibilities' (1985: 131). In this sense, progressing from Inoue's representation of hip hop culture in *Tokyo Tribe-2* to Watanabe's schemata of anachronistic or anachronistic samurai world, is a method set up ingeniously both to understand the self-definition (cultural expression) of hip hop culture, and to challenge the alteration of Japanese self-definition in anime, and vice versa.

To shift the focus from anime scenes to ongoing cultural issues around the world, what Watanabe's *Samurai Champloo* offers is more than an extended understanding of hip hop culture or an alternative language for intercultural exchange. As mentioned in the chapter's introduction, Condry (2005: 53) assumes that the setting of *Samurai Champloo* was designed to draw attention to racial or ethnic discrimination in Japan. Since hip hop was developed in a diasporic reality and always aligns itself with the oppressed, to what extent does hip-hop themed anime or manga intertwine with the 'real' world? To take this question into account, Condry's assumption can be more comprehensive, because what Watanabe intended to reveal is not only how hip hop's cultural practices can be appropriated by anime representation, but also by how its cultural expression articulates the diasporic realities and consciousness to fight social injustice.

Take for example Akitomo 'Aki' Ri, an urban/street dancer or hip hop practitioner from Kobe, Japan, becoming involved with the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Aki wrote on his Facebook wall after he took part in the Osaka march protesting the George Floyd killing on 7 June 2020: 'As a promoter of the culture, I would like to fight for those who developed and are developing hip hop and street culture so as to secure

their dignity and interests' (Ri 2020: n.pag.). He also uploaded a selfie videoclip in which a signboard reads 'Yellow Pearl Supports Black Power!' Born into a fourth generation of Chinese residents in Japan, Aki has always been concerned about social injustice, which includes racial, ethnic, gender discrimination and so on. Meanwhile, he thinks that understanding hip hop culture and adopting a 'hip hop attitude' can make social injustice right. Throughout his process of understanding hip hop culture, watching *Samurai Champloo* has been one way that Aki was cognisant of the culture.⁸ From his example, it is evident that the anime not only transcribed hip hop into an anachronistic and anachronistic representation, but that it also provided an understanding of its cultural expression, one that suggests diasporic realities and consciousness.

Conclusion

This chapter articulates an understanding of the political aspects of street dance while at the same time exemplifying Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast'. If Inoue's *Tokyo Tribe* series was a milestone for manga that revealed the development of Japanese hip hop culture and the policing of (street/club) dance in the first hand, then Watanabe's anime *Samurai Champloo* advanced the meaning and possibility of Japanese manga and anime with their diversified hip hop elements. Furthermore, *Samurai Champloo* has succeeded in synchronising Japanese youth's street dance and hip hop interests with manga and anime. This has provided a better understanding of the cultural and socio-political expressions of hip hop.

With Inoue's and Watanabe's contributions, hip hop-themed manga has increased since the 2000s. For instance, *Street Dance Classroom: Master with Manga* (2017), written by Kyota Shibano, is a street dance-themed manga that guides readers on how to do the dance moves. I consider Shibano's work a progressive example that warrants further investigation along the lines of the hip hop discussion presented in this chapter. Moreover, hip hop-themed manga or anime now even challenges their own possibilities, as can be seen from the example of the up-to-date manga series *Shonen in the Hood* (2020-present) by graffiti writer SITE (aka Ghetto Hollywood). SITE's manga tackles social issues of low-income housing estate, drug abuse, and foreign residents in the satellite cities of Tokyo, against the background of 1996 Japanese hip hop culture with storylines that trace to his personal experience. From *Tokyo Tribe-2* to *Shonen in the Hood*, hip

⁸ Aki mentioned the anime several times in personal gatherings. His insights as summarised here are based on several personal conversations without record between June 2018 and December 2020 approximately.

hop-themed manga depicts the transition from rebellious and violent behaviour to tackling Japanese social issues and speaking up for social injustice.

Finally, hip hop visual arts have also appropriated manga or anime materials through digital sampling. The music video for Nicki Minaj's 'Chun Li' (2018), directed by Steven Klein, for example, is controversial, yet worthy of further consideration for the 'cultural appropriation' of Japanese anime materials in hip hop. This music video combines several Asian signifiers such as Japanese anime's explosive effects, a tattoo of Chinese characters, and coolie hats, along with others. Critic Andrew Chow opposed the mixing of Asian signifiers because it 'conflates many Asian cultures into an Orientalist mess' (2018: n.pag.). However, Chow's criticism is too judgemental and intolerant, if compared to Gilroy's insight into hip hop culture, i.e., the aesthetic rules that govern the culture are 'premised on a dialectic of rescuing appropriation and recombination' (1993: 103-04). In this regard, it is not surprising that the music video for 'Chun Li' took cutting and mixing Japanese anime materials with hip hop elements through digital sampling for granted. Instead, it is a subsequent refinement of the cultural practices that hip hop culture grew out of. This corresponds to the 'call and response' structure, in which hip hop culture could dialogue with manga or anime with the condition that it alters its self-understanding to generate an alternative language. In this sense, the antiphonic structure is not only a musical concept, but it can also be a powerful appliance to understand the 'bodily' cultural expression such as dancing in relation to music, including its rhythms and the sonic space of social awareness and emotional connection the structure created. At the same time, this graphic and digital hip hop space also ended up manifesting hip hop's 'streetness'. As a result of the cross-cultural extension of the Afro-diasporic antiphony in popular culture, hip hop enriches Japanese manga and anime, and creates a new genre of representation that parallels the 'real' world of (fictional) graphic narratives, which in part raises awareness of specific social issues.

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In the next chapter, I will focus on the 'dancing body' in hip hop film representation to examine the cultural interplay between the bodily, cultural expression developed upon the 'call and response' structure and Chinese cultural practices. Meanwhile, my analyses of the hip hop film representation or transnational hip hop spaces contextualise Chinese political atmosphere and social conditions. In this account, I will provide an insight into the diversity and the 'bodily' engagement of sociopolitical conscious hip hop in the Chinese cultural context while exploring the possibilities of 'call and response' to generate extensions of expressive (local) cultural practices.

CHAPTER 4

Hip Hop against Gender Roles: Transformed Yingge Performance under Street Dance Disguise in Chinese Film *Ying Ge Hun*

Introduction

This chapter explores the ‘cultural appropriation’ of street dance in Yi Huang’s 2019 Teochew-Mandarin film *Ying Ge Hun* (‘The soul of Yingge’) as a response to the criticism of street dance’s male dominance. This will be accomplished by examining the fictional cinematic representation of ‘Yingge hip hop’, a Chinese folk dance with hip hop alteration, performed by a dance crew under the management of the female street dancer Wenqi from Guangdong, China. As an intangible cultural heritage of Teoswa, present Yingge (literally ‘hero song’) is a performative folk dance, but it was a masculine group dance formed with martial arts, plays and its facial makeup, as well as rites of subduing demons and evils, including through dancing and shouting (see Wang 2018: 32; Wang 2017: 71; Yi 2008: 53-54).¹ Street dance, by contrast, is a hip hop element considered to develop within a male society by the youths suffering from adversity in the US since the 1970s. Hip hop culture beginning with its dance elements, i.e. ‘breakdancing’, arrived in China in the 1980s through Joel Silberg’s 1984 film *Breakin’* through the diffusion of hip hop around the world.² Such worldwide diffusion has triggered ‘cultural interplays’ between hip hop elements and other cultural practices or social realities, as I mentioned previously. French rappers, for example, are both socially conscious and realistic since the contents of their rap mainly focus on the fight against discrimination and on ghetto life involving drug trade or gang war issues. Chinese hip hop, however, tends to alter its expression by synchronising two different cultural practices because it developed in twists and turns. Hip hop coming across Yingge dance is only one example, but the significance is that ‘Yingge hip hop’ has created a new way of non-verbal expression for the two different cultural practices.

¹ Also known as Chaoshan, Teoswa is a contraction of the names of two cities—namely, Teochew (Chaozhou) and Swatow (Shantou)—in today’s Canton (Guangdong), China. Although it is a part of Guangdong Province, the spoken language in the area is the Chaoshan dialect of Min, which is similar to Hokkien (Southern Min language).

² Joel Silberg’s *Breakin’* (1984) is also known as *Breakdance: The Movie* due to its release in different countries (see DeFrantz 2014: 123).

LaBoskey described the gestures in street dance battles as ‘the male ego on trial’, and the battle dancefloor a ‘male-dominated realm’ (2001: 113), where it is assumedly so dangerous that the b-boys often discourage b-girls from getting involved (2001: 114). The parallel masculinity appears in Yingge, too. However, Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (2019) is retold in a peculiar way. His film casts Taiwanese street dancer Yide ‘Popping Ed’ Tian as Ade, the hero, who teams a dance crew with local friends, and Yan-Jhen ‘Nikki’ Chen as the heroine Wenqi, who Ade entreats to lead the crew and choreograph Yingge with street dance moves. Although it retells how the younger generation preserved and passed on Yingge dance, *Ying Ge Hun* manifested itself as a Chinese hip hop film through the cultural interplay between hip hop and Yingge. The hip hop-altered Yingge dance appears in the final performance number in the film, in which Huang depicted the fictional Yingge dance in ‘street dance’ disguise choreographed by Wenqi. This final performance number in Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* has created an intervention of female representation in two distinctive dance forms considered to be male-dominated cultural practices. As a result, the final performance number Huang depicted provides an alternative to reconsider the agenderness of two distinctive dance forms.

Nonetheless, like the first step of transcription of hip hop in manga or anime, as I examined earlier, street dance and Yingge hardly share a common language. That is to say, Huang would have to pass through a process of extending both cultures’ self-understanding to make his innovation of ‘Yingge hip hop’ possible. In this sense, the theoretical framework, which I established by borrowing Taylor’s (1985) concept of ‘a language of perspicuous contrast’ and Gilroy’s (1993) observation of the ‘call and response’ structure underlying hip hop culture, would be useful. While I have examined the manga and anime representation of hip hop with this framework in the last chapter, I will utilise it again to analyse the ‘cultural appropriation’ of street dance, together with other hip hop elements, in Huang’s fictional Yingge representation of transformed Yingge performance, by arranging the framework with a focused account into dance cultures. Examining the ongoing social atmosphere and media restrictions in China, this chapter unfolds into two main sections by pinpointing the hip hop-altered Yingge performance and how it grapples with two focal issues. First, the chapter explores to what extent Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* appropriated hip hop elements to create ‘Yingge hip hop’ against the backdrop of the strict media censorship imposed by the Chinese authorities. Second, this chapter also explores how the film’s insertion of female representation in the altered dance forms gainsaid the criticism that feminine voice is missing in the street dance society. For this matter, by drawing on Huntington’s (2007) argument that street dance gender roles are forced to be separated as how Euro American society understood and enacted them, I argue that the innovation of ‘Yingge hip hop’

suggest hip hop's agenderness, especially from the perspective of its dance community.

Exploring Representations of Female Dancers in Street Dance Filmography

When hip hop became a craze in the US, its cultural elements quickly appeared in American media coverage. Likewise, street dance elements, together with other hip hop elements, massively manifest in TV programmes and movies such as *Soul Train* (1971-2006) and Charlie Ahearn's 1983 film *Wild Style*. As Huntington (2007) argued, the understandings of Euro American society have determined the gender roles in hip hop's dance culture. Therefore, most of the street dance representations in these media demonstrated masculinity and turned out to be male-centred. Schloss's (2009) research on b-boy and b-girl culture directed attention to this problem, too. As he pointed out, the term b-boying, which refers to the street dance form developed in New York City, is not only 'normative' but also 'the projection of masculinity itself' (Schloss 2009: 64). Nevertheless, Schloss also argued that the central ideology of dance judges a b-boy or b-girl by their skills rather than their gender (2009: 66). This accords with Huntington's (2007) assertion on the feminine voices of street dance. She emphasises that the feminine voice has 'always been a part of hip hop, but the media focuses so much on men that the women are left out' (Huntington 2007: 85). Although the feminine voices were missing in most of the media coverage, several media such as TV programme, street dance films and documentaries in relation to hip hop's dance culture have showcased the footage of female dancers or used their dance performance to develop storylines, while exposing hip hop to the world.

In this regard, the presence and the representation of female dancers in these media, as researcher Jenny Sky Fung (2014) pointed out, provide a way to see 'their understanding of gender in hip-hop culture' (2014: 38). Besides, not only the fictional street dance films but also documentaries and TV programmes concerning the culture captured the presence of female dancers. For example, Israel's documentary *The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-Boy* (2002) interviewed b-boys, DJs, graffiti writers and hip hop pioneers, as well as leaders of the hip hop art movement. Israel included two video clips that capture the presence of b-girl in his documentary. One is of an unknown 'b-girl' dancing, and the other shows the scenes when b-girl Baby Love raps and sings in the music video of '(Hey You) The Rock Steady Crew' (1983) performed by Rock Steady Crew, with which she was affiliated for three years. However, in his cut of the music video, Israel didn't show the dance performance of Baby Love at all. Another presence of a b-girl in Israel's documentary goes to the rolling credits, where several dancers such as B-girl Asia One showcase their dance skills. B-girl Asia One is known as an activist, an ambassador for hip-hop and a b-girl visionary. Although

she showcased her dance in the rolling credits, director Israel didn't reveal her identity. Nor did Israel include her interview in his documentary. It might be true that there were only a few notable b-girls back in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, it is a pity that Israel couldn't mention a few b-girls, such as Majestic Rockers' Laneski, NYC's legendary Rokafella and Da Funky Style Crew's Nadia, and that the female dancer was made into a nameless performer in his documentary *The Freshest Kids*.

By contrast, the gender dynamics of street dancers portrayed in the TV programme *Soul Train* on-air in syndication from 1971 to 2006 are more balanced than those in *The Freshest Kids*. Throughout more than thirty years, *Soul Train* (1971-2006) had featured guests, most of them being kids then, dancing to funk, soul, R&B, disco, hip hop—that is, the music genres then up-to-date in the nightclubs (see Austen 2005: 97-108).³ The dancers would throw their dance steps into the background music in different genres on the stage of the programme. Don Cornelius, the first host and executive producer of the TV programme, would present the dance performances in the show with 'the Soul Train line', where female and male dancers showcased their dance equally. Besides, Cornelius also made some arrangements to the dance line to keep the audience's attention. As Austen (2005: 105) put it, '[t]he Soul Train line ceased to be a couples dance and became two lines segregated by sex. The cameras gave the female dancers (often doing strip club moves) long, sensuous ogles, punctuated by tiny bursts of male dancers doing intense acrobatics so that their five seconds would be memorable'. However, the way *Soul Train* portrayed female dancers, as Fung (2014: 39) commented, 'could not counter the already dominating masculine images and male aesthetics associated with hip-hop that was growing to be the definitive representations of Black Americans and hip-hop culture'. No matter how media representation has portrayed female street dancers, they are always catch the eyes of their audience, which is not confined to the representations in the nonfiction media.

Apart from the street dance nonfiction mentioned above, Stan Lathan's *Beat Street* (1984) is one of the street dance films featuring b-girls and b-boys, MCs, DJs and graffiti writers, as well as hip hop practitioners either as fictional characters or as themselves to unfold its storyline intertwined with 'the

³ I abbreviated my discussion of *Soul Train* in the details that follow, and only focused on the even ratio of male and female dancers on screen in the TV programme. For more information on *Soul Train* (not limited to its television syndication), please refer to Jake Austen's *TV-A-Go-Go: Rock on TV from American Bandstand to American Idol* (2005), which provides the documentation of the *Soul Train* show broadcasted in its early times and how the show engaged with popular cultures such as hip hop and street dance.

communal bonding, criminality, aesthetic innovation, and youthful exuberance endemic to the genre' (DeFrantz 2014: 121). The significance of *Beat Street* is that the film 'valued an emotional relationship between young people of color committed to their own choices as emerging artists amid a nuanced world that included contemporary classical music and dance as well as hip-hop culture', as black social dance researcher Thomas DeFrantz (2014: 123) put it. Besides, *Beat Street* (1984) captured dance footage, in which several female street dancers showcased their dynamic dance moves. Lathan's *Beat Street* featured b-girl Baby Love, for example, as a member of Bronx Rocker (the Rock Steady Crew). Regardless of her short presence in the film, Baby Love appears in several dance battle scenes, where she and her crew battle the Beat Street Crew (the New York City Breakers). Moreover, popper Peaches also made a cameo in Lathan's film. As Fung (2014: 38) pointed out, Peaches's quick cameo appearance 'was meant to highlight female popper'. To this point, street dance films like Lathan's *Beat Street* have reflected the reality that female dancers are fewer than male dancers on the dance floor. Nevertheless, the street dance film Silberg's *Breakin'* (1984), different from *Beat Street*, has altered through the 'Hollywoodification', as in DeFrantz's (2014: 126) term, that brought 'cultural exchange' between hip hop and other dance genres while featuring female dancers to unfold its storyline.

Silberg's *Breakin'* starred American former dancer and actress Lucinda Dickey as the protagonist Kelly 'Special K' Bennett, whose dancing career changes from being a jazz dancer to becoming a street dancer after meeting two street dancers, Ozone and Turbo. Besides, the film also featured female locker Ana 'Lollipop' Sanchez, who acted as a member of the antagonist's crew 'Electro Rock'. Set in California while recruiting female dancers, the film unfolded with Kelly's increasing understanding of hip hop culture and the shift of her dance performance from jazz dance to the hybridisation of jazz and street dance. After Special K engaged with Ozone and Turbo, who lost against 'Electro Rock' in a dance battle, they team up as a troupe to enrol in a dance competition whose requirements follow 'traditional' and 'classic' dance styles. However, their performance in the audition displays the rebellious spirits of hip hop, to which the judges give the troupe a standing ovation, albeit surprised at first. Winning the competition, Kelly keeps on with her dancing life as a professional while Ozone and Turbo are active in the street dance community.

The plot Silberg created in *Breakin'* is the key to make the film gain the attention of its audience. DeFrantz, for example, digested the plot and pointed out that *Breakin'* corroborated the 'Hollywood hip-hop body' (2014: 126). As he put it, the film manifest itself as '[a] representative of racial and cultural exchange', 'an indicator of the possibility for progressive group politics' and 'a method of resistance against structures

of hierarchical, old-guard authority' (DeFrantz 2014: 126). Furthermore, the representation of Kelly in *Breakin'* also attests to Schloss's (2009: 66) argument that street dance's ideology judges a dancer not by their gender or other identities, but by their dance skills. As a result, *Breakin'* turned out to be a significant film representation of hip hop.

With the circulation of the film *Breakin'* worldwide, the female representation of street dance also manifests and transforms in the later hip hop film production, such as Huang's Chinese hip hop film *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). *Ying Ge Hun* is set in the Teochew area in Guangdong. The film retells the story of the hero Ade, who practises Yingge dance in his childhood reluctantly, coming back to Teochew due to his business failure and resuming his dance skills with the help of the heroine street dancer Wenqi. Like that in *Breakin'*, Ade and Wenqi form a troupe with their local friends to enrol in the Yingge dance competition. They finally receive a standing ovation from the audience in the competition with hip hop Yingge dance forms.

Featuring a female representation of Yingge dance and hip hop elements, Huang's film ingeniously synchronised Yingge dance with hip hop. In this sense, like the film *Breakin'* (1984), *Ying Ge Hun* is another significant dance filmography representing the feminist perspective of street dance and Yingge dance. Nevertheless, the film is more complicated due to the 'cultural interplay' between Yingge and hip hop and the innovative way Huang arranged the final dance performance number of 'Yingge hip hop'. In addition to Huang's innovative arrangement in the last dance scene of *Ying Ge Hun*, which I will discuss in a moment by drawing from Linder's (2011) insight into the final dance footage in cross-cultural dance films, the 'cultural interplay' between Yingge and hip hop is worthy of discussion. It is because Huang's female representation of Yingge hip hop not only provides possibilities for both dance forms to extend their ways of expression, but it also triggers hip hop transformation. In other words, Huang has created an 'alternative language' for two distinctive cultural expressions to stimulate 'cultural interplay' in *Ying Ge Hun* by featuring the dancers' skills in two dance forms. I will thus arrange my framework to explain how Huang made such 'cultural interplay' possible and elaborate on how street dance synchronises with other dance forms as follows.

The language of perspicuous contrast: Street Dance vs. Yingge Dance

As in last chapter, my framework has provided an insight into the synchronisation of two 'perspicuous contrast' ways of cultural expression, i.e., the synchronisation of the means of representation (of an alien culture or its cultural elements) in manga and anime, as well as the means of expression in hip

hop, as an invention of the black expressive culture. In this chapter, we examine the encounter of hip hop and Yingge dance from the aspect of ‘dancing body’. In terms of bodily expression, it seems that street dance and Yingge dance are not in ‘perspicuous contrast’ at all if we take their male-centred developmental backgrounds into account. However, street dancers usually create improvisational dance routines with the adaptable and remixable ‘foundations’ of a dance style, which makes their performance discursive yet expressive.⁴ On the other hand, Yingge dance perspicuously contrasts with street dance since Yingge dance grew out of the Chinese opera performance, and its determined dance routines turned out to be concentrated in storytelling, albeit expressive to a certain extent.⁵ As a result, Taylor’s idea of ‘a language of perspicuous contrast’ (1985) can be useful to explain how Yingge dance synchronises with street dance in Huang’s film representation.

As mentioned previously, Taylor argued that as we challenge ‘their language of self-understanding, we may also challenge ours’ (1985: 125). He thus avoided two common errors in social science by designing an ‘interpretive approach’.⁶ To apply Taylor’s (1985) principle to Huang’s film representation of Yingge and street dance, neither did Huang assume he can approach both dance culture from ‘objective standpoint’, nor did he take both culture’s bodily expression with ‘ultimate seriousness’. In this sense, the self-understandings of Wenqi and Ade, as representative of hip hop and Yingge in Huang’s film depiction, are challenged to articulate alterations of dance skills so as to synchronise their distinctive bodily expressions. In Taylor’s words, it would be the result of ‘an alteration in [Yingge and hip hop’s] self-understanding’ (1985: 130) in relation to the film representation of ‘Yingge hip hop’ that might be ‘distorted or inadequate in some respects’ (1985: 125) at the beginning, while at the same time challenging the self-definitions of the two dance cultures. This process of ‘interpretive approach’ found in Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (2019) echoes my interpretation of Taylor’s (1985) argument in the last chapter. Namely, Huang provided an extended ‘two-way’ understanding of hip hop and street dance when they encounter one another in the film.

To this point, the diffusion of hip hop into Yingge dance also gains the possibilities of extending

⁴ For further details about the ‘foundations’ of street dance styles, see Chapter 5, where I will discuss the formation of street dance.

⁵ I will clarify the formation of Yingge dance later in this chapter.

⁶ Earlier in this thesis, I have discussed these two common errors in research related to the social sciences, which Taylor (1985) avoided. See Chapters 1 and 3 for further details.

the self-understanding of hip hop culture. In this sense, to borrow Gilroy's (1993) observation as I mentioned previously, 'call and response' structure enables the culture to synchronise its cultural expression with other cultural practices in terms of the alteration of its self-understanding. That is, by appropriating the cultural practices of Yingge dance, hip hop cultural expression can be more extensive, too.⁷ Therefore, the meaning of hip hop would be extended, whereas the cultural expression of Yingge would have more possibilities to the extent that Yingge dancers alter their bodily expression to regenerate the tradition of Yingge and create hybridised dance forms. Either way, the synchronisation of Yingge dance and street dance in Huang's film representation is a 'two-way' extension of two bodily expressive cultures, which creates possibilities for the birth of 'Yingge hip hop'. However, this synchronisation appears in the recent development of hip hop culture in China despite its arrival in the mid-1980s.

Hip Hop Diffusion in China: Revival Booms, Restraints and Regeneration

Beginning with street dance, hip hop culture became popular amongst Chinese youth in the mid-1980s, which echoes the result of the hip hop diffusion into Japan and Taiwan. The popularity of diffused hip hop, as researcher Zhang (2010: 6-7) observed, soared with the release of Joel Silberg's 1984 film *Breakin'* and the circulation of street dance video clips while the prevalence of videotape recorders expanded in China. Regardless of its popularity, hip hop didn't develop full-scale in the country for the reasons such as the conservative, closed society, the urban-rural divide, and the strict media censorship in China. On one hand, these reasons restricted the development of hip hop in China. This restriction divided its development into several booms. On the other hand, the above-mentioned reasons are the factors that triggered the transformation of hip hop and gave birth to Huang's creation of 'Yingge hip hop' in his film *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). In this regard, to analyse how Huang's film came to the point of regenerating hip hop and thus creating 'Yingge hip hop' through synchronisation of Yingge and street dance, it is crucial to quickly review the development of diffused hip hop culture in China by examining its revival booms and the policy of restraints imposed on the culture by the authorities first.

⁷ Also see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, where I explain my theoretical framework of this study and the concept of the 'call and response' structure, which I developed upon Gilroy's (1993) view of this structure.

Revival Booms and Policy of Restraint in Hip Hop Diffusion

In the first boom of hip hop diffusion in China, Jin Tao was the earliest dancer who adopted street dance styles and choreographed his dance routines with these dance forms for Zhuangzhuang Tian's 1988 film *Yaogun Qingnian* ('Rock the youth') (see Zhang 2010: 7). Because of several reasons in the 1980 Chinese context, the circulation of street dance culture ended quickly. One reason is that information from the outside world was still strictly cut off in China and that there was no market for street dance culture during the time, regardless of Deng Xiaoping's opening-up China policies. Also, street dance's image became linked to social problems such as riff-raff or drug abuse during this period. These issues caused street dance to develop a negative image, resulting in the Chinese general public labelling the young dancers who practised street dance as ruffians. It seemed that the first boom rapidly disappeared from the urban landscape in China, but it revived when China started to have more cultural exchanges with foreign countries.

During the 1990s, Japanese dancers reintroduced street dance culture to China, and the culture spread out from Guangdong, Shanghai and Beijing. Amongst these three areas, the development in Guangdong began the earliest, as Zhang (2010) observed. The street dance cultures in Guangdong, Shanghai and Beijing grew out of the influences from other areas in East Asia. For example, Zhang (2010: 8-9) observed that street dancers from Shanghai gained more connections with Hongkonger and Taiwanese dancers and practised those other regions' dance styles, whereas street dancers from Guangdong tended to have more influences of Japanese street dance culture. On the other hand, the 'Hallyu Korean Wave' became a craze that brought the boom of street dance in Beijing (Zhang 2010: 8-9). Hip hop then diffused into every township and provincial capital in China from Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Shenyang, Kunming to Chongqing (Zhang 2010: 9). Furthermore, during the second boom of hip hop culture's development in China, several street dance TV programmes have been on the air since 2002 in China with a different image from that of the negative one in the 1980s.

Hip hop culture in China has reached its third boom since 2017, especially in terms of the popularity of rap music, while facing new challenges of restraint due to governmental propaganda. Not only street dance is in audiences' daily lives through TV programmes, but there also have been programmes for MCing such as *Zhongguo Xin Shuochang* (formerly known as *Zhongguo You Xiha; The Rap of China*) on the air since 2017. The term xiha ('hip hop'), as Zhang explained, connotes the meaning of not only rap music or 'the culture itself' but also 'street dancing' in China (2010: 8). In other words, even though 'hip hop' developed with its diffusion from the US and other areas in East Asia into China, hip hop culture transformed

into a Chinese way of understanding. Following several hip hop booms, 'Chinese hip hop' manifests itself in the Chinese mass media. However, the TV programmes are strictly censored and restricted by the Chinese authorities, especially when the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China (SAPPRFT)—the country's top media regulator—has imposed the new rules on the contents of entertainment programmes since 19 January 2018.

The censorship on the programmes relating hip hop culture dictates these new rules, translated into English by Quackenbush and Chen (2018: n.pag.) as follows.

Absolutely do not use actors whose heart and morality are not aligned with the party and whose morality is not noble.

Absolutely do not use actors who are tasteless, vulgar and obscene.

Absolutely do not use actors whose ideological level is low and have no class.

Absolutely do not use actors with stains, scandals and problematic moral integrity.

Chinese online media press *Sina* interpreted the rules promulgated by the SAPPRFT as explicitly requiring 'that programs should not feature actors with tattoos [or depict] hip hop culture, sub-culture (non-mainstream culture) and dispirited culture (decadent culture)' (quoted in Quackenbush and Chen 2018: n.pag.). Furthermore, this set of rules can also be considered to be a method of controlling the artists' creative minds. That is to say, this set of rules is an explicit 'cultural censorship' authorised by government propaganda to oppress objection, to restrain the importation of foreign cultures and to 'preserve' Chinese culture and 'tradition'. What is worse, it is a method by which the Chinese authorities make sure the artists' performances would not be deliberately against the government.

Regeneration of Chinese Hip Hop

From its arrival to this point of the policy of restraint in hip hop culture imposed by the Chinese authorities, hip hop has developed within several booms in China. Instead of ceasing its diffusion, hip hop culture always found sufficient vitality to regenerate itself in Chinese contexts while negotiating with the hindrance to its development process. However, to take Zhang's (2010: 8) explanation of 'xiha' into account, if hip hop music (that is, rapping or MCing) is banned, then street dance, as the extension of hip hop in terms of bodily movements, is banned in China as well. This restriction bomb dropped by the Chinese authorities has brought an inevitable transformation in Chinese hip hop culture.

Street dance and hip hop music performances on TV shows in response to the policy of restraint

in hip hop culture altered performers' ways of expression. For example, the Chinese rap singer Gai eventually added lyrics such as 'zuguo wansui' ('Hurray for Mother Country') in his performance, whereas the street dancers began to express concern for 'social care' in their dance performances. Street dancers in *Zhe! Jiushi Jiewu Di'erji (Street Dance of China II)* (2019), in particular, began displaying transformed street dance forms comprised of their social concerns, such as elderly care, by showcasing ageing dancers so as to urge their audiences to take care of their elder family members (Peng and Liu 2019: n.pag.). Such street dance performances, as critics Peng and Liu put it, follow the 'required' standard and promoted the 'collectivism' propagated by Chinese authorities. In fact, 'collectivism' is nearly synonymous with 'Han Chinese culture' in the PRC context. That the street dance performance concerned 'elderly care' connotes the concept of 'xiaodao' (filial piety) or 'jinglao' (respect for the aged) in Confucianism, one of the Sinocentric ideologies in (Han) Chinese history. As a result, the transformed street dance that Chinese street dancers showcased on the TV show *Street Dance of China II* is indeed the manifestation of 'collectivism' or the 'cooperativity' in the so-called 'Han Chinese tradition' in response to the policy of restriction in hip hop culture. In this sense, Chinese hip hop struggles with losing its power for resistance under the cultural censorship and intervention by Chinese authorities. It seems that none of these transformed performances in relation to the media censorship in China have anything to do with what hip hop as a counterculture was fighting against, nor could these performances carry on the 'knowledge' and the history of hip hop.

As a result, Chinese hip hop culture came to an intersection where the hip hop fans are divided into two groups: one accusing Chinese government's intervention in cultural expressions of hip hop and one supporting Chinese hip hop while promoting patriotism and 'Chinese tradition'. Under this division, Chinese hip hop with 'authorised' alterations also triggered hip hop transformations in verbal ways of expression. For instance, globally known Chinese rap collective Higher Brother utilises the indecipherability of 'mumble rap' as 'a way to rap about nothing in particular while being abundant in sonic aesthetics, emotional delivery and politics of being apolitical' (Lui 2021: 56). Higher Brother's strategy hence has 'exhibit[ed] its uniqueness as a local response to the state censorship in China', while creating a new trend of hip hop expression globally (Lui 2021: 56). Likewise, street dance also found an alternative to break through the Chinese policy of restraints in its cultural expression.

Ying Ge Hun: *Breakthrough in Chinese Hip Hop*

Director Yi Huang, for instance, has appropriated hip hop elements and inserted street dance moves

in his depiction of Yingge dance in his film *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). It is evident that while synchronising two cultural practices, Huang attempted to promote the Chinese traditional folk dance Yingge. As the press release for promoting the event ‘5 Yuan for Seeing a Movie’ held by the Administration of Film of Guangdong writes, ‘[u]sing Yingge dance—an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Teoswa—as an entry point, the film *Ying Ge Hun* merged popular culture street dance with traditional Yingge dance, which not only evokes people [its audience’s] nostalgia for ICH but also has a positive value orientation towards the inheritance of excellent traditional culture’ (see Huang 2020: n.pag.). These promotion words quoted from this press release accentuated the SAPPRT’s policy of restraint in the hip hop culture. In other words, Yi Huang’s Yingge dance film featuring hip hop elements was released after the new rules promulgated by SAPPRT, which resulted in the film following the ‘required’ standard and promoting ‘collectivism’.

In this regard, casting the hero and heroine for Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* is a knotty problem, but his taste of casting Popping Ed and Nikki is keen to attract the audience’s attention, while complying with the state’s standards. Both Popping Ed and Nikki, as representatives from Taiwan, have enrolled in the dance contest *Zhe! Jiushi Jiewu (Street Dance of China)* (2018), a popular online TV programme released by Youku after the Chinese authorities imposed ‘cultural censorship’ rules. Popping Ed, for example, won the first prize in the contest and signed with the Chinese entertainment company Cool Young.⁸ Because *Street Dance of China* was popular amongst the younger generation audience and it brought about another boom of ‘hip hop craze’ in China, starring Popping Ed and Nikki in *Ying Ge Hun* could ensure that box offices are doing a brisk business. Furthermore, it is also a way to convince Chinese hip hop fans that ‘Yingge hip hop’ is an alternative way of breaking through the ‘cultural censorship’ while extending the possibilities of supporting Chinese tradition or Chinese cultural practices.⁹

Nevertheless, *Ying Ge Hun* is more complicated than promoting ‘collectivism’ which centred on ‘the inheritance of excellent traditional culture’ (see Huang 2020: n.pag.) and at the same time catered to the mass market of Chinese hip hop. Instead, *Ying Ge Hun* corresponds to *Breakin’* (1984) to the extent of their

⁸ Popping Ed’s success in contests and his signing with a Chinese entertainment company were mentioned in our online video interview via WhatsApp on 20 March 2020.

⁹ Perhaps it is too political to be mentioned, but in fact, the Taiwanese nationality of Popping Ed and Nikki might be another factor that the SAPPRT approved of for the shooting script of *Ying Ge Hun* (2019), for their performance also stands for the ‘collectivism’ in terms of Cross-Strait unification by cultural exchange.

plots, both confirming ‘hip hop body’, as DeFrantz’s (2014: 126) insight into the plot of *Breakin’* (1984) mentioned earlier, in two distinctive cultural contexts. Namely, Huang’s film confirms ‘Chinese hip hop body’ in three important manifestations: as a representative of ‘cultural interplay’ between hip hop and Yingge, as an indicator of the possibility for a deconstruction of gender stereotype in hip hop communities (and in Yingge expression), and as a method of resistance against policies of restraint in any racial, ethnical, political and cultural expression, or against any oppression at all. In this sense, *Ying Ge Hun* turned out to be a significant Chinese ‘hip hop film’ (or precisely, ‘Ying-hop film’) produced in Teoswa—the ‘South’ of China—in the sense of compounding Yingge with hip hop elements.¹⁰ Moreover, that the film represents the storyline of the cultural inheritance of Yingge by casting street dancer Nikki as heroine Wenqi. This is not only a milepost in the hip hop film genre but also a breach of the deep-rooted traditional Chinese perspective of ‘zhongnan qingnü’ (son preference) or ‘nanzun nübei’ (male domination) in China.¹¹

Yingge Hip Hop: From Chinese Folk Dance to Agender Street Dance

Director Yi Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (2019) is a notable ‘hip hop film’ in that it struggled to break through the cultural censorship imposed upon the culture in China. However, this was concealed behind the film’s careful manoeuvres to synchronise hip hop with Yingge and wreck the male chauvinism in the Han Chinese folk-dance culture. In other words, the way Huang displayed ‘cultural interplay’ between Yingge and hip hop, as well as how he represented Yingge culture by casting female dancer Nikki as the protagonist in the film, are two schemes Huang installed in the film to break through the policy of restraint in cultural

¹⁰ Teoswa is spatially located in the south of China, and it has been hampered by economic underdevelopment, regardless of being one of the Special Economic Zones in recent years. Note that my assumption of Teoswa as ‘South’ of China is based on the newspaper article entitled ‘Zhuanjia: Shantou fazhan luohou liao tui xince bangfu’ (Expert: New policies might be implemented to resolve the underdevelopment in Shantou) released on 13 October 2020 by *Min Pao*.

¹¹ ‘Zhongnan qingnü’ (重男轻女) and ‘nanzun nübei’ (男尊女卑) are sexist terms in Chinese. While the former means ‘to value sons over daughters’ referring to ‘prejudice for sons’, the latter means ‘to put men over women’, denoting ‘male chauvinism’ and ‘subjection of women’. I will tackle how this patriarchal attitude manifests in *Ying Ge Hun* (2019) and how ‘Yingge hip hop’ breached this discrimination through the feminine voice, both in hip hop and Yingge dance culture, by borrowing the hip hop feminist perspective.

expressions imposed by the Chinese authorities. In this sense, these two schemes in Huang's *Ying Ge Hun* are thus worth examining. It is because Yingge dance and street dance didn't share any language in common except for their masculinity, but Huang created a fictional space for 'cultural interplay', where hip hop's bodily expression synchronised with Yingge's performative way through extending their possibilities in his film. As a result of such fictional space being created for 'cultural interplay', the female representation of hip hop and Yingge in Huang's film envisaged street dance's possibilities of extending its bodily expression with Yingge in both cinematic depiction and real world, which could gainsay the criticism that feminine voice is missing in the street dance society.

Male-Dominant Yingge Dance

Yingge dance was not a female art form at all. The formation of Yingge dance started approximately 400 years ago in the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty in the Teoswa region (Wang 2018: 31). As Yingge dance researcher Zhe-yun Yi (2008) discovered, its formation includes origins such as the Chinese opera Waijiang, Shaolin Monastery martial arts, Yangko rural folk dances, the legend of 'Jishiyu' (Timely Rain viz. Song Jiang) in the Chinese novel *Shui Hu Zhuan* (a.k.a *Water Margin*), and the Nuo folk religion (Yi 2008: 53-54). However, the most notable performance of Yingge dance is an excerpt from Chinese opera's storytelling which represents the episode of the Liangshan heroes saving the character Lu Junyi in the Chinese novel *Shui Hu Zhuan* (Liu 2011: 23-24; Wang 2018: 31; Chen 2011: 213). No matter where this folk-dance culture derived from, Yingge dance is male-centred due to the cultural practices of martial arts underlying the Chinese opera it appropriated, which as Wang (2018: 31) observed, has made people from Teoswa 'reminisce and worship heroes' through the dance.

Considered a masculine 'square dancing', present Yingge dance has become 'a way of expression for people to celebrate festivity' in China (Chen 2011: 213), while this masculine dance form transformed through the change of social condition in Chinese society (Wang 2017: 71).¹² For example, Yingge dance master Hanlong Chen has organised a mixed-sex Yingge dance crew for the 1958 Lunar New Year

¹² In China, square dancing or plaza dancing (广场舞; literally 'public square dance') is an exercise routine danced to music in squares or plazas in public spaces such as parks by a group of (elder) people. Also see Zhang and Xu's (2009) essay for the information on how Yingge dance functioned as an exercise and sport of all in Guangdong.

performance in Huamei Country of Chaoyang County and reformed a set of routines for female dancers thereafter in 1962 (Wang 2018: 31). As a result, folk dance researcher Wang (2018) argued that the birth of female Yingge dance reflected the shift of its gender-biased tradition from ‘zhongnan qingnü’ (prejudice for sons) to cultural ‘emancipation’ of women (2018: 31). In this sense, female Yingge dance supported and embodied New China’s propaganda of ‘gender equality’ (Wang 2018: 31). Besides, drawing on Teng’s perspective of art sociology (2006: 171), Wang added,

The manifestation of female Yingge dance, to a certain extent, has shifted the social status of women from Chaoshan, which ‘freed people from the numbness of habitual behaviour to discover new aspects and new characteristics of life, being a kind of liberation as well’. To the general public, emancipating women of the Chaoshan region from household chores to connect to society is liberation from preserved traditional perceptions. (Wang 2018: 32)¹³

Wang’s argument foresaw the potential of how female Yingge dance might affect the Chinese society, but on the other hand, he also foregrounded the limitation of female Yingge dance earlier in his essay.

As Wang (2017) addressed, female Yingge dance is not as prevalent as traditional Yingge dance since female dance crews only developed in some limited areas of Teoswa; meanwhile, most of the female Yingge dance crews still practise the dance notes that are choreographed for male dancers (Wang 2017: 71). The limitation of female Yingge dance is due to its formation having been derived from the Chinese opera. That is to say, the transformation of (female) Yingge dance requires new stimulation (in terms of ‘cultural interplay’ with another culture) to ‘challenge [its] self-definitions’ and ‘extend [its] language of human possibilities’, as in Taylor’s (1985: 131) words.

In fact, Yingge dance has adopted the tradition of Chinese opera, which does not allow women to perform on stage. As Wang (2018) pointed out, ‘traditional Yingge dance conventionally is performed by men’, whereas women are not allowed to play any part in the performance (2018: 31). Besides, in Chinese musical theatres, ‘even if men have to bend their gender and play female roles, they would not let women play their roles’ (Wang 2018: 31).¹⁴ Huang, for example, manifested this tradition in his film *Ying Ge Hun*

¹³ Note that I have paraphrased Wang’s (2018) words in my translation for the sake of ease of reading.

¹⁴ As Li (2011: 233) put it, the male-dominant value inevitably manifests in Chinese drama. Moreover, he argued that there is a logical connection between drama art concerning life issues and gender theory exploring the gender issues; hence, the introduction of gender criticism into the study of Chinese drama

(2019), in which street dancer Wenqi's father is furious when he learns that Wenqi will create a new Yingge dance choreography. He is angry because only men may inherit the skills and knowledge of Yingge, while the male Yingge dancer should always follow the traditional dance forms. However, in his dance film, Huang made Yingge dance encounter hip hop and street dance, which led to Yingge's challenge of its self-definition and triggered Yingge to extend its possibilities of bodily expression. In this sense, Huang's role setting of Wenqi as a female street dancer in *Ying Ge Hun* is so indispensable that this role also altered the cultural expressions of hip hop while amplifying the female voice of both street dance and Yingge dance culture.

Female Voice in Hip Hop from Day One

Director Huang's casting of Nikki as a female street dancer and the heroine Wenqi in his *Ying Ge Hun* was an audacious attempt. It is because hip hop culture, as researcher Damien Arthur highlighted, is 'a gender salient male enclave where masculinity is enacted by members [of the hip hop community], who often use sexism 'to feminise the other, and hence masculinise oneself' (2006: 114). Arthur argued that the gender performance in this culture is 'enacted through the performance of being "hard" [and] the repression of feminine traits', which limit female hip hop practitioners (2006: 114). However, focusing only on rap music, Arthur (2006), as a result, fell into the pitfall of his argument lacking a careful consideration of the inseparability of music and dance when it comes to hip hop culture.

To a certain extent, Arthur's observation of the mainstream hip hop artists reaffirming their 'masculinity' is penetrative (see Arthur 2006: 109-10), which corresponds to scholar Huntington's examination of (Eurocentric) male-dominant capitalism being played out on hip hop music and dance from a feminist perspective (see Huntington 2007: 83-84).¹⁵ As Huntington posited on a closer inspection, underground rap songs tend to criticise racism and often 'avoid perpetuating female exploitation', whereas mainstream media-driven street dance supports 'the definition of capitalistic success and the exploitation of women' (2007: 83-84). Furthermore, she theorised that although 'African American women have always been a part of hip hop dance', they were left out because of the overemphasised focus on men in the mainstream media (Huntington 2007: 85). In other words, 'sexual equivalence', as in Huntington (2007: 90)

would be a crucial issue in the anthropology of arts in China. See Li's (2011) essay for more details.

¹⁵ As well as being a marketing scholar, Carla Stalling Huntington is a dance history theorist, who writes numerous articles and books on dance and the performing arts.

words, or gender equality—one of the ethos that hip hop has articulated—lapsed into unconsciousness under the capitalist mainstream media’s power, which commodified its cultural elements through a male-centred perspective in Euro American society.

In this instance, Huang’s production of *Ying Ge Hun* would have to keep its representation of hip hop culture away from lapsing into such unconsciousness, regardless of the film’s actual setting. Nevertheless, the opening of Huang’s film begins with Ade’s narration retelling the reason why he restarted to practise Yingge dance, which he abandoned in his childhood. The capitalistic media seemed to have driven *Ying Ge Hun* into the male-dominant way of cinematic storytelling, but Huang’s representation of ‘dance’ gradually changed with Wenqi’s hip hop intervention in Yingge dance convention. As a result, Wenqi’s presence in the film became a significant and powerful scheme that Huang has devised to deconstruct the Euro American perspective enframed in hip hop culture and position Yingge in hip hop’s perception of gender equality.

Speaking of the representation of ‘dance’ in Huang’s film, Huntington’s (2007) theory of reading ‘hip hop dance’ (namely, street dance) as ‘text mirror’ is apropos to a discussion of how powerful Wenqi’s hip hop intervention in Yingge dance could be. In her hip hop dance theory, Huntington (2007) has read the dance as ‘text mirror’ and highlighted the idea that hip hop dance could reflect ‘Eurocentric patriarchy, racism and sexism situated in a capitalistic economy’ and reject ‘hierarchal relationship patterns so prevalent in Euro American institutions’ (2007: 107). She also asserted that ‘[t]he separation and delineation of roles for African American men and women as understood and enacted by Euro American society do not apply to hip hop dance as text’ (Huntington 2007: 107). In this regard, Wenqi’s intervention in the Yingge dance convention with the perception of hip hop and her street dance skills successfully rejected the hierarchal relationship patterns and Sinocentric patriarchy, regardless of the ‘perspicuous contrast’ between two dance cultures. Said otherwise, without Wenqi, the fusion of Yingge and street dance would turn out to be inadequate and distorted due to the lack of respects to both cultures.

Cultural Interplay Between Yingge and Street Dance

Wenqi’s hip hop intervention in the Yingge dance convention on the other hand triggered the ‘cultural interplay’ between two distinctive cultures. That is to say, the male-centred ideology and the fixed dance moves practised by a dance group in Yingge dance culture are ‘perspicuous contrast’ to hip hop cultural practices. Unlike Yingge dance, street dance forms developed with a dancer’s creation of routines,

and some of them would become the ‘foundation’ of street dance. Nevertheless, when the dancers represent a dance, they will break down the sets of routines and remix them at their will. Such improvisational street dance performance requires personal skills, and it will eventually become a dancer’s style. Although a personal style also comprises a dancer’s gender identity, dance skill, as Schloss put it, is ‘central to the ideology of the dance’ (2009: 66). Hence, bringing her understanding of hip hop culture into Yingge dance, Wenqi’s involvement in the troupe to enrol in the local dance competition entails possibilities for two distinctive cultures to extend their self-understanding and alter their cultural expression.

Such ‘cultural interplay’ in Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* includes the remix of Yingge percussion with hip hop rhythm and music and the remaking of Yingge dance costumes, along with the synchronisation of two dance forms. These manifest in the film’s final performance number, where the ‘call and response’ structure underlies, and where the troupe display their Yingge hip hop dance on the stage. While the street dance music plays in the background, the scene begins with a serial montage of traditional Yingge dance costumes, paints and makeups, as well as the hip hop alteration. Amongst the fusion of cultural elements, the clothing Wenqi and her crew members created together in the earlier scene is a way they articulate their group identities of Yingge hip hop that outshined all the other traditional Yingge dance crew, and provides a narrative structure that give meanings to their final performance number (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

The footage of Wenqi and her crew members creating and wearing the altered or hybridised makeup and costumes in the film representation corresponds to Schloss’s (2009: 78) observation of the b-boy and b-girl’s power of naming a dance with their personal experience and their clothing aesthetics which project their self-image.

Another way that b-boys articulate and project their self-image is through their choice of clothing. B-boy style combines athletic functionality with artistic creativity. A b-boy’s or b-girl’s clothing must allow for an extreme range of motion without binding the body or actually ripping. The art of finding (and/or altering) clothing so that it is serviceable for b-boying and also looks flashy and unique is a subtle one. On a deeper level, b-boys’ ability to mediate between these two concerns represents a more general ability to mediate between functionality and creativity in other aspects of life as well. (Schloss 2009: 78)

In this sense, hip hop’s aesthetics of finding and altering their clothing is suitable for the remake of Yingge costumes and makeups into a sharper shape to represent the hybridised creativity generated by two cultures.



Figure 4.1: The footage of Wenqi's father discovering that Wenqi and the members of dance crew have snitched the costumes from his office and remade them into Yingge hip hop clothing. Source: Yi Huang (2019).



Figure 4.2: The opening of the last number showing the hybridised outfits of the Yingge hip hop dancers. Source: Yi Huang (2019).

After showing a serial montage of the fusion of traditional Yingge materials and popular hip hop cultural elements, the final performance number designed by director Huang depicted the Yingge dance moves danced in time with Chinese drumming and hip hop music. Director Huang displayed a DJ playing turntable, another essential hip hop element, while the dancers danced in the film. Following the Chinese drumming, dance moves start to transform by remixing the Yingge with several street dance moves such as breakdance and wave moves or hitting in popping; meanwhile, the dancers change the dancer formation but

follow the Yingge tradition (see Figure 4.3). Besides, Huang's insertion of several street dance solo pieces presented by Ade and Wenqi became an innovation of Yingge dance performance (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5). In traditional Yingge dance, the leading dancer would carry a plot of a serpent as a weapon to defeat the demons, but in her solo, Wenqi transformed the image of a serpent into a snake dance form that represents the serpent plot (see Figure 4.6). All of these samplings of Yingge dance with hip hop cultural elements lead to the success of Huang's film, just as the audiences give a standing ovation in its last scene. Needless to say, Wenqi's creation of Yingge hip hop in Huang's fictional representation is one of the critical factors in its success.



Figure 4.3: A male dancer showcases breaking, a street dance style, after practising the footwork appropriated from Yingge dance in the last number. Behind the male dancer, the dancers in the back, including Wenqi, are in two different costumes and makeups—red tracksuit with Yingge makeup on the right and remade Yingge costumes with hair in cornrows on the left. Source: Official still released by *Ying Ge Huo* (2019).



Figure 4.4: Ade's dance solo beginning with Yingge dance footwork in the final number. Source: Official still released by *Ying Ge Hun* (2019).



Figure 4.5 Ade (the central role) soloing 'popping' after mixing some Yingge dance steps in the final performance number. Source: Yi Huang (2019).



Figure 4.6: Wenqi's solo showcases the image of a snake representing the plot of the serpent, which the leading dancer of Yingge dance would originally carry, in the final performance footage. Source: Yi Huang (2019).

Yingge Hip Hop Dancing Agenderness

Huang's depiction of the last number, which engaged 'cultural interplay' in his *Ying Ge Hun*, shares similarities while showing differences from the representation of final numbers in notable dance films such as Thomas Carter's *Save the Last Dance* (2001) mentioned in Linder's (2011) essay. As Linder (2011: 14) posited, contemporary cinematic depictions of dance associated with the female dancers tend to address '[t]ensions arising from the incompatibility between the perceived and ideal body' through the process of training or rehearsal and resolve the tensions within the final numbers that push the cinematic realist boundaries. Indeed, Huang's *Ying Ge Hun* follows this pattern, but the cinematic depiction of dance in the last number of Huang's film turned out to be partially contrary to its perceived cinematic scenarios, as Linder (2011) disclosed in the conclusion of her essay:

The final numbers constitute the kind of utopian and escapist celebration of all-encompassing joy, integration and social harmony, often in the name of heterosexual romance [...]. The female body has to be reintegrated into a binary and hetero-normative representational order for racial, ethnic and class differences to be overcome, usually through the integration of initially incompatible dance styles, and for the heterosexual couple to be reunited in the final number. (Linder 2011: 14).

Meanwhile, she also warned that such climatic celebrations might lead to the lack of subjectivity in the female body (Linder 2011: 15). Nevertheless, Huang depicted neither 'the integration of initially

incompatible dance styles’ nor ‘the heterosexual couple to be reunited’ in the climax of *Ying Ge Hun*. Instead, Huang depicted the climax in the last number of *Ying Ge Hun* with the absence of Wenqi and her vision of the performance completed by the Yingge hip hop dance crew and Ade’s father, a representative of the older generation of the Yingge practitioner, as follows.



Figure 4.7: Wenqi breaks her ankles, but she insists, ‘I can still dance’, while her father stops her from dancing and worries about her injury. Source: Yi Huang (2019).



Figure 4.8: Taking over Wenqi’s role as a symbol of the reverse of cultural inheritance from the younger generation back to the older, Ade’s father waves the leading Yingge flag on the stage in the last number. Source: Yi Huang (2019).

When dancers showcase Yingge hip hop in the last number in *Ying Ge Hun*, the scene freezes because Wenqi injures her ankles after she knocks over a dancer (see Figure 4.7). Seeing Wenqi get injured, Ade's father takes over Yingge flag—an important element to lead the Yingge dance troupe—to join the dance crew and perform the last scene by waving the Yingge flag (see Figure 4.8). Director Huang edited this film clip with flashbacks such as the tension between Wenqi and her father, the conflicts between Ade and his father, as well as depicting how Ade's father shares his experience of changing the Yingge dance formation with Wenqi. The scene zoomed in and focused on Ade's father waving the Yingge flag in the final footage. Meanwhile, the dance crew gathers on the stage to celebrate the harmony, whereas Wenqi sees the performance of Yingge hip hop she created from the auditorium (see Figure 4.9).

Regardless of Wenqi's failure to complete the performance, Huang has given credit to Wenqi and her creation of Yingge hip hop through her vision of the final performance number in his cinematic depiction. This pattern of cinematic depiction, which Huang designed in *Ying Ge Hun*, has confirmed Wenqi's subjectivity and ensured the cultural inheritance and sustainability of Yingge dance. On a deeper level, the confirmation of Wenqi's subjectivity in the film resulted from her intervention in the Yingge dance convention as a female street dancer. As a result, Yingge hip hop, which Wenqi created to alter Yingge dance with the cultural appropriation of hip hop elements, deconstructed the traditional gender positions and the gender stereotype underlying the two dance cultures and reinvigorated the possibilities of their ways of cultural expression in an agender perspective.

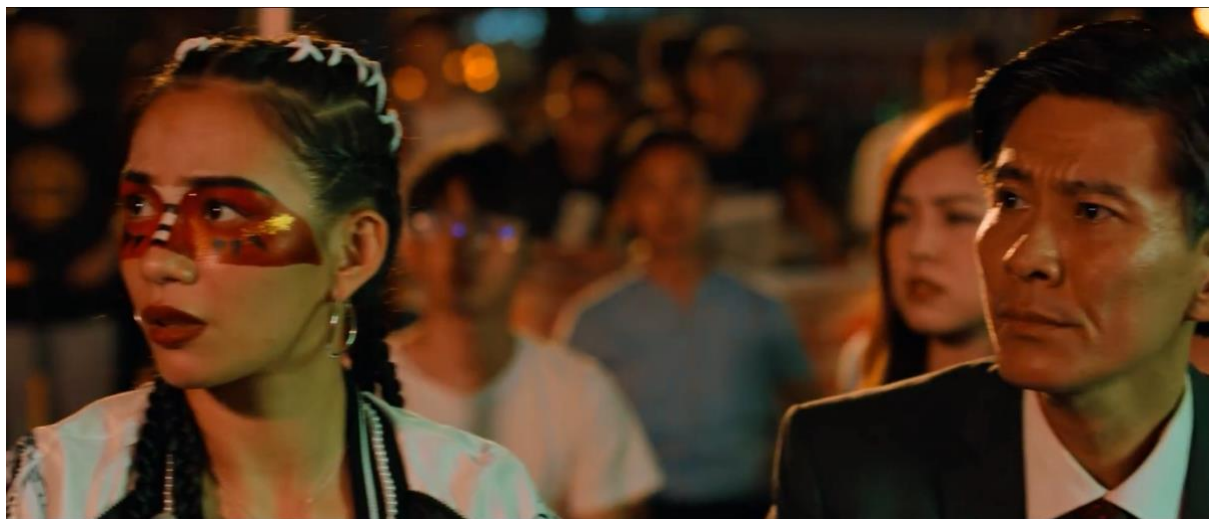


Figure 4.9: Wenqi and her father see the final performance number of Yingge hip hop she choreographed from the auditorium together. Source: Yi Huang (2019).

Conclusion: Yingge Hip Hop against Gender Roles

Tackling on the gender roles in hip hop and the film representations of dance, I have explored the cultural interplay between Yingge and street dance, which are in ‘perspicuous contrast’ yet both considered masculine culture, by examining Yi Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). Based on Taylor’s (1985) theory of understanding and interpretation, together with Gilroy’s (1993) observation of black expressive culture, my theoretical framework provided an insight into examining how street dance synchronised and altered Yingge dance. Also, Huntington’s (2007) hip hop dance theory from a feminist perspective and Linder’s (2011) essay touching on cinematic depiction of female dancers supported my analyses of *Ying Ge Hun* to gainsay the criticism and promote the hip hop agenderness.

Developed in a Euro American male-dominated society, street dance usually manifests itself as masculine in US media coverage, which leads to the criticism of the female voice missing in street dance culture. Still, the cinematic depictions of dance engaging female dancers such as that in *Breakin’* (1984) have attempted to gainsay such criticism and provided a clue to prove that dance skills in the culture precede gender roles. *Ying Ge Hun* (2019) is an example of a milepost in the hip hop film genre. The film not only gainsaid the criticism of the female voice missing in hip hop but also challenged street dance and hip hop to extend the possibilities of its cultural expression. Such hip hop extension to its cultural expression manifests itself when the culture diffuses. Through the diffusion of hip hop, street dance has travelled worldwide and arrived in China in the 1980s. Since then, the diffusion of hip hop has triggered synchronisation and ‘cultural interplay’ between hip hop and the local cultural practices or elements. In director Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun*, the heroine Wenqi has synchronised hip hop with Yingge—a folk dance developed in the Chinese male-dominated society in the Teoswa region, Guangdong. As a result of the synchronisation, the film has innovated a fictional ‘Ying-hop’ culture or the ‘Yingge hip hop’.

The innovation of ‘Yingge hip hop’ depicted in Huang’s film represented a means of hip hop seeking an alternative to breaking through the restraints that have resulted due to the recent ‘cultural censorship’ rules that Chinese authorities imposed on hip hop. In such policing background, the film became a prominent example of the breach in the policy of restraint in hip hop culture. In this sense, Huang’s insertion of the heroine Wenqi by casting female street dancer Nikki is a way to convince Chinese hip hop fans that Yingge hip hop is an alternative to breaking through the ‘cultural censorship’. I have analysed the last number of Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun*, where the degenderised dance of Yingge hip hop is prominently featured. I argued that Yingge hip hop of Wenqi’s creation provides a deconstruction of the traditional gender

positions underlying Yingge and street dance culture. Furthermore, director Huang's screenplay that was designed for the last number in his film turned out to reinvigorate the possibilities of the ways of two dance culture's bodily expression in an agender perspective.

In other words, Huang's film has extended the possibilities of Yingge to alter its cultural expression while challenging the diffused street dance culture to extend its self-definition by degenderising its bodily expression that is considered masculine in the Euro American mainstream media. Besides, the cinematic representation of 'Yingge hip hop' has attested that hip hop is agender and against gender roles in terms of its bodily expression—that is, the street dance culture. However, the altered hip hop manifested in Huang's cinematic depiction has more possibilities, which corresponds to hip hop's regeneration by sampling its representation in Japanese manga and anime, as I examined in the last chapter. Therefore, it is imaginable that hip hop would reinvigorate its 'streetness' by synchronising with the film representation of 'Yingge hip hop' and regenerate its ethos manifesting in the mainstream media with the perception that implements a disturbance of gender stereotypes.

CHAPTER 5

Hip Hop Diffusion from the US to Taiwan: Policing, Transformation and Gentrification of Street Dance

Introduction

This chapter explores the ‘street dance’ forms and the gentrification of globalised hip hop spaces by reappraising its formation and foundation in the American youth counterculture in the 1970s and examining the sociopolitical context in today’s Taiwan that has triggered the transformation of this diffused culture. Street dance, similar to the other three main elements of hip hop culture—MCing, DJing and graffiti—is an art form and a means of dynamic, bodily cultural expression that grew out of the Afro-diasporic ‘call and response’ framework, as Paul Gilroy (1993) observed, mainly practised by African American youth.¹ In conjunction with the globalisation of hip hop as a product of popular culture, including dance and music, street dance culture began to diffuse into the Taiwanese cultural context with the broadcast of MC Hammer’s hip hop music video on MTV in the mid-1980s (Huang 2007: 88; Lee: 2005: 80-81), and the release of Emile Ardolino’s film *Dirty Dancing* in 1987 (Lin and Chuang 2003: 17). Known as *jiewu* (street dance) or *piliwu* (bolt dance), street dance (or ‘breakdance’ to be exact) became a craze in Taiwan when it gained massive exposure further on the media, such as during the debut of hip hop collective L.A. Boyz and dance crew Gestapo (蓋世太保) on television programme *Wu Deng Jiang* (‘The five-star competition’) (1965-98).² However, the massive exposure of hip hop to media sparked the boom of the culture in Taiwan when the country was under Martial Law. After the lifting of Martial Law by the end of the 1980s, Taiwanese hip hop and street dance culture have transformed the ways of its cultural expression by breaking through cultural censorship and synchronising with local cultural elements and social conditions.

¹ The categorisation of these four elements is stated in many research studies despite their differences in terms. I chose my preferences for terms that fit my analyses in this article. For clarifying any ambiguity and for further understanding hip hop culture in Mandarin-speaking countries in particular, see Lin (2005:11), Lin and Chuang (2003:17), Wu (2009:22-27) and Zhang (2010:3).

² *Jiewu* (街舞) in Chinese literally means ‘street dance’, whereas *piliwu* (霹靂舞) refers to a specific genre of street dance—namely, the ‘breakdance’ in Mandarin-speaking countries such as Taiwan and China.

The cultural development of hip hop in Taiwan went through a certain period of policing and cultural censorship after its arrival in the mid-1980s, but it turned out that Taiwanese street dancers (and rappers) have found alternative hip hop cultural expressions to counter these challenges. I have read about this heavy-handed oppression of Taiwanese street dancers and how their situation related to hip hop's developmental backdrop of American youths suffering from inequalities such as poverty, racial discrimination, police brutality and lack of education. In this sense, when the diffusion of hip hop intersects with the policing of its dance culture or the censorship of its cultural expressions, hip hop inevitably challenges and extends its possibilities in order to break through these restraints to remain 'socially and politically conscious' during its developments. Nevertheless, after its breakthrough and freeing itself from cultural censorship, Taiwanese hip hop has relocated itself further in a context to maintain its social and political consciousness, meanwhile fulfilling hip hop practitioners' and fans' personal interests and needs. On this point, while the ideology and ethos of rebellion or resistance that hip hop culture has established within the US cultural context require 'regeneration', the means of hip hop's (non-)verbal expression necessitate 'alteration' to develop further in the Taiwanese cultural context.

Examining the formation and transformation of 'street dance' culture contextualising the distinguishing 'hip hop spaces' against the sociopolitical backgrounds of the US and Taiwan, this chapter unfolds into two main sections. First, based on the 'call and response' structure, the chapter explores how different genres of dance music associate with the foundation of dance forms that converged as 'street dance' in hip hop culture developed in the US social conditions. This chapter also describes how these expressive 'street dance' forms manifesting as 'products' in capitalist American media coverage began to travel globally. Second, the chapter also discusses how Taiwanese hip hop bulldozes the policing and cultural censorship, find a new pathway to create transformation to a localised street dance expression, enacting cultural interplay against the backdrop of Taiwanese cultural movements and 'street dance' gentrification under globalisation. These two sections will come after the following section that offers my insights into the gentrification of hip hop culture under globalisation and the arrangement of my theoretical framework for this chapter.

Exploring the Gentrification of 'Socially and Politically Conscious' Hip Hop

Studies of hip hop culture, such as Schloss's *Foundation* (2009), usually focus on the connection between breakdance music and b-boying or b-girling, as a representative of the transition of musical expression to the bodily expression in hip hop culture, contextualising the sociopolitical conditions of

(Afro-)diasporic youths from the borough of the Bronx in New York City. However, the inseparability of music and dance in hip hop culture that has developed across North America, including the Caribbean, for decades is not limited to the relationship between a single musical genre and a single dance form. In other words, the ‘call and response’ underlying hip hop culture is a key to examining the distinctive creations of street dance forms, because having been transplanted from the African Continent to the Americas, they had already been hybridised by default. ‘Call and response’ had become a common way of expression developed by an assemblage of different groups of slaves from the African Continent. Moreover, it had been further developed or synchronised with other cultural practices of other ethnicities such as Native American and Latino American. In this sense, despite it being widely-believed as having come from African American culture, hip hop is difficult to define due to its complex historical backdrop. As one of hip hop’s main cultural elements, and an umbrella term, street dance can then refer to various forms danced to various musical genres such as hip hop, funk, jazz (swing), reggae, house, disco, Techno and so forth. Whichever music genres the dance forms are related to, they are performed best with their ‘appropriate musical influences’ (Pabon 2006: 25). Hence, this chapter first unveils the relationships between several street dance forms and their musical influences by disclosing their formative backgrounds in the US.

Throughout its formative background, hip hop culture is synonymous with the evolution or regeneration of an ‘old tradition’. From the point of view of dance, there was the evolution of African American and indigenous social dances in particular. The formative backgrounds of street dance were waves of the art movement in the US involving not only African American youths but also Native Americans, Latino Americans, and even American-born descendants of Chinese in the 1970s. However, it is significant that hip hop’s art movement is also ‘critical’ and has ‘interesting symbolic, political and social implications’ (Schloss 2009: 3-4). In effect, the formation of hip hop is an extension or the offshoot of the Black Power Movement, especially in the early 1970s. For example, hip hop artists such as Public Enemy and KRS-One ‘positioned themselves as heirs to the legacy of the Panthers and Malcolm X’ (Jeffery 2015: n.pag.), and Tupac Shakur has a direct connection with the Black Panther Party (see Alridge 2005: 243; Franklin 2007: 558). These hip hop artists’ music, as Alridge asserts, are ‘socially and politically conscious hip hop’ (2005: 233). Therefore, if the lyrics of rap songs accuse someone of racial discrimination and social inequality, then these would be denoted in hip hop’s bodily movements that grew out of the cultural practices of ethnic minorities, too.

But the ‘regeneration’ from being the Black Power Movement to hip hop’s art movements didn’t

end there. The dance culture of diffused hip hop travelled to East Asia in the 1980s by video recordings of choreographies, and these street dance forms, as well as their meanings, began to transform themselves with cultural interplay. In general, a street dance form develops with sets of routines created by several crucial pioneers or representative founding dancers. The dancers usually perform a street dance form with improvisation by repeating and remixing sets of routines danced to specific music. This process is similar to how one expresses their self at ease when speaking their mother tongue, whereas the improvisational forms of expression in street dance culture often appear in a cypher or battle scene, which could be ‘socially and politically conscious’, too.

Furthermore, street dance also turned out to be commercial, that is, when a cypher or dance battle transitioned to becoming a stage performance. Hip hop activist Pabon warned that ‘[a] stage performance creates boundaries and can restrict the free-flowing process of improvisation’ (2006: 24). Nevertheless, the videoclips of stage performances or the choreographies on television programmes circulating outside the US did boost the diffusion of street dance culture around the world. From the corner of a ghetto to the capitalist media representation under globalisation, ‘street dance’ spaces that produce hip hop’s bodily, cultural expressions are undergoing (local) gentrification. To name a few of them, such ‘street dance’ spaces diffused from the street to television programmes such as *Soul Train* (1970-2006) and *Street Dance of China* (2018), to films such as Joel Silberg’s *Breakin’* (1984), Ande Cheng’s *Tai Qi Tou Lai* (2014) and Yi Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (2019).

Not only film representations, but also manga and anime representation of hip hop, as I analysed previously, created ‘street dance’ spaces (see Chapters 3 and 4). Moreover, street dancing extends over the ‘spaces’ from public parks or train stations to dance studios and campuses, meanwhile manifesting in the international dance contests such as the International Battle of the Year (BOTY) held in Germany since 1990, the Juste Debout organised in France since 2002 and breakdancing’s debut as ‘sport’ at the forthcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games. The diffusion of street dancing into international dance contests and then becoming recognised as a ‘sport’ indicates that the ‘battlefield’ of the culture has relocated from domestic fighting against racism or classism with dancing and bodily expression to an international competition of dance performing hybridised cultural expressions synchronised with local cultural practices and identities. Therefore, this international ‘battlefield’ of street dance became a ‘transnational space’, demonstrating both homogeneity and heterogeneity of dancing bodies and diversifying hip hop’s meanings, and is not limited to its social and political consciousness.

Furthermore, I assume that the manifestation of street dance's 'transnational space' is due to the 'cultural interplay' between the culture and the local elements when it diffused. Otherwise stated, the cultural interplay, which creates alterations to hip hop's bodily expression, corresponds to its transnationalism under globalisation. My assumption echoes Meng-Hsuan Wu's speculation that street dancers from Taiwan could produce broader social meanings under hip hop's globalisation in the condition of street dance being 'political' (2016: 152; 154). In her thesis, Wu (2016: 154) depicted a 'transmitting process' from the US to Taiwan to explore body politics and identity yearning of Taiwanese street dance under globalisation, which signifies street dance's transnationalism. As a supporting theory for my observation in this chapter, Paul Gilroy's (1993: 15) insight into Afro-diasporic cultures from an 'explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective' corroborates street dance culture's account of globalised transmission. Within the framework he established in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy demonstrated the process of Black Intellectuals' transnational exchanges with Euro American societies: 'Notable black American travelers [...] went to Europe and had their perceptions of America and racial domination shifted as a result of their experiences there. This had important consequences for their understanding of racial identities' (Gilroy 1993: 17). Drawing on Gilroy's (1993) 'transnational reading' of racism and resistance across nation-state borders, I regard the cultural interplay between 'street dance' and the cultural practices as well as social conditions outside the US cultural contexts to be a 'transnational extension' of the bodily, cultural expression which transcends the resistance to racism across nation-state borders. On this account, Charles Taylor's (1985) concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' is adaptable for examining how such 'cultural interplay' extends the possibilities of its bodily, cultural expression, preceding the altered street dance expression that manifests in transnational spaces. As a result of the transnational spaces, the alteration to street dance forms, I argue, may eventually transform hip hop's ideology of resistance into proclaiming local concerns, aspirations and interests, gentrifying the 'socially and politically conscious hip hop'.

To examine the gentrification of hip hop from either its ideological ethos or local and globalised sites in the Taiwanese cultural context, I will review the formation and foundation of street dance in the US by tackling how the culture began to diffuse into different cultural contexts under globalisation first in the following section.

Formation and Foundation of Street Dance

As I mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, the formation of street dance correlates highly with genres

of dance music. In other words, when it comes to street dance, music matters. These music genres came from the preferences of the dancers from the West Coast, New York, and Chicago in the US, and even from the Caribbean. The pioneer dancer's preferences for specific songs became the 'canonical songs' with which they developed a street dance form and passed down to the younger ones. As Schloss explored in his *Foundation* (2009), b-boy and b-girl chose the 'canonical songs' by looking at the formative background of b-boying and b-girling (2009: 37-39). However, the selection of 'canonical songs' is not limited to the 'breakdance' form. It is important to notice that other street dance forms also developed specific song lists. Besides, these song lists grew out of, as Gilroy suggestively calls, '*a non-traditional tradition, an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the manichean logic binary coding*' (1993: 198; emphasis added). As a result, street dance culture tends to renovate as soon as the tradition of dance music has been challenged to regenerate.

'Call and Response' as a Basis for the Formation of Hip Hop's 'Changing' Dance

This music-dance relationship, i.e., the way 'canonical dance music' was established, and the way a dancer created (and creates) dance styles relied on the fundamental 'call and response' structure that underlies hip hop culture—that is, a black expressive culture. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) argues against 'the conception of black music as a fixed dialogue between a thinking [Afro-centric] racial self and a stable racial community' (Critchley 1999: 135; Gilroy 1991: 134). Nevertheless, to examine hip hop as black expressive culture, it is necessary to crystallise the relation between black expressive culture—including hip hop music and street dance—and African music.

As music historian Burton W. Peretti (2009: 11) points out, 'African music lacked "downbeats" that mark European time signatures such as the "oom-pah-pah" triple meter of waltz tempo. Instead, polyrhythms overload the ear and create the illusion of an irregular master beat [...]. [A] community could fall into this master beat, moving their heads, shoulders, and limbs to it, often with great subtlety'. However, the music genres in a street dance scene, especially hip hop music, are usually composed of downbeats. The shift from an irregular master beat to a downbeat tradition resulted from the syncretisation in the importation of plantation slave communities in the New World. The syncretism of European, African and indigenous ways of life had provided the energy for the birth of different genres of (African American) dance music and

especially hip hop later on.³ The different cultural practices of musical expression that came together rely on a common basis to understand one another, namely, the regenerated ‘call and response’ structure embedded in hip hop and other genres of African American music. Moreover, whenever the musical expression transforms, the inseparable dance forms also spin off from the novel musical genres. Hence, it is almost impossible to trace the so-called origins or roots of street dance since both the starting point of the music and dance are unaccountable, particularly when the culture surged in the capitalist media coverage from the 1980s under globalisation.

Speaking of the globalisation of hip hop, Gilroy’s (1991; 1993) insight into the tradition of black music provides a perspective on the ‘changing’ transmission process of hip hop in relation to ‘call and response’. Black music, as he put it, is ‘a changing same’ (Gilroy 1993: 103). In that black music is ‘a cipher for the ineffable, sublime, pre-discursive and anti-discursive elements in black expressive culture’ (Gilroy 1993: 120), it exemplifies ‘the relation between identity and difference that is constitutive of cultural tradition and tradition as such’ (Critchley 1999: 135). Notwithstanding, Gilroy (1991) also highlights the (hip hop’s) ‘challenge’ of the changing same in relation to the ‘call and response’ structure underlying the globalised black expressive culture.

[T]he globalization of vernacular forms means that our understanding of antiphony will have to be changed. The calls and responses no longer converge in the tidy patterns of secret, ethnically encoded dialogue. The original call is becoming harder to locate. If we privilege it over the subsequent sounds that compete with each other to make the most appropriate reply, we will have to remember that these communicative gestures are not expressive of an essence that exists outside of the acts which perform them and thereby transmit the structure of racial feeling to wider, as yet uncharted, worlds.

To put it simply, the changing sameness of hip hop culture, including its dancing, bodily expressions and musical modes of expression, has resulted from the displacement or migration of different ‘national’ groups in Black Atlantic and their cultural exchange of expressive practices. However, the cultural expressions of hip hop embodying its transnationality and articulating different experiences or memories might create ‘changing’ street dance forms under globalisation. This accelerated when the global media leapt upon the culture from the 1980s, resulting in the naming complexity of ‘street dance’.

³ I will specify the relationship between dance music genres and street dance forms in what follows.

Naming the Complexity of 'Street Dance' and the Relationship amongst Dance Forms

Although each of the street dance forms is distinguishable though relative, they turned out to not be different from 'b-boying/b-girling' or 'breakdancing' according to the NYC-centred media coverage, for which the formative background of street dance culture was decontextualised (see Pabon 2006: 18; Chang 2006: 4). In effect, the usage of the term "breakdancing" in media coverage came later than the term "street dance" introduced in the dance TV programme *Soul Train* in the early 1970s. Well-known guest dance crews showcased in *Soul Train* were the Lockers and Electric Boogaloos (or Electric Boogaloo Lockers), for example. The dance forms they showcased were respectively locking and popping—two forms of street dance developed through funk and soul music on the West Coast, specifically in California.

The dance form 'locking' was created by dancer Don 'Campbellock' Campbell and developed by his dance crew the Lockers in the early 1970s. Locking, as Pabon (2006) documented, was an attempt when Campbellock put his imitation of 'funky chicken'—a local dance known in California—together with 'an effect of locking of the joints of his arm and body' (2006: 22). The term *lock* refers to 'a specific movement that is a combination of steps and moves similar to a freeze or a sudden pause' (2006: 22). Furthermore, this dance form is highly related to 'popping' developed in Fresno, California.

Popping, on the other hand, is a dance form that was developed or transformed by Sam 'Boogaloo Sam' Solomon. Boogaloo Sam, who is a member of the Electric Boogaloo Lockers, compared a popping dancer's body to 'a musical instrument in which the movement was as varied as the notes' (Pabon 2006: 23). The term *popping* originally came from the description of 'a sudden muscle contraction executed with the triceps, forearms, neck, chest, and legs' in a dancer's movement that causes 'a quick, jolting effect' (Pabon 2006: 23). Boogaloo Sam further combined the form 'boogaloo' with popping by adding some 'isolated sharp angles, hip rotations' with all parts of the body in his moves (Pabon 2006: 23). As a result, popping became an umbrella term that included Boogaloo, wave, twisto-flex, slides and so on. No matter how they are documented or practised, both locking and popping thoroughly differ from 'breakdancing' even though they were concurrent dance forms and often categorised as the same genre.

Breakdancing (or b-boying, b-girling and breaking), in fact, is a dance form performed under the scene, where the DJ drops the beats or the MC creates the rhythms while the dancers reacted to those percussions, in the Bronx during the 1970s (Pabon 2006: 19). Breakdancing is the most well-known 'hip hop dance' around the world. Thus, Schloss defines this element or dance form of hip hop culture as 'a group of related art forms' in visual, sound and movement that are involved in the media and practised in Afro-

Caribbean, African American and Latino neighbourhoods in New York City from the 1970s (2009: 4). He also points out that the music genre which b-boys and b-girls danced to in the first place was in some tracks regarded as the canon of b-boy songs such as ‘Apache’ (1973), ‘Give it Up or Turnit Loose’ (1969) or ‘The Mexican’ (1972); yet, these songs are not categorised as ‘hip hop’, but rather, as ‘rock’ or ‘funk’ music (Schloss 2009: 17).

Formation of Hip Hop Music and Hip Hop Dance

Hip hop music came on the scene when Kool DJ Herc created the looping of breakbeats by using two turntables, a mixer, and two copies of the same record to recue the ‘break’ (the part when there are only drum beats) of a song over and over again; this, thus, also allows the dancers to have more time to showcase their signature dance moves (Pabon 2006: 19; Schloss 2009: 18-19). These moves, such as *top rockin’*, as Pabon documented, ‘fuse[s] dance forms and influences’ from Afro-Cuban and various African and Native American dances, for example (2006: 20). Also, African martial arts in the disguise of dance forms such as Afro-Brazilian martial arts *Capoeira* or Chinese Kung Fu movements are significant elements that breakdancers incorporated. However, Pabon indicated that *Capoeira* as disguised in dance for self-defence purposes didn’t exist in the Bronx jams until the 1990s when it evolved into a codified dance form (2006: 20). Instead, Kung Fu films were popular and taken to by the young dancers from the 1970s. Either way, Kung Fu or martial arts like *Capoeira* generally were practised rhythmically in a certain percussive dance-like form. Considering the point that the youth from the Bronx were fond of these martial arts films, martial arts inevitably turn out to be an influential element in the formation of the hip hop culture, whether the dancers were conscious of it or not.

In a case to trace the formation of a street dance form, it is important to reappraise the connection between ‘breakdance’ and martial arts. For instance, Sally Banes (1994) recorded her witness of it in 1980 while discovering a photography exhibition of subway graffiti. She wrote, ‘its [breaking’s] spatial level called to mind capoeira, the spectacular Brazilian dance cum martial art form that incorporates cartwheels, kicks, and feints low to the ground’ (Banes 1994: 128). But these two body movements are ‘only a distant relative, and certainly one the breakdancers weren’t acquainted with—at least on a conscious level’ (Banes 1994: 128). The similarities in the body movement in *Capoeira* and breaking might be a coincidence, but how Chinese Kung Fu is linked to the dance is definitely done on purpose, as I mentioned previously in Chapter 2. To put it simply, dancers such as Ken Swift admit that Kung Fu moves demonstrated in the martial

arts films brought new elements for the dancers to construct ‘windmill’ or ‘headspin’ moves (Ken Swift quoted in Delgado 2007: n.pag.; Pellerin 2007: n.pag.). Moreover, the headspin move for example, appears in Hsin Yen Chang’s Kung Fu film *Shaolin Temple*, and is featured when the hero Jue Yuan finds out that his master and senior are practising *wushu* (‘fistic play’) on the other side of the wall, which he is unable to access. As those fistic plays appear in the film, there are some moves such as flipping and spinning around with performers’ heads rotating on the floor. Bringing the fistic play onto the dance floor by rotating his head on the floor, b-boy Lil’ Lep of the New York City Breakers, for instance, was the founder of ‘headspin’. The formation of the headspin move, like those moves discovered in breaking, popping and locking, or the rest of the various street dance forms, has become one of the ‘foundations’ of a street dance form.

Foundation: From African American Social Dance to Street Dance

The ‘foundation’ in street dance culture, as Schloss (2009: 7) put it, refers to ‘an almost mystical set of notions about b-boying that is passed from teacher to student’. The music or songs that dancers dance to allow them ‘to carry history in their bodies’ (Schloss 2009: 39). This also means that the foundation of a street dance form is a shareable set of knowledge comprised of specific music patterns and dance movements. This set of notions, or ‘rigorous system of knowledge’ to be exact, has always been those of the elders such as Pabon who would like to maintain and pass them on (see Chang 2006: 4). In this sense, the foundation is a process of the ‘regeneration’ of dance moves that synchronise or regenerate with concurrent cultural practices when the pioneers pass them on to the next generation, and then the next generation to another. Thus, the foundation of street dance forms grown out of African American social dances is by no means unalterable.

Thomas DeFrantz, for example, has contributed his findings to this set of notions by demonstrating several specific dance moves in black social dance, as well as how they were passed on and became the foundation of street dance (Duke University 2019). According to DeFrantz, the shape of ‘the trilogy of dance forms’ in African American social dance—that is, the Buck dances, Wing dances and the Jigs—has been carried on until today’s street dance forms (Duke University 2019).⁴ Buck dances and hip hop dance share the same forms, in which the dancers put more weight down on their feet by stepping percussively; however,

⁴ See DeFrantz’s lecture in YouTube videoclip uploaded by Duke University (2019) for more details. Also note that I have elaborated on DeFrantz’s observation in my analyses that follow.

hip hop dance focuses more on the flow. Wing dances, as DeFrantz depicts them, are practised by the dancers flapping parts of their body ‘as if their wings [were flapping]’ (Duke University 2019). The shape of wing dances has been carried on in popping and the dance form ‘butterfly’, as DeFrantz puts it, or perhaps ‘the lock’ gestures in locking. As for the jig, DeFrantz explains that it is a dance form with plenty of energy. He goes on to demonstrate that by mixing Wing dances and Jigs, they become dance forms such as the ‘footwork’, ‘Charleston,’ or ‘Kid n’ Play’ (Duke University 2019).

DeFrantz’s demonstration of the liaison between African American social dance and some specific street dance forms attested that the foundation has always been ‘reforming,’ and that this set of street dance forms can thus be intricate. As a result of this intricacy, media coverage often misinformed and integrated the set of street dance forms as an ambiguous term, say, ‘street dance’ or ‘breakdancing’, whereas the Western academic writings usually describe it as ‘breaking’ or ‘hip hop dance’. Pabon (2006), for example, documented the history of ‘hip hop dance’ while including dance styles such as uprocking, breaking, popping and locking by clarifying their respective formations. However, there is no such standard term to refer to what I have tried to explore in this thesis, and neither could the journalists, scholars or hip hop practitioners come to an agreement about the term. In other words, I chose the term ‘street dance’ in this study because of the preference in East Asian cultural contexts. It turned out that the misinformation, particularly in media coverage, has granted this cultural movement vigorous energy to synchronise with different cultural practices and to transform, no matter how an individual, who is involved in the culture journalistically, scholarly or practically, categorised or named these alterable dance forms.

Transformations of Street Dance in Taiwanese Cultural Context

Street dance, as a part of hip hop culture and an embodiment of Black Atlantic culture, has been a ‘counterculture’ since it emerged in the US (see Gilroy in Lin 2005: 11-12). Street dance culture is a counterculture by default in that the dancers carry their histories in their bodies when performing these regenerated (African American) social dances. As DeFrantz asserted, African American social dances developed against the historical backdrop of when ‘the African Americans had to figure out the ways to [...] be outside of the controlling eyes of clergy’ (Duke University 2019). The street dancers, like other hip hop practitioners, have carried on (the memories of) such sufferings, yet their resistance to inequality continues, which has further triggered the transformation of hip hop’s non-verbal expressions. By practising and regenerating the dance forms culturally through their bodily movements, street dancers have passed on their

ways of expression through diversified dance forms from one generation to another.

Including street dance, hip hop culture began to travel around the world in the 1980s, especially with the circulation of dance videoclips and dance films. The fusion of hip hop's cultural expressions and those distinctive cultural practices generate transformations. This phenomenon, as Nanda and Warms observed, occurs when hip hop participants around the world would 'pick up [hip hop's] styles and statements' and 'recast [the] culture to give it meaning within their own context' (2014: 296). As I mentioned earlier for example, when hip hop culture came to manga and anime in Japan, its cultural expression was transcribed into graphic representation, contextualising the Japanese sociopolitical backdrop (see Chapter 3). In this sense, the diffusion of hip hop culture (i.e., its globalisation) is not only an embodiment of its globalised commercialisation, but also an extension of multiple cultural expressions. As a result, how street dance culture is consumed and how street dance is represented can be distinctive, depending on the social, political, cultural, racial, ethnic and historical backgrounds of the region it diffuses into.

For instance, as I mentioned previously, the Fueiho law in Japan restrained the development of dance culture from after World War II until 2014. This law not only regulated the spaces such as ballroom, dancing schools as well as dance clubs where dance activities took place, but also 'specifie[d] that an establishment that serves drinks and whose customers dance must be properly licensed and close by midnight or 1 a.m.' (Manabe 2015: 51). Against such a developmental background, Japanese hip hop was synonymous with rap music, although hip hop arrived in Japan with Charlie Ahearn's street dance film *Wild Style* in 1983. Besides, in the last chapter, I have also examined how Chinese hip hop sought to break through the cultural censorship enforced by the authorities. To put it simply, the State Administration of the Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China (SAPPRFT)—the country's top media regulator—for example, issued new rules to regulate their programmes to prohibit the development of a subculture or 'decadent culture' effective 19 January 2018. Such new rules, as interpreted by the online Chinese media *Sina*, have been the means with which to regulate Chinese mass media so as not to allow actors with tattoos, or to depict subcultures such as hip hop (Quackenbush and Chen 2018: n.pag.). Chinese hip hop thus had no choice but to mute its criticism of social issues or legal abuse to prevent media censorship (see Liu 2021). Either way, the policing of dance culture in Japan or the censorship of hip hop culture in China is related to government policies for specific limitation purposes.

Ironically however, such heavy-handed oppression turned out to be a force for hip hop to extend its cultural expressions, primarily because hip hop culture grew out of the backdrop of American youths'

response to their suffering from poverty, racial discrimination, police brutality and lack of education. In this sense, when the diffusion of hip hop intersects with the policing of its dance culture or the censorship of its cultural expressions, this culture inevitably challenges these limits to extend its possibilities for breaking through such restraints to remain 'socially and politically conscious' during its development. The cultural development of hip hop in Taiwan, like those in Japan and China, also underwent a certain period of policing and cultural censorship, but it turned out that Taiwanese street dancers (and rappers) found alternative hip hop cultural expressions to counter these challenges.

Taiwanese Hip Hop Breaking through the Cultural Censorship

The hip hop craze arrived in the second half of the 1980s in Taiwan, and the development of street dance culture in Taiwan unfolded in three periods as follows. The first started in the mid-1980s, through the importation of street dance videoclips, including the release of Emile Ardolino's film *Dirty Dancing* (1987), and MC Hammer's rap music videos (Lin and Chuang 2003: 17; Huang 2007: 88; Lee: 2005: 80-81). This was precisely during the last few years when the freedom of assembly and speech was under intensive surveillance because of the promulgation of Martial Law in Taiwan. Street dance, as a youth counterculture, was therefore monitored with Martial Law regulations, which restrained people from dancing in public, but street dance culture developed in the dancehalls rapidly, especially in Taichung (Lu 2011: 25-26). As a result of the relatively slack restriction despite Martial Law regulations as Lu (2011) assumed, the members of dance crew ABC teamed up to perform street dance by imitating the dance moves in smuggled videotapes from the US, thus becoming the pioneer street dancers in Taiwan. Soon thereafter, the Martial Law regulations were terminated in 1987, the same year the breakdancing film *Dirty Dancing* was released. The dance scenes in this film shocked Taiwanese youths and enticed them to practise street dance. The same as the members of ABC, these youths merely mimicked the dance moves in videotapes (Che-ke quoted in Tsai 2013: 4), and attempted to copy these sets of dance moves entirely and represent how well could they dance, mostly in dance clubs. Nevertheless, this youth's street dance boom rapidly waned in Taiwan by 1990, when the dance club culture came to light in Taiwan with the country's democratisation under Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian. Thanks to this political change which brought commercial, educational and democratising political developments, street dance scenes extended from the street to stage performances. Like the development in China, hip hop culture thus diffused into Taiwanese TV programmes and helped open a new cultural era in Taiwan.

The second period of street dance development occurred from approximately the 1990s to the early 2000s, when this dance boom revived and was popularised in Taiwan, including the Eastern side of the island, which is ‘often behind the curve on trends’ (Huang 2007: 88). The new generation of street dancers started to imitate dance moves in videotapes and perform them on TV in 1991 (see Zhuang 2012; Tsai 2013: 7), whereas the dance culture boomed in dance studios and college dance clubs. The commercialisation of hip hop culture shed light on its development during this period. The domestic idol group L.A. Boyz, for instance, also released their first album *SHIAM! Siam* (‘Shiam! Piss off’) and officially introduced hip hop culture in 1992.⁵ The emergence of L.A. Boyz was one of the backstage driving forces in the street dance boom and revival in Taiwan. From 1990 to 1993, the street dancers tended to team up as a dance crew and competed against one another on TV programmes by representing the routines in the videotapes they collected, for example, in the programme *Wu Deng Jiang* (‘The five-star competition’) (Lin and Chuang 2003: 21; 29). The second period of the development of street dance culture peaked between 1994 and 1996.

However, that was the period when street dance began to confront another wave of policing by the ‘cultural censorship’ enforced by Taiwanese authorities in order to disseminate propaganda about anti-drug abuse and specific ethnic identities. Anti-drug abuse contests were held nationwide by the Ministry of Education in 1998 under the name of the Nationwide Chun Hwei Dance Contest, aimed at making the young pupils have better competitions, do healthy sports, and be able to say ‘no’ to drugs. This contest occurred because street dancers had been stigmatised in Taiwan since the late 1980s as ‘troubled students’ who do drugs. Even though many of the pupils from the senior high schools participated in the anti-drug street dance contests and took part in this competition (Lin and Chuang 2003: 19), the purpose of such events was a one-sided enactment of the government anti-drug policy.

Likewise, street dance contests such as the Hip Hakker Rapping and Street Dance Contest held in 2003 by some local governments and the Hakka Affairs Council in Taiwan to promote the minority Hakka people’s identity was another act of the ‘cultural censorship’ of street dance. Young street dancers wore lanshan (‘blue shirts’), huabu (‘fabric in flower patterns’), even suoyi (‘straw capes’) or douli (‘conical hats’) intended to link their dance performance to Hakka traditional spirits for the audience. Yet, none of these events transformed the street dance forms themselves, nor did they pass on hip hop’s cultural expressions

⁵ The album title is *SHIAM! Siam* (SHIAM! 閃). Here ‘SHIAM’ is a transliteration of Taiwanese *siám* (piss off).

that have embodied suffering and resistance.

During the second period, apart from the battle game held by the dance circle, many young dancers used these contests as platforms to perform their skills and interact with other dancers under the guise of showing the sunny personality or Hakka look on stage to adult viewers. Although the street dancers in Taiwan couldn't avoid such cultural censorship, their dance skills improved because of the creative combinations they came up with in the battle scenes and in the routines they choreographed to meet certain criteria of the Taiwanese governmental propaganda. Even so, those choreographies created by the street dancers who attended the dance contests were often criticised for *swagga-jackin'*—that is, copying the dress codes and dance moves of others on the dance floor.

This criticism led to the development of street dance culture in Taiwan, that is, to the third period when the street dancers were conscious that their performance was insufficient to comprehend not only the dance skills but also hip hop's formative history. In order to gain more knowledge of hip hop culture and street dance skills, Taiwanese street dancers Popping Sam (from Let's Boogie Taiwan), Popping Kwon, Alumi Lu, and Terry Lin, for example, made a 'pilgrimage' to the US to meet street dance pioneers from the 2000s. In addition, Terry Lin travelled to Japan and discovered that Japanese lock dancers had developed a slightly different way of representing locking. Eventually, these street dancers returned to their home country with not only dance skills, but also hip hop knowledge from their various instructors. By internalising the hip hop knowledge, they realised that they could carry on hip hop culture not only by learning the dance forms but by knowing their history and sharing the memories cached in their bodily movements. Thus, they were and are dedicated to passing on what they had realised to younger generations by giving lectures either in their own dance studios or in high school and university students' street dance clubs.

Seeing the changes with these developments, the pioneer dancer Poppin' Pete from Electric Boogaloo once commented on popping dance forms in Taiwan as having been reputed to transform the foundation into its own style.⁶ The dance style of Let's Boogie member Jason 'Krazybonez' Huang's popping dance is an obvious example. Krazybonez created his personal style based on the foundation of

⁶ Popping Sam from Let's Boogie (Taiwan) mentioned Poppin' Pete's commentary during part of our discussion at a midnight feast after the lecture he gave in Kaohsiung in summer 2010. Pete's commentary affected my view then but the conversation is neither recorded nor transcribed. Note that the following personal conversations are all unrecorded unless otherwise mentioned.

popping when he would bend his limbs with exaggerating angles that brought him very close to the dance floor. In brief, during the third period of the development of street dance culture in Taiwan, these dancers broke through the ‘cultural censorship’ by developing their bodily expression and filled up the *swagga-jackin’* ‘empty shell’ when performing distinctive street dance forms.

Following the breakthrough of overcoming policing and cultural censorship, Taiwanese street dancers and rappers begin to shift their concerns to social issues. Taiwanese rapper Dwagie, for example, is known for his critical lyrics that cite class injustice, promote environmentally friendly activities, and focus on the concerns of minorities. Alumi Lu and Popping Kwon, the founders of the Lumi Dance School, a dance studio in Taipei, produced the documentary *Tai Qi Tou Lai* (‘raise up your heads for Taiwan’) (2014) to support the activists involved in the Sunflower Student Movements, which protested the passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement by the then-ruling Kuomintang-Ma administration in the Legislative Yuan without a clause-by-clause review. However, Taiwanese rappers and street dancers to this point created hip hop art forms in separate domains bearing different social or political consciousness of hip hop. Besides, as I mentioned earlier, what these hip hop art forms transmitted are quite different from that developed and connotated within the US context. However, Taiwanese hip hop dancers did begin to carry transnational social or political concerns after they sought to find new pathways to extend their cultural expressions both at home and abroad. I will demonstrate street dancers’ dance production in cooperation with rap singers from Taiwan and how their bodily expression represents the transmission of their hip hop knowledge in relation to the localised, social or political concerns in what is to follow.

Street Dance Cultural Exchange between Taiwan and China

Apart from their social or political concerns, Taiwanese street dancers also ‘share’ their knowledge and dance skills by participating in international dance contests. Because of their language skills as native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, they tend to showcase their skills in China and exchange their experiences with Chinese street dancers. Both Taiwanese and Chinese hip hop confronted cultural censorship during their development. Although the cultural censorship in Taiwan served certain political purposes, such political appropriation of hip hop elements turned out to be a target that Taiwanese hip hop fought against. In fact, Taiwanese street dancers’ breakthrough of the cultural censorship led to the alteration of their performances by creating new styles and carrying on the history of hip hop. In this sense, cultural censorship could be a potential power for hip hop to remain ‘politically and socially conscious’. Likewise, as I mentioned in the

last chapter, Chinese street dancers seek to display transformed street dance forms comprised of their social concerns, such as elderly care, in their stage performances to follow the ‘required’ standard and ‘collectivism’ propagated by the Chinese authorities (see Peng and Liu 2019: n.pag.). In other words, such ‘authorised’ performance is an alternative way that hip hop negotiates with the local condition it is immersed in. Hence, the cultural censorship of hip hop in two sinophonic countries has also created a channel for street dancers to increase cultural exchanges.

For instance, as Terry Lin recalled, he got a chance to work with dancers from China in 2016, and then moved his dance studio and street dance business to Shanghai until the COVID-19 Pandemic. During his time in Shanghai, he branched out his business into the entertainment industry. Terry utilised his knowledge of hip hop and dance skills to create choreography for hip hop singers and idols.⁷ In effect, since 2010, famous street dancers such as Kila Chuang and Yide ‘Popping Ed’ Tian have gone to China to conduct street dance workshops or participate dance contests. Kila didn’t stay in China after his dance workshop due to having to run his own dance business both in Taiwan and Japan, whereas Popping Ed won the second prize in the Chinese online TV show *Street Dance of China* (2018) and signed with the Chinese entertainment company Cool Young thereafter.⁸ As Popping Ed mentioned in our interview, ‘the street dance cultures in Taiwan and China are quite different. Taiwanese dancers tend to exchange dance knowledge while enjoying dance parties, while Chinese dancers compete in dance contests to enhance their dance skills’.⁹ Popping Ed thus gained new inspiration while participating in the dance contests in China and achieved success. Moreover, his success in China triggered a further cultural exchange of street dance between China and Taiwan.

An explicit example is that Popping Ed starred as a Yingge dancer who performs synchronised ‘Yingge’ street dance in Yi Huang’s *Ying Ge Hun* (‘The soul of yingge’) (2019), as I analysed in the last chapter. In short, present Yingge is a Chinese performative folk-dance form that grew out of the Chinese

⁷ Information about Terry’s work experience as a street dance instructor in Shanghai is based on several personal conversations.

⁸ In personal conversations, Kila mentioned that he went to Shenzhen to showcase his dance skills several times but had to return to Taiwan and Japan to manage his studio and family’s business.

⁹ Popping Ed’s success in contests and his signing with a Chinese entertainment company were mentioned in his online video interview via WhatsApp on 20 March 2020.

opera performance that retells the story of a chapter of the Chinese novel *Shui Hu Zhuan* (a.k.a *Water Margin*). The synchronisation of Yingge dance and street dance is due to the ‘call and response’ structure underlying hip hop culture, a transformation quite similar to the uproking dance featuring Taiwanese folk dance Pat-ka-chiòng, a war dance that originated with Taoist belief, which Jacky Zhuang presents in his documentary (see Zhuang 2012). Likewise, B-boy Bojin Chen also creates his personal dance style by synchronising breakdancing with Pat-ka-chiòng and Chinese martial arts, which he has practised for seven years (Lung 2021: n.pag.) These cultural interplays between hip hop and traditional East Asian folkdance practices demonstrated the transnational means of hip hop’s bodily expression, intersecting the Kung Fu-fused b-boying developed in the borough of the Bronx in New York City, as I examined previously. The synchronisation of Yingge dance and street dance, in particular, is a significant cultural interplay of hip hop and Chinese cultural practice, as well as a crucial cultural exchange between Taiwanese and Chinese street dancers. In this sense, the ‘cultural censorship’ might be a fatal restraint for the development of hip hop, but the ‘call and response’ structure underlying the culture assures it as vital for transforming and regenerating new dance forms. This was further obvious when Taiwanese dancers opened a new pathway in Chinese street dance spaces, for instance, in dance studios, dance contests or even hip hop films, and began to ‘share’ their dance knowledge, as well as skills, with dancers from different sociopolitical backgrounds.

Gentrification of ‘Socially and Politically Conscious’ Hip Hop in Taiwan

The dance studio, where Taiwanese and Chinese street dancers exchange their dance knowledge and skills, is worth mentioning, as it is a space for ‘labbing’. In a street dance context, the term ‘labbing’ means dancers creating their personal dance styles or ‘most memorable signatures’ by endeavouring to experiment with new ideas and research for dancing (see Damien 2020: n.pag.). As I mentioned above, the dance studios established by the Taiwanese street dancers made ‘pilgrimages’ to the US or Japan, in particular, which turned out to be a transnational space—that is, the ‘street’ in a broader sense—for a group of street dancers to practise their dance skills, create their personal styles and update the ‘song lists’ or exchange their dance knowledge.

Take the Tribal Crew Dance Studio located in Kaohsiung, for example. The studio was founded by the hip hop collective Tribal Crew, whose members include street dancer Will John, Kila and Mr Cow, as well as DJ Swift. While Tribal Crew Dance Studio provides dance lessons for young students, the hip hop collective also takes care of the students who spend a great deal of time practising their dance skills either

in the studio or privately with the crew members. They also invite young dancers to join as members of their lineage—that is, a hip hop educational system, which is similar to the becoming a student or disciple of a school of a specific Chinese martial arts style, as I mentioned previously (see Chapter 2). For instance, Chia-ching ‘Lu Kuang-chong’ Lin, my old acquaintance from the University of Kaohsiung, joined the Tribal Crew lineage.¹⁰ Apart from the regular practice in the university’s Hot Dance Club (HDC), Lu Kuang-chong created his dancing signatures such as ‘funky clumsy’ moves through ‘labbing’ when he had spare time in the dance studio. In this sense, the term ‘labbing’ connotes the gentrification of ‘street dance’ in two related layers. First, it indicates a shift of street dance space from a vernacular, outdoor site in the ghetto of the urban landscape to a capitalist well-equipped site in the interior of a room with fine flooring, dance mirrors and air conditioning. Second, it points to a functional shift of hip hop’s educational system from the *street* for dance battle or exchange of dance-music knowledge to a *studio* as a gentrified replacement for dance lessons, research for dancing and transmission of hip hop knowledge.

Although the example of a dance studio reflecting the gentrification of street dance is now a transnational flow that fosters the diffusion of hip hop worldwide, the dance studios have turned into a backstage driving force for the development of hip hop culture in Taiwan and the hub of the street dance community network. Founders of dancer studios are usually involved in organising street dance associations in Taiwan. For example, Popping Kwon, who runs Lumi Dance School, was the first chairperson of the Taiwan Street Dance Art Association (TWSDA), and b-boy Bojin Chen of Taipei Bboy City, the owner of HRC Dance Studio, who holds the post of the director of Taiwan Street Dance Culture Association and is the secretary-general of Breaking ROC.¹¹ While TWSDA is dedicated to the street dance art development in Taiwan, the associations in which Bojin is involved have engaged with Taiwanese authorities such as the Chinese Taipei DanceSport Federation and Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, as well as becoming

¹⁰ Chia-ching Lin is a hip hop dancer born in Taoyuan, a northern township in Taiwan. Lin is also known as ‘Lu Kuang-chong’ because he is very much like the Taiwanese singer-songwriter Crow Lu (盧廣仲; Kuang-chong Lu) in appearance. We practised popping together while he learnt hip hop dance with Will John, our mentor and dance instructor, back in the days we spent together at the University of Kaohsiung.

¹¹ The following are the official titles of the associations mentioned here in Chinese: Taiwan Street Dance Art Association (臺灣街舞藝術協會), Taiwan Street Dance Culture Association (台灣街舞文化推廣協會) and Breaking ROC (中華民國霹靂舞協會).

involved with the preparations for the breakdancing's debut as 'dancesport' at the forthcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games. The Olympic debut of breakdancing is not a surprise, but rather, a belated confirmation that the hip hop means of bodily expression has become a transnational popular culture. This is because before the Olympic Games, street dancers—especially the b-boys and b-girls around the world—have already competed in international street dance contests, such as the BOTY International since the 1990s, as I mentioned earlier.

The dance floors of the international street dance contests provide the dancers with spaces not only to showcase their dance skills but also to transmit and amplify their aspirations in relation to their sociopolitical backgrounds. Like other international sport competitions, the BOTY or other worldwide dance battles often invoke 'nationalism'. Bojin Chen (2011), for instance, waved the national flag, a symbol to display his sentiment of Taiwanese nationalism, when he showcased his dance skills in 2006 and 2011 BOTY International, as the photography is shown in his blog (2011: n.pag.) and in Chao's essay (2013: 22-23). In this account, the international street dance contests turned out to be spaces of battlefields for Taiwanese street dancers to manifest their patriotic sentiments as a result of Taiwan's diplomatic isolation from the international community and her exclusion from international organisations.¹²

However, the manifestation of patriotic sentiments was not the only pursuit for Taiwanese street dancers to compete in international dance contests. The World DanceSport Federation (WDSF), as being 'responsible for the vision, direction and overall organisation of the [Paris 2024] Olympic project', has appointed Bojin as a technical delegate to the Breaking Division (WDSF 2021: n.pag.).¹³ In his interview with the Taiwanese reporters on the SETN, Bojin mentioned that 'this is the Olympic Games. If you want to

¹² In fact, not only Taiwanese street dancers tend to show their national flag in international dance competitions; those from South Korea, for example, also display their national flag on the stage (see figure 'Zui ju guanjunxiang de Nanhandui JinJo Crew' in Chen 2011: n.pag.). Celebrating nationalism by waving national flags in such spaces is because the mass media representation of these spaces can make the audiences become a people who are addicted to the ignited glorious and honouring scenes. Nevertheless, what the media representation generated is only a contingent arena where nationalisms are negotiated.

¹³ For his effort into promoting street dance culture, b-boy Bojin Chen received the 11th Presidential Culture Awards in Creativity and Innovation Category (總統文化獎青年創意獎) on 10 September 2021 (Lung 2021: n.pag.).

sit next to them and have a meeting [with the committees] at IOC, you need to be a big wheel. Not like us, [we're only] rolling on the floor—rolling to the world champion' (quoted in Hua and Lo 2021: n.pag.). Notwithstanding that he sounds upset, speaking from his fruitful experience in participating in international street dance competitions, Bojin also asserts:

[B]ecause of the Olympic inclusion, the so-called Olympic protocol defined many new rules, such as the certification system and the national athlete selection. You will have to negotiate with the governmental authorities like TPE, Sports Administration, Ministry of Education and Republic of China Sports Federation (ROCSF). The process is pretty complicated. [...] But [...] *I hope the breaking [culture] can develop on the right track, instead of transforming into [a sport] under the Olympic protocol and become something new.* (quoted in Hua and Lo 2021: n.pag.; emphasis added)

Bojin's aspiration toward a Breaking Division in the Paris 2024 Olympic programme echoes Kila's thought of the Olympic inclusion. As Kila mentioned, 'Olympic committees need to pay respect to hip hop culture. You can't evaluate the moves of a dancer by scores and say, "Oh! The leg-bending angle and headspin are perfect. Ten points for it!" That's not how we judge a dancer and their dance skills'.¹⁴ Street dancers from Taiwan, in this sense, are aware of the problem of breakdancing's inclusion in the Olympic Games while aspiring to a space in the international dance competition to showcase their dance moves and manifest their sentiments.

Apart from their concern over the Olympic engagement with breaking, Taiwanese street dancers have devoted their dance production of creativities to composing choreography for rap music videos in cooperation with mainstream rap singers. As I mentioned earlier, rap singers and street dancers in Taiwan tend to create hip hop art forms in separate domains. In fact, the Taiwanese dance crew Gestapo has made its debut as an idol group releasing the album *Buyao Shuo Wo Huai* ('don't say I'm bad') (1992) in the Taiwanese entertainment industry, but the boom of street dance that Gestapo brought to the industry turned out to be a flash in the pan. With the development of Taiwanese hip hop throughout several decades, the music video of Ying-hung 'DJ Didilong' Lee's 'Shuige ft. Soft Lipa' (2020) and the main song of his album *Shuige 2020 (Sweet 2020)* demonstrated the rap singers' collaboration with street dancers (or poppers, to be

¹⁴ This quotation is from a personal conversation with Kila on 12 January 2020, when I bumped into Kila at Kansai Airport. After we got on the shuttle bus heading back to Kobe, Kila mentioned his opinion on the Olympic inclusion of breaking in our conversation.

exact) in the Taiwanese entertainment industry, however. DJ Didilong's album *Shuige 2020* has successfully transcribed West Coast hip hop (G-funk) into his creation of 'T-funk', namely, Taiwanese funk music, with the extension of his self-understanding. As DJ Didilong explained, 'I [...] liked to listen to West Coast hip hop very much before, wearing loose clothes and imagined I were African American in Cali [...] [but] through internalisation, we realised that we could never be [African Americans]' (quoted in Wang 2020: n.pag.). As critic Wang (2020: n.pag.) commented, 'T-funk [...] is a revolution of [G-funk] music, but its lyrics also make a difference [in the sense of] retelling the local living conditions'. In this sense, DJ Didilong's T-funk creation is a process of synchronising West Coast hip hop with his local life experience in Luzhou, New Taipei City, attesting Charles Taylor's (1985: 131) theory by extending the possibilities of hip hop verbal and musical expression.

Furthermore, the showcase of popping dance routines and the depiction of Taiwanese life experience in the music video of 'Shuige ft. Soft Lipa' (2020) manifest this synchronisation process. In other words, the visual representation of the lyrics and the choreography composed for the music video has transmitted DJ Didilong's understanding of hip hop and co-created a virtual space for Taiwanese hip hop cultural expression.

The lyrics of the song intended to address sexism and transcribe the objectification of women from the Euro American society to the domestic phenomenon of betel nut beauties. As the song's chorus in DJ Didilong's 'Shuige' (2020) goes, 'Sista / Give me 50 for each / You know I just want to chew / Young ones, young ones, young ones, young ones'.¹⁵ To put this in jargon-free language, the lyrics attempted to depict the scene when a blue-collar labourer, especially a male driver, goes to a *pin-nîg* (betel nut) kiosk, which is usually run by a *pin-nîg se-si* (betel nut beauty), and orders NT\$50 amount for each flavour of *iù-á* (young betel nuts). Besides, the language used in the lyrics is ingenious. For example, the word 'jiějie' (sister) was pronounced in Taiwanese dialect 'tsé-tseh' (sista), whereas the term *iù-á* (幼仔) code-switched as *youde* (幼的) from Taiwanese to Mandarin, connoting the blue-collar driver's preference of 'young lady'. Nevertheless, the lyrics didn't further indicate any sexual harassment, such as breast touching, which might appear in such

¹⁵ The lyrics read, 'Tsé-tseh / Geiwo laige ge wushi / Ni zhidao wo zhi xiangyao chi / Youde, youde, youde, youde' (姊姊 / 給我來個各五十 / 你知道我只想要吃 / 幼的 幼的 幼的 幼的) in Mandarin, with pronouncing 'jiějie' (sister) as 'tsé-tseh', a Taiwanese variation of 'jiějie'. In order to show such variation in the language use of the lyrics, I translated 'tsé-tseh' into 'sista' on purpose, but I meant no offence to it.

a scene. This is more obvious in the rest of DJ Didilong's (2020) lyrics as Soft Lipa rapped in half Mandarin [M] and half Taiwanese [T] without using any sexist term. Instead, Soft Lipa suggested an ideal image of 'sweet boyz':

[M] Follow Sweet Boyz. Gals find happy.

With just a glance, how handsome he is?

[T] Checking the way you like, the way you desire,

The way you're high, the way you're delight'd.

[M] Sweet boyz [T] all know but not corrupted.

Those bad hobbies, he's not far apart.

While their rap lyrics code-switches between Mandarin and Taiwanese, DJ Didilong and Soft Lipa also showcase popping together with poppers such as Popping Ed, Pop Pop Joe, KrazyBonez, Ming, Sam Boog, POPPIN'RYAN, who come from different lineage and dance studios, in the music video. Instead of composing the dance routines with breakdance moves, the street dancers engaged in the music video display popping dance moves choreographed by Popping Ed because DJ Didilong's 'Shuige' (2020) is composed with a mixture of funk and West Coast hip hop. Significantly, the dance number assembled street dancers' popping solos with unique signature dance moves, including Pop Pop Joe's bizarre and funny moves, KrazyBonez's exaggerated limb-bending moves, as well as Popping Ed and Sam Boog's conspicuous and powerful hitting to the rhythms of beats, for instance (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The diversification of these unique signature dance moves is because of the popping dancers coming from different dance studios and lineages, such as Popping Ed and Sam Boog correlating with Lumi Dance School as former members of G-Force Dance Crew, as well as Pop Pop Joe and KrazyBonez of Let's Boogie (Taiwan) springing from the Electronic Boogaloos Family based in California. Either way, as an embodiment of 'call and response', these popper's unique signature dance moves in response to DJ Didilong's T-funk hip hop and lyrics reflecting local life experience draw a clear line from sexist representation, regardless of DJ Didilong's local, though vague, transcription of transnational hip hop sexism. In return, their showcase in the music video turned out to be a 'call' to invite rap singers to dance with them, demonstrating the combination of two means of transformed cultural expression in Taiwanese hip hop (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.1: Krazybonez's exaggerated limb-bending move (centre). Source: KAO!INC. (2020).



Figure 5.2: Sam Boog's conspicuous and powerful hitting (centre). Source: KAO!INC. (2020).



Figure 5.3: DJ Didilong (centre, in wine red) and Soft Lipa (centre, in orange) showcasing popping while rapping. Source: KAO!INC. (2020).

The music video representation of DJ Didilong's lyrics, transcribing American sexist images or harassments into a vague innuendo about the interaction of blue-collar drivers and betel nut beauties in the Taiwanese cultural context, results from the globalisation and the local gentrification of hip hop in a sequential process of cultural transmission. However, such a process defies transnational hip hop to synchronise with local cultural practice, which could be, as in Taylor's (1985) words, 'a language of perspicuous contrast' to hip hop. That is to say, the music video embodied the processes of synchronisation, and also challenged their self-definition to extend their possibilities and create alteration to cultural expressions in its fictitious space, including multilingual rap lyrics, visual narratives of betel nut beauties in relation to the 'Taiker culture' and popping dance with T-funk music. As I analysed above, the first synchronisation process is the 'cultural interplay' between the transnational hip hop sexism and DJ Didilong's multilingual rap lyrics with his understanding of hip hop's self-definition and extension to its cultural expression. Following this extension, Popping Ed's composition of choreography furthermore synchronised with the rap lyrics and created dance moves indicating innuendo about local sexism in Taiwan by appropriating Taiker's bodily, cultural expression but avoiding sexual harassment.



Figure 5.4: Popping Ed's remix of the walk-out move in popping with Taiker dance footwork and loose hand gestures. Source: KAO!INC. (2020).



Figure 5.5: Pin-nŋg ladies and DJ Didilong in the betel nut kiosk. Source: KAO!INC. (2020).



Figure 5.6: Pin-nîg ladies in the betel nut kiosk subverting the stereotype of the Taiker culture. Source: KAO!INC. (2020).

Although the Taiker culture connotes the vulgar image of Taiwanese grass-roots, or the Islanders, who for example use a creole of Taiwanese and Mandarin, listen to techno music and live a pretentious lifestyle, the concept of ‘Tai’ or ‘Taiker’ reflects Taiwanese social conditions and historical experiences, which tends to accept and internalise alien cultures while maintaining its cultural practice in its own locality (see Yeh 2005: 10-13; Lin 2007: 62). No matter whether the Taiker culture appropriated by Popping Ed’s choreography or the visual narratives in the music video is negative or positive in the sense of its extensive compatibility, the synchronisation of hip hop and Taiker articulated the possibilities of both cultures, which started from the encounter of these two cultures in a ‘perspicuous contrast’—explicitly, in the sense of techno vs. funk. These two genres of music are quite different. In relation to these dance music genres, ‘street dance’ also includes their dance style offshoots—namely, the house dance and the funk dance (pop-lock)—but Taiker dance differs from house dance quite a bit. In this sense, it is still a ‘perspicuous contrast’.

In just a few seconds, Popping Ed remixed the walk-out move (that is, crossing one leg before another before walking out) in popping with Taiker dance footwork responding to the rhythms of beats (see Figure 5.4). On the other hand, instead of the depiction of their huge breasts or wearing small shirts and short skirts to show their bodies, the use of betel nut kiosk and pin-nîg ladies without emphasising their sexy appearance also subverted the stereotype of the Taiker and hip hop culture (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6). These

devices of alteration to both cultures through synchronisation installed in the music video ingeniously corresponded to the successful code-switching between Taiwanese and Mandarin, as well as the redefinition of both cultures' perceptions of sexism.

Besides, the production of the rap song 'Shuige' and its music video, contextualises the National Languages Development Act (國家語言發展法) passed its third reading in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan on 25 December 2018. The Act was officially announced on 9 January 2019, and the whole Act will come into effect on 1 August 2022. As Article 1 states, the Act '[recognises] the multicultural nature of the nation, and to spur the transmission, revival, and development of national languages' (2019: n.pag.). On this account, both Taiwanese and Mandarin (and even English) are equal to the 'national languages', which will erase the stigma of Taiwanese being inferior to Mandarin labelled to the Taiker culture. Although the lyrics of 'Shuige' (2020) is not as straightforward as Dwagie's English rap songs such as 'WHO' (2020), which accused Chinese authorities of suppressing Taiwan in the international arena and WHO of excluding Taiwan during the COVID-19 Pandemic, DJ Didilong and Soft Lipa's code-switching between Taiwanese and Mandarin in the rap song is also an attempt of Taiwanese hip hop to show its respect to Taiwanese social conditions. Meanwhile, the music video 'Shuige' (2020) created a fictitious space that embodies the 'call and response' structure and reflects the 'reality' of Taiwanese society with the synchronisation of hip hop and local culture, resulting from the challenge for both cultures when they encountered under globalisation and went through gentrification. Therefore, such an articulation of Taiwanese hip hop's self-definition can also be as powerful as straightforward rap music and remain 'socially and politically conscious' at home.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the relationships between main 'street dance' forms such as breakdancing, popping and locking, as well as their musical influences, by disclosing their formative backgrounds in the US. Mainly having grown out of African American dance culture, street dance formation was rather complex due to the synchronisation of multiple cultural elements through the Afro-diasporic 'call and response' structure underlying hip hop culture. Despite this complexity, these dance forms are categorised as 'street dance' or 'hip hop dance' by the US media with its commercialisation of the culture.

Hip hop culture then began to diffuse not only into geographical divisions but also between different genres of text and it reached East Asia in the 1980s. This triggered the transformation of hip hop's cultural expression and the meaning of the 'street' when the culture interplayed with local elements or practices.

Therefore, I examined the transformed street dance culture in Taiwan and explored the alteration of street dance culture interplays between two sinophonic countries—Taiwan and China—through their exchanges of dance skills and knowledge. The alteration of street dance culture in Taiwan is due to the dancers' breakthrough from the restrictions imposed by the country's cultural censorship. In effect, whatever hip hop fought in the US context was replaced by the censorship of street dance or hip hop culture in Taiwan, thus becoming a force to enhance the development of Taiwanese hip hop, especially when the dancers realised that they should carry on the history and extend their understanding of hip hop. This brought fruitful results, that is, the 'regeneration' of street dance culture in Taiwan, including Taiwanese street dancers' efforts to showcase their dance skills in international street dance competitions and extend the possibilities of hip hop's bodily, cultural expression. To this point, I have explored Taiwanese street dance culture under globalisation by tackling the Olympic inclusion of breakdancing in 2024 Paris and contextualising the change of street dancers' minds to leave China and relocate their dance career in Taiwan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, I have examined the collaboration of Taiwanese rap singers DJ Didilong and Soft Lipa, as well as street dancers, for example, Popping Ed, Pop Pop Joe, Krazybonez and Sam Boog in the music video 'Shuige' (2020), a fictitious, transnational hip hop space demonstrating the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the culture under globalisation.

Apart from their cultural exchange with Chinese hip hop and interconnection with hip hop communities worldwide, Taiwanese hip hop has been creating a new pathway. The music video 'Shuige' has created a fictitious space with its embodiment of the 'call and response' structure and the reflection of the 'reality' of Taiwanese society. Meanwhile, it is an attempt of Taiwanese rap singers and street dancers to synchronise hip hop with local culture when they have realised that the cultural movement develops under globalisation and goes through gentrification. With decades of development, the articulation of Taiwanese hip hop's self-definition in its (non-)verbal expression turned out to be as powerful and remain 'socially and politically conscious' both at home and abroad, as b-boy Bojin notes:

The true meanings of hip hop are Peace, Love, Unity & hav[ing] fun [*sic*]. These are what we often say. In this culture, 'love' is an important element, whether it is the passion for the dance music, friendship as in human relationships, or even, it is the *true feeling of supporting the local [culture]*. 'Support your local!' [...] Through [putting] hip hop culture and street dance [into practice], we can be more united and freer. [...] Hip hop is a great culture grew out of [art and civil movements] fighting against social inequalities, so what we learn from hip hop and street dance includes living

*life with a global perspective or concern with the minorities in other countries.*¹⁶ (emphasis added)

¹⁶ B-boy Bojin Chen mentioned this in his text-message interview via Facebook Messenger on 28 October 2021. Bojin doesn't do well in verbal expression, but he is an activist and would take action immediately on whatever came to his mind. Also see his performance and speech given to TEDxTamsui on YouTube (Tedx Talk 2021), where he addressed similar thoughts as quoted in my thesis.

CONCLUSION

– Diffusion of Street Dance –

Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, we shall find a way around or through it. [...] If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.¹

Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.²

———by Bruce Lee, ‘The Lost Interview’,
in *The Pierre Berton Show*, 9 December 1971

This thesis has explored ‘street dance’ of hip hop culture developed in the US since the 1970s and spread into East Asian countries since the 1980s by examining its cultural diffusions and contacts with local cultural elements or practices in East Asia to reappraise the Afro-diasporic antiphonic structure—‘call and response’. Street dance, together with other of hip hop’s cultural expressions, grew out of the waves of art movement following the civil rights movement in the 1960s. At that time, these art movements were led by the youths, who turned out to be the hip hop pioneers (regardless of their ethnicities), fighting against poverty, class inequality, racial discrimination and so on. As a result of this backdrop, bodily cultural expressions of

¹ Although the ‘Be like water’ quote of Bruce Lee is believed to be a part of the interview, there is no clue to prove whether or not Lee had addressed these words in the interview nowadays in *The Pierre Berton Show* on 9 December 1971, since the interview was lost and would not be found until 1994. It is indeed so famous that most of the works, either academic or nonacademic, quoted it without reference. However, in Campbell and Lee’s *Remembering the Master* (2006: 102), Karena Beverly Lee quoted Bruce Lee’s words of ‘be water’ philosophy to remember the friendship of his father and Bruce Lee in her essay. Despite lack of citation, it might be the most convincing source to reference. I hope this finding would show my respect to Bruce Lee (R.I.P.).

² Also see the transcription in *The Lost Interview: Bruce Lee (The Pierre Berton Show, 9 December 1971)* (Anon. 2009: 29).

hip hop, i.e., street dance, connote silent resistance, resulting in today's hip hop cultural studies overemphasising street dance's inseparable musical counterpart—namely, rap music or hip hop music. In other words, fruitful hip hop research, especially in anglophone academia, often prioritises the musical, verbal expression of hip hop, falling into the pitfall of 'lyrical centrism', as I mentioned previously in Chapter 1. In this regard, my thesis attempted to provide an investigation into the bodily expressive culture as such and the representation of the dancing body while theorising and redefining the musical concept of 'call and response'.

Summary of the Thesis

Apart from Paul Gilroy's (1993: 78) conceptual definition of this musical structure, Chapter 1 redefined it in three concepts to develop its arguments: First, 'call and response' refers to 'the inseparability of music and dance'. Second, it is a 'repeated process of cultural appropriation'. Moreover, it is a sense of 'hip hop diffusion' but not limited to the geographical or linear dissemination of hip hop. Besides, I have established a theoretical framework by borrowing Charles Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' (1985)—a concept that Taylor asserts that as we challenge an alien culture's language of self-understanding, 'we may also challenge ours' (1985:125). Taylor's assertion focused not just in one direction as such, but certainly in an extended 'two-way' understanding of both cultures when they encounter one another. In this sense, his concept provided my thesis with an insight into elaborating how hip hop culture creates alternatives to its cultural expressions by extending its self-understanding for the 'cultural interplay' when it diffuses and encounter divergent cultural elements or practices. Street dance embarked on a 'cross-cultural' diffusion into academia from here.

In Chapter 2, I began my dissection of 'street dance' from its contact and 'cultural appropriation' of Kung Fu films, Bruce Lee's philosophy and the aesthetics of Chinese martial arts amongst the alien cultural elements the culture had encountered so far. This was contextualised with the commercialisation of Kung Fu films as popular culture in the US under globalisation. It is the reason why I go back to Bruce Lee's sophisticated words as the prologue in this Conclusion. It is Bruce Lee who gave struggling youth hope to lead cultural revolution and to display resistance, and strengthened their (non-)verbal cultural expressions. The convergence of hip hop and Kung Fu as a representative of popular cultural revolution, as M. K. Kato (2007) argued, has demonstrated the power of 'cultural interplay' between hip hop and other cultural

elements. In this sense, I concluded that the encounter between Kung Fu and hip hop may empower the culture to confirm its possibilities to synchronise, regenerate and become shareable.

As I analysed in my last chapter, ‘cultural appropriation’ manifested as a keyword for my thesis to progress its investigation. Chapter 3 then elaborated on this idea by supporting the examples of hip hop diffusions in manga *Tokyo Tribe-2* (1997-2005) and its anime adaptation *Tokyo Tribes* (2006-07), as well as anime *Samurai Champloo* (2004-05) to examine how street dance culture or hip hop synchronised with local elements in Japanese subcultures. By analysing how anime and manga have transcribed the cultural elements of manga and anime, I argued that their transcriptions have called for the domestic awareness of racial or ethnic issues such as the BLM event in Japan, which is more obvious in *Samurai Champloo* in relation to its intention to retell the hip hop ethos of rebellion and resistance. Yet, if the diffusion of hip hop is taken into account, manga and anime representation of hip hop would not be limited to domestic consumption and awareness. In other words, manga/anime representation of hip hop would also become another call for the hip hop movements. I hence concluded that the diffusion of hip hop into Japanese manga and anime representation creates an alternative way of cultural expression, which is reversible.

In Chapter 3, my investigation of ‘call and response’ tended to surround on the musical aspect, resulting from the manga representation has reflected the actual site of dance club being a ‘professionalism in [music] performance’ (Condry: 235-36) in the Japanese cultural context. By contrast, in chapter 4, I explored the diffusion of hip hop into ‘Yingge hip hop’ dance film representation and how ‘call and response’ functions in the synchronisation of bodily expressions by looking at *Ying Ge Hun* (2019). Besides, I utilised this film to gainsay the criticism of feminine voices missing in street dance society, as exemplified by the engagement of the heroine Wenqi in the last performance number. Contextualising the fictitious film with the Chinese social conditions and context, I also tackled the Chinese policing of hip hop and explored that either Chinese rap singers or street dancers had found alternative as ‘resistance’ to break through the policy of restraint in hip hop culture. Apart from my investigation into hip hop’s breach of the cultural censorship under Chinese social conditions, I also concluded that (Chinese) hip hop is against gender roles and that this is furthermore explicit by examining the hip hop transformation due to its diffusion.

Just as the previous two chapters are associated with each other because of my focus on the media representation of hip hop, Chapters 4 and 5 are highly related as well. This is because of the interaction and connection of the street dancers and rap singers from two sinophonic countries—namely, China and Taiwan. However, in Chapter 5, I began by revealing the formative backgrounds of several main ‘street dance’ forms

in relation to the musical influences in the US, and then sought to examine the transformation of Taiwanese hip hop and street dance by examining the movements of hip hop practitioners from Taiwan, such as their culture exchange of hip hop knowledge with the Chinese people and their making pilgrimages to the US or Japan to renew their dance skills. Like Chinese hip hop, the alteration of street dance culture in Taiwan is due to the dancers' breakthrough of the country's cultural censorship, which has brought the 'regeneration' and the gentrification of the culture in Taiwan. Contextualising with the Olympic inclusion of breakdancing in 2024 Paris, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the latest national language policy, I examined, for example, the collaboration of Taiwanese rap singers and street dancers in the music video 'Shuige' (2020), a fictitious, transnational hip hop space demonstrating the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the cultural reality under globalisation. I concluded that the articulation of Taiwanese hip hop's self-definition in its (non-)verbal expression turned out to be powerful and remain 'socially and politically conscious' both at home and abroad, exemplifying with b-boy Bojin's breakdancing career.

Significance of the Study

As a study of street dance culture and representation, the theoretical framework and methodology of this thesis have developed out of Paul Gilroy's observation of 'call and response' in his *The Black Atlantic* (1993) and Charles Taylor's concept of 'a language of perspicuous contrast' (1985). The findings of this study are based on both representation of street dance and its cultural developments contextualising the social and cultural spatiotemporal conditions in East Asia, through exploring the 'streets' that hip hop occupies in anime, manga, films, TV programmes, dance contests and 'real' street dance scenes, and contributes in three layers (for the general public, for street dancers and for academia) as follows.

First, this study redounds to the benefit of societies and helps them to consider that street dance culture plays an important role, in terms of the youth culture or mass media, but also as a symbol of, say, violence and vulgarity recognised by the general public in East Asian countries today. Secondly, the approach of understanding street dance derived from the results of this study will also enable street dancers around the world to know the past, present and consider the future of street dance culture developed in different social contexts while reconsidering to what extent the 'cultural appropriation' of street dance is in/adequate. Finally, for researchers, this study will help them uncover critical areas in the cultural studies of street dance or other hip hop elements that many researchers could not explore, to the extent that my thesis provides a dance study theory to investigate bodily expressive culture as such and media representation of the dancing body through

the redefined 'call and response' structure that asserts the music's inseparable counterpart cultural expression. Hence, a new theory on street dance or hip hop (in any aspects or elements of the culture that develops under the 'call and response' structure) may be arrived at.

The Future of Hip Hop and Street Dance Cultural Studies

This thesis has studied the East Asian street dance culture while relying heavily on media representation of hip hop. Due to my focus on the media representation of the culture in China, Japan and Taiwan, I could only explore the limited connection between hip hop and local social conditions in each chapter, although I sought to traverse between fictional street dance scenes and the 'real world'. The future of this study, in this sense, should present a challenge to investigate some critical issues on cultural studies of hip hop, such as the politico-economical aspects and deepen its discussion on 'real' social movements. In this regard, Mayu Nakamura and Kimihiro Tsumura's Japanese documentary *Lonely Swallows: Living as the Children of Immigrant Workers* (2012), which retells Japanese Brazilian labourer Coca's breakdancing stories in Hamamatsu and his financial difficulties that he confronted, for example, would be a crucial insertion of a future study in relation to Chapter 3.

On the other hand, in terms of regional hip hop research, this thesis couldn't cover Korean hip hop and street dance culture, but I would like to point out that Korean hip hop culture is highly related to the spread of K-Pop around the world. To the extent of the gentrification of hip hop, Korean hip hop would probably be the most suitable research target if taking BTS or Psy, for example, into account. Such expansion of K-Pop and its cultural appropriation of hip hop is related to Korean nationalism and the authorities' cultural policies. In this sense, Korean hip hop can be analysed together with Chinese hip hop, as I have examined in Chapter 4. However, it is also crucial to explore the Korean hip hop movements, which the national funding and the globalised capitalistic market exclude.

Besides, I have examined the gentrification of hip hop by looking at the transformation of street dance spaces in Chapter 5, including the shift from the battle scenes to international dance competition scenes and the 'street' to 'dance studio'. However, the chapter cannot state what impact the Olympic inclusion of breakdancing in 2024 Paris will bring to the culture, or how 'street dance' may respond to the convention since it is still an ongoing issue. From this point of view, Taiwanese b-boy Bojin Chen's engagement with the WDSF is worthy of investigation in the future as well.

*

Last but not least, I would like to conclude this thesis with Caribbean history specialist Gabriel Entiope's manifestation in his book *Negroes, Dance and Resistance* (1996). This also echoes the conclusion of Chapter 5, where I address to Bojin's comment to Taiwanese hip hop and street dance culture, as well as the culture's 'social and political consciousness' that has developed from the 'street'.

Let's not forget dancing is a form of expression. It speaks and transmits a message. It is a silent verbal expression in which the speech becomes movement and gestures. The slave will use dance as a language to express both their immediate resentment, as well as their refusal of the abject world of slavery and refusal to make themselves to be stripped of both their cultural and physical self. The dance is then part of the whole resistance movement of the Negroes for their freedom, in the same way as the revolts, the poison, the suicide, the abortion, the lie, the flattery, the mockery, the tales, the songs, the garden, sycophantism, Marronnage....³ The Negroes did not only dance for entertainment or to make profitable the plantation of their master. *They also gave to the dance a political value and content*, and they also marooned in the dance.⁴ (Entiope 1996: 258; emphasis added)

³ Marronnage, in French, is not a common word for the general public. The term refers to the escape of a black slave from being their master's property in America, the West Indies or the Mascarenes during colonial times. Also see footnote 4.

⁴ A special thanks to Arnaud Stockinger, who helped to double-check this translation from French to English. Note that my English translation also relied on Michiko Ishizuka's Japanese translation of Entiope's *Negroes, Dance and Resistance* (2001). Please also see Ishizuka's translation for the term 'Morrannage', where she put it as 'tōbō' (escape) in Japanese (Entiope 2001: 238).

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