

Day 01

Tuesday

21 Aug 2018

A spoken phrase shared by Amy Chia ("Mdm Chia") who sells her handmade breadcrafts, amongst other accessories:

"		七		月		七
洗				池		塘
人				心		杂
我				心		通
教	我	学	裁	兼	学	剪
教我勤针学补粘"						

She recited the words in Cantonese and in a rhythmic manner.

This is my first time coming to a large-scale wet market in Klang Valley. The ones I usually go to are much smaller in size or the Pasar Tani on the road. Hence, this large-scale and frequent slaughtering of chickens for several hours throughout the morning is not a usual experience for me.

As I walked through the market, taking in the multi-layered sights, smells, sounds, voices, sense of light, sense of space, moisture in the air...putting my body amidst all of these. As I listened for triggers to my body, I could not help but sense a sameness between the flesh of the cow that is being chopped up and the flesh of my legs and arms.

I thought about how distanced my life is from the source and journey process of the myriad things that I consume every day. "Progress" resulting in greater convenience has not really saved us time but simply altered our perception to take a lot for granted and lose/forget our relationship with the rest of the ecology. I also do not know much

about who laboured and how their work conditions are for the clothes or mobile devices that I buy from the store. The massive distance is indeed a comfort shield. The distance effectively makes consuming much less thoughtful for me.

I found myself very quickly drawn to a group of Indonesian migrant employees (mostly women) who work at a chicken stall that often has many plastic bags of undelivered chicken eggs together with other innards for sale. They were also some of the first people I spoke with and interacted with most.

Goods sold for spiritual needs e.g. flowers, incense, etc. I felt that some people view us as young girls instead of women.

A quick note from today: The activities that take place in the market are out of necessity, maybe mundane, mostly purpose-driven, and not so much a leisurely place that people come to spend time at.

I spent a long time—an hour—just hanging out behind a stall that was not open. The owner of the vegetable stall opposite used this counter to place and arrange extra stocks. The whole time behind the unoccupied counter, I simply observed, inhabited, contemplated, wondered, changed positions, sensed—mainly inhabiting while learning as much as I can of the place and people, and trying to be as invisible as possible even though it is not possible. In terms of visible action, I was hardly doing anything at all. Except, my existence there was unusual—a stranger just hanging out doing nothing behind an unoccupied stall. Some workers talked amongst themselves about me—I read from the way they were gesturing and looking my way, but no one approached me directly. I also did not feel any clear reason to explain myself, though I understood that my presence was sufficiently out of place that I could do no more than just stand there physically. I noticed that when I occasionally shifted the stance my body was in, or when I stretched a little after some time of being still, someone will tell someone else who will then pass on the update on the “progress of things” with regard to this stranger.

While being in (affecting) observation mode behind the counter, I also thought about perceived right to space or appropriateness of being—in this context where the space is a very purpose-defined place and people are here to work. The space is not fluid, at least during the 2am-12noon period. Also, this market is not one that I come to usually—far from where I stay. I am an outsider and I feel very much like one. I felt almost wrong to be here (in contrast to the walk/dance rituals I do in my neighbourhood).

When I finally emerged from behind the stall counter, after an hour or more, I felt that the awareness around me was heightened. In the past one hour, it was as if my position behind the stall counter eventually settled and was “accepted” as a setting. So the moment I moved out of that “accepted position”, there seem to be some kind of destabilizing or alert trigger—or people were just simply curious to know this stranger’s next move.

While I was behind that counter, the woman owning the vegetable stall opposite kept watching me. At first, I thought she was guarding against me. Later, I realised that it was probably because the stocks laid on the counter were hers. A few times, some customers would ask me about “ini jual macam mana?” or “怎样卖?” and I found myself matter-of-factly help to pass on to the boss or her workers. One particular instance, a man with lots of tattoos walked over and bellowed at me to pick some vegetables for him. It made me wonder if it was simply his personality, or his mood that morning, or that I was a woman, or that I looked young. I could also be too sensitive of such matters, at times.

Today, the second day here, I felt I am in a place where I feel unable to “set my own task”, or “find something from my inner self”, or “dance for myself”...I simply cannot be “in my own world”. Instead, I felt the most appropriate I could be was to remain responsive and approachable at all times, to be available to converse normally to anybody. At the same time, there is also a relaxed sense of inhabiting—listening and paying attention to all the things that were going on in the market. Also, I found that non-movement and quietness on my part made the most sense—but not an inward quietness. Simply, not making action but just being in the environment and with the people.

Today, Hari Raya Haji, I also had the chance to see many, many young migrant men wearing the taqiyah(?) waiting for the bus outside of the market. They all appear to be in bright mood and excited. I felt excited or festive alongside them, even though it wasn't a shared experience.

Today, I paid attention to the way rays of light of different intensity and width penetrate through the space of the market; the different angles that thin metal rods or wires hang or jutted out from the ceiling; the variably shaped clusters of dust; the empty or quiet spaces of the market... I tried to track, corporeally, the flow and distribution of people in the market over time. I tried to get a feel of the demography. (In retrospect, today is the day I encountered the highest number of male migrant customers. Most days, male migrants are almost only visible as workers in the market.

I look out through the openings to see the world outside of this market: the condominiums across the road, the flats behind, the famous Old Klang Road, the buses that stop momentarily just outside of the market, the cars, an air-con shop with a giant sign "pork and seafood", entertainment bars nearby, the giant bins that contained mounds and mounds of slaughtered chickens' feather, with black crows always perched nearby, ready to swoop in for a stray piece of gut...there is more than one consumption chain at this market. Spending long hours in this market makes me feel a surreal juxtaposition of life (and death) inside and life outside. The market is also a life and death place. Life is taken and life is given or sustained.

The market is decorated with some Malaysian flags hanging here and there, somewhat sparse and yet never out of sight. The flags look very new and untainted, hanging from the dust and grey of the old ceiling structure. We gathered that it was probably put up this month for

the famous Merdeka day. It was a stark image—of pristine Malaysian flags looming powerfully over a setting that looks out of time or out of place with the flags: Small groups and big groups of migrant workers gutting fish, chopping up chickens—there's always so many chickens, washing squids, arranging and selling vegetables... The flag seems so oblivious, or irrelevant.

Day 03

Thursday

23 August 2018

I watched a rat scurrying around a cage of live chickens. As usual, the caged chickens appeared listless. I thought of the kind of decay that begins from an already deteriorated place.

人

Human

人与人

Between two persons

人人与人

People and the individual

众人与人

The crowd and the person

沟通、无语的语言。 Communication; a language

without words.

看

See

想

Think

聆听

Listen

感觉

Feel

眼神、感觉...

Eyes, facial expression,

reading nuances, intuition...

被接受? 受欢迎?

Welcomed?

“你不是来买菜的，一直站在那里，很奇怪叻。”

“You didn't come here to buy groceries, just standing there, that's odd and abnormal.”

Oddity.

A place's function.

Some places' function are more fluid, open, less defined.

In a place with such defined parameters (of function and purpose), I wondered if my being, when not looking to buy something, might only cause discomfort or suspicion.

On this second day since my first 'abnormal' appearance yesterday, I heard someone remarked, "That person is here to exercise again." ("她又来做 exercise 咯。")

Perhaps that is the most logically-comforting deduction for my odd behaviour. Maybe it's about my attire i.e. t-shirt and shorts and sport shoes—the most practical combo, but maybe not the intended impression). Maybe the woman (owner of a dried goods' stall) who made the remark was in some way taking upon herself to alert her community about the odd recurrence in their space. She questioned me, when I told her I was doing a research: "Research? What's there to research here? Nobody comes here anymore. You see, I have so much free time right now. Not many customers. Saturdays and Sundays there will be more people."

She then told me her stall has been for 60 years already, starting from her mom selling vegetables.

Then she continued her questions in cantonese:

"You want to open a stall, is it?"

"You want to do business here?"

"Are you a student? Or working already?"

When she found out that I delve in the arts, she spread the word on to the stalls nearby.

Since I am not in this space for the function of this space, I may be causing discomfort. This is not my intention.



Why is discomfort caused?

Especially in this particular section of the market where I spent yesterday and today, the space is more dense and “crowded”—the ceiling is lower, the stalls are closer to each other, there is lots of gutting and cleaning going on all the time, fish scales flying around, sounds of chicken slaughter, and there is much less spill-in of day light from the outside, there is less space—both real or perceived—between bodies and between people. In juxtaposition, another part of the market where the ceiling is much higher, and there is abundance of daylight and outside sights pouring in at all angles, the space feels much more open, porous, and spacious. And even though there was a lot of activity going on, chopping and gutting (tempo and pacing just as rapid), yet it feels like people are generally calmer and more relaxed about things. There also seems to be less (obligated or inevitable) interaction between stalls, and people simply attended to their own things.

What is public space? What is the contract of a shared space? Is one really free in a public space? What is one’s obligation in a shared space? Is it a shared space?

What am I doing here? What is my relevance? If I am not buying something from the stall, what is my use or benefit to them? Maybe I should let them know first, what I am doing here, since this is their space. Would this work for what I am doing? Which should be priority, and to what extent? What are my principles?

Regardless, the subsequent days that I spent at the market, besides getting breakfast, I try to buy some things home each day.

Today—a Thursday—there was very few customers. By 9am, the market appeared quite empty already.

Day 04

Friday

24 August 2018

The immaculate national flags still stick out like a circus notice.

Today, my companions for breakfast are a middle-aged man in office attire, a senior man, yet another man in Honda polo shirt, two very senior women, and a senior couple.

I started my corporeal mapping with footsteps/pacing. First, I walked about everywhere, attempting to average the pace of the people I am amongst. Usually, it is moderately fast speed. I noticed that the speed of my footsteps is a helpful trick for me to blend in. As long as my footsteps is in sync with the pace of the place, I belong—I become one of them. I also tried walking briskly, weaving through the entire market, continuously and for a prolonged time, here and there, to and fro—as if determined to get a corporeal and sensorial mapping memory of the market as one body. It is as if I want to take in all that maketh the market.

Starting from the feet,  
The average of the surrounding pace;  
The flow of people;  
Where is it dense, where does it feel sparse;  
How is tempo related to the spatial density;  
Music (playing from some stalls);  
Voices (low-volume conversations, high-volume call-and-response);  
And then someone was scolding someone—both adults;

Quietness at certain spots, (it was as if I was  
being carried by the water current through  
calmer seas and through larger waves)

Meat-chopping,  
flesh being chopped up;  
Rats scurrying and pausing;  
Being seen, when no one is watching;  
Who looks?

Little children.

Entrance and exits.

Border markers.

Periphery of the market;

The world in here,

The world outside;

Categorization within the market—informal but  
functioning ones and formal but no longer  
applicable ones

e.g. “Gerai Khinzir”.

What is the rhythm of this market, today, right  
now?

Dead, living;

Moving;

Dead bodies;

Body parts;

Bone,

Blood,

Flesh,

(All these words I refer to in my body practice...)

Liver,

Intestines,

Altar,

Smell, aroma;

Flower fragrance;

Aroma of coconut milk;

Smoke, grease;

Sunlight,

Narrow spaces,

The far sight outside framed by the silhouette of  
the market's roof and structure;  
The perspective frame across the longest length  
of the market, possible only from limited angles;

Migrant workers in general seem to be most open and approachable and amicable—both female and male. Again, some asked me if I was doing exercise. (I made a mental note to avoid wearing attire that suggests sports.) As I started to dance, I noticed that the roti canai stall owners and the char kuey teow chef were most outwardly friendly toward me, smiling and gesturing to me. One comfortable spot today is next to the Indian aunty who makes thosai and apom. It was a small space that gave me a temporary and unexpected sense of personal space, freedom, and hush-hush joy.

At a stall that sells shoes and slippers, a radio plays music. The male Chinese boss and his migrant employee danced, teasing each other.

Day 05

Saturday

25 August 2018

Today, the market felt different.

I don't feel much. Is it that I have gotten numb, or I was simply tired from not sleeping enough? (These 10 odd

days, I mostly woke up at 5plus in the morning, in order to catch the 6am bus from where I live in PJ.)

The market just feels like a background. Today, it didn't feel so different from the market I usually go to near my house. Why did I feel so triggered the past four days? Was it only because I was new to the market? Did I simply get used to it? Or, was the market really different today?

Almost every single stall is open today. What roughly feels like 20-30% more stalls are open today. All those unoccupied counters were mostly operating today. The unopened counter I had stood behind on day#2 was a roast pig stall today. The usual vegetable stock arrangement on it was out of sight. A chicken egg stall had a live male chicken as its mascot. Its proud owner, a Chinese senior man, told me his favourite singer is Doris Day who sang the famous Que Sera, Sera. He also decorated his stall for Merdeka Day, which mainly translates into a display of many national flags.

The Chinese aunty who sold economic bihun sold out all her food and was already packing up by 8am. The Indian aunty who makes thosai and apom only came to open her stall at 9am. At 9am, another nyonya kuih and dumpling stall had sold out its goods. It felt like, today the peak hour was 7-9am. I also saw some very young migrant women, looking like the local college age, dressed very trendily, who came to buy groceries.

I passed by the jewellery stall opposite the wild boar meat stall. The music playing is a Chinese song sang by a woman in mainland Chinese accent. Today, randomly, the phrase "Fucuk Goreng" printed on the translucent plastic bags containing the dried good jumps out at me. Somehow, it became a visual note for the rest of my days here.

I spent a long time standing across from the large dispose bin behind the market.

Black crows. So many.

They are always perched there, waiting.

They always look intelligent and intimidating.

A snooker and internet café is just around the corner.

A migrant young man came by with a deep pail containing 6 live chickens. One after another, he picks them out, holds them expertly, and cuts a small slit in their necks. So simple, so quiet, so efficient. The chickens never showed any reaction to the slit. But, some 30 seconds later, you hear each one struggle, in the new pail they were placed in post-slit. The crows waited. One swooped down into the massive mound of disposed chicken feathers and flew back up with a piece of gut dangling from its beak.

A Chinese middle-aged man was waiting on his motorcycle nearby. He is not someone who works at the market. He asked me in mockery, just as he was riding off, “You documenting the crows?” I was holding a pen and a journal.

The mounds of chicken feather is enough to fill the surface area of my bedroom, perhaps up to or above my thighs. I never realized how much chicken is sold at the market each day. I never imagined the demand so high. And this is just one market.

生、死、吃、活、杀、拜、信、干。

(Alive; dead; eat; live; kill; worship; believe; do.)

Day 06

Sunday

26 August 2018

I danced a little, somewhat, near a coconut milk manufacturing stall where the floor is perpetually oil-slippery. I recall that Junyi said it always smells good at this part of the market. I feel the heat radiating from a large freezer nearby. I strived to inhabit inside this market—sometimes I find it easier to blend in when I moved (danced) matter-of-factly behind another person who is just standing around. I tasked myself to find how I can de-hierachicalize my being in this situation: How can I dethrone the attention-hierarchy that is so embedded in performance? How can my being/dancing not be asking of people to watch me? How can my dance become

invisible in the place? I want to be able to (stop and) greet or converse with anyone at any time, when I am dancing. As I further tune-in corporeally to the environment, I tasked myself: What is the relationship between my dance and the people who work here.

I noticed the chicken stall that is owned by an old Chinese uncle always closes at 10am. The workers, who are mostly from Surabaya except for one young man who is from Bangladesh, would close and clean up the place by 10am, and then the boss uncle, with a cigarette between his lips, will hand out the daily pay to them in cash. Then, most of them will go off—either to their second job of the day, or to go home and sleep before their other night shift starts in the evening. For instance, the young Bangladeshi man also works as a waiter at a nightclub at Scott Garden on Old Klang Road—he goes there to work from 6pm till 3am, after which he comes directly to the market to start work: loading and preparing for opening up the chicken stall. Many of these migrant workers live in the flats just behind the market or nearby.

The migrant workers (both men and women, young and adults) mostly seem very comfortable when I dance nearby, as if it was the norm to have someone dance in the market. They are often uninhibited to smile and greet, ask me questions (initially) and to converse with me. This is also how I learn about their daily routine and other simple information. There was an Indonesian family of three generations: the mother and her daughter-in-law worked at a chicken stall, while the grandson who is 18 years old works at the coconut milk stall, and his father works between two stalls. The son only went to primary school and then started to work when he got older. His mother is at this time 5 months pregnant. She also often goes over to chit chat with a mainland Chinese woman (who operates a clothes stall), after the chicken stall closes.



Today is the first time I see the boss of the fish stall “明明有档鱼” (roughly translates to “obviously there is a stall of fish”)—a Chinese man—come in. His three Burmese workers are always there every day cleaning and gutting fish. (There is a fourth young boy, perhaps not yet 20 years old, who helps them whenever he is not occupied at the adjacent vegetable stall.) Later, I would observe that the boss only comes in on the weekends, never on weekdays. And I’ve only ever seen him in a yellow Bersih t-shirt.

The sound of chickens being taken to slaughter rings through the market. I continued to dance. Life, death, grief, dread...Dancing does not clash with these. Meanwhile, I continue to see the cut up fish bodies, the pig’s flesh and bone, chicken parts, and sheep’s flesh being chopped up. The meat I consume and help form the flesh of my body, the body that I move and sense and live in, the body that lays on the counter...

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Some responses toward my dancing that I have knowledge of—also the ones that I get directly while I danced:

-A Chinese uncle who sells vegetable: “Why come to such a complicated place to dance?”

-The male Chinese boss of a pork stall came over a few times to where I was dancing at, two rows of stalls from him, “Continue!” (I had stopped dancing as I thought he wanted to speak to me.) “I should bring my child to come and dance with you.”

-The Indian family who runs the roti canai stall is always very positive and at ease, when I dance nearby. They either smile, greet or talk to me.

-The Chinese father and son duo of another chicken stall joked about wanting to learn dance steps.

When I encountered persons whom I sensed a more informal, casual, at-ease vibe, I wondered what their background is that form such personality that are more open and less serious. It was as if they were very open to alternative ways of expression and being, that they took my behaviour (of dancing in the market) just as a matter of fact. It is no big deal to them.

In journaling now, I realise that in an attempt to articulate or document findings and observations, I find myself simplifying e.g. a particular identity marker group would respond a certain way to my dancing or my being in the space. Yet, in actual, every person can be quite different, depending on their personality and the myriad background factors that make them. This is in spite of some common cultural/demographic denominator that I might conveniently subscribe to.

Before I left the market, I went to the market's altars of Dato' Gong and the Hindu deities to say my thanks for the day at the market.

Day 07                      Monday, "Market Rest Day" 27                      August  
2018

Most of the people at the market call Monday the "rest day". From what I know of the Chinese wet market closer to where I live, those in-charge of slaughtering pigs break on Sunday. So, on Mondays there is no pork for sale, and thus, nobody goes to the (predominantly Chinese) market.

Mental note: Perhaps I should make a work titled <On Sunday All Pigs Live> “礼拜天猪不死”/“礼拜天诸不死” (“On Sundays No One Dies”).

I arrived to the market much later this morning. Junyi who arrived before me said there were some office-attire folks who came to the market to eat or tapau breakfast at 7:30am. As usual, I had taken the bus to get to the market. When I was switching bus near Midvalley at 8am, I saw many nasi lemak stalls at the side of pavements on the overhead bridge. I hadn't encounter them last whole week, perhaps because my usual time there is 6plus in the morning, and these stalls apparently serves the office people (locals). At 6plus, all the people I encounter going to work are almost solely migrant workers. And there are many, filling up a whole bus. I hadn't need to worry about being alone at the bus stops, there was already many people (mainly migrant workers) out and about at 6am where I live.

I wonder if the exhibition (of photos of the people of the market) that Pey Sien, Doris, and Junyi are working on might contribute to some kind of geo-body to the people working in the market. For instance, in the past few days, I slowly observed that, due to the very large area of the market, not everyone who works there knows everyone else. For example, when one of the pork stall aunty came to another side of the market to eat, a noodle stall uncle there will tell me (while listing some facts about each person in the immediate area we were at) that this aunty does not have a stall in the market, that she simply comes to the market to eat breakfast. This also kind of relates to my question some days ago: If I kept dancing at only one part of the market, will the event spread by word across the entire market? I had this question because after the first 3-4 days of mostly spending time at one area, I realized that when I went to dance at a different area, what

has become sort of accepted as usual in one place became something strange and unexpected again in another area of the market, just meters away. This led me to decide that every day, I could attempt to roughly cover the entire market, in order to build the regularity of encounter—in my pursuit of exploring relationality over (limited) time.

Ten questions I tasked myself to come up with today:

1. Do I intend for the people who work here to watch my dancing?
2. In any case, who do I wish for to see my dancing?
3. What are my principles or consideration regarding people who come to the market as customers? (So far, my principles or tasks mainly concern the people who work here.)
4. In a market that has no people (i.e. quite empty today), what is my dance?
5. Could I share or exchange dance steps with some people that I've become more familiar with, when they are free and unoccupied? (A few people brought it up to me, jokingly or seriously.)
6. What kind of steps would I share with them?
7. I saw an old newspaper cutting titled “霸王抢滩生意减” (Losing business and customers to dominant supermarket). How do I feel about the nostalgia often appealed to and the call for preservation?
8. Why is it that the Chinese men are the first to engage, converse, and the Chinese women slower to do so? Has it to do with conventional gender roles that relates to the “representative

voice”? (Maybe I’m conveniently simplifying again.)

9. There is a young Chinese man who is always sleeping in a sit cross-leg position on one end of his mother’s stall counter, with his torso completely bent over his legs. I kind of noted him as my personal “constant” in the market. Today, I was very surprised to see him, still in the same sit-sleep position, but with a new haircut! The sight of the new haircut on the “permanently” same body and posture made on me an expected impression. (And I realize now, in retrospect, that this point is not a question. And that I did not get to the tenth one.)

I spent 20 minutes just standing by a vegetable stall chitchatting with two senior uncles who have their stalls opposite each other. They were talking about culture and arts. One of them was a musician when younger and is member of an alumni choir today. He said that a few others who work at the market are also members of that choir group. The other uncle, who mainly sells rice dumplings made by his daughter-in-law, tells me his wife is a Qigong master.

Today rest day. Empty spaces. Spaces left empty. Many ‘used-to-be’s. Traces evident of people who work here but are not here today. Absence that feels very present. People, working for a living. Walking through the market today, it became even more pronounced to me the extremely specific function of the place: If not for making a living, the people don’t come here. It is not a place that people come to spend time, it is just to work and for buying necessarily. Somehow, the empty spaces made (the otherwise-usual) routine jump out more.

Routine:

Work for a living.

I stood for a long time, looking at things and having thoughts flow through my mind. The emptiness of the market seem to have an effect of me: I found myself having lots of space—space for nothingness, headspace, space of thoughts, and space for stillness. A few uncles who passed me by asked what I am looking at. Perhaps, standing still for a long time is indeed as abnormal as dancing, at such a place.

Chicken cages stacked high, one atop another. A sparrow perched on the topmost. The tiny body perched on top of countless stacked bigger bodies; imprisoned bodies; unhappy bodies. And then, there's a de-feathered body placed right on top of a cage with live chickens in it. I considered the equivalent: A naked, dead human body put on top of a cage crowded full of living people and myself. And then, there is another stack of empty cages—the absence also very present.

“Hujan oh, ah moi,” a migrant worker call out to me. He is one of the workers in charge of slaughtering and de-feathering the chickens. I had been standing for some time out in the open, behind the market where the cages are stacked. It was drizzling. But I was more focused on the fact that the rain is drenching the living chickens in the cages—the top cage the most drenched and less so the lower cages—not that it is any more significant concern than what will happen to them later.

Back inside the market, some male migrant workers simply laid down comfortably on unoccupied counters. Some were sleeping, some were looking at their phones. Perhaps they are taking a break while there is no customer. The char koay teow uncle sits at his stall patiently, even though there doesn't seem to be much business today,

and it is already 10:30am. The pineapple stall was already closed by 9:30am. The boss told me he was only here to catch the very early morning wholesale business. The santan stall has closed by 10am. The beef and lamb/mutton stall and a chicken stall that frames the no longer applicable “Gerai Khinzir” door were not open either. Many unoccupied counters were stacked high with Styrofoam boxes.

Today, I had the rare chance of seeing the migrant worker of the beverage stall sit down to eat properly. Another personal constant of the market for me: the Indian man who operates the stall selling tobacco, leaves, flower garlands, batteries, and tissue, amongst other little curious things (or just curious to ignorant me). His stall is open today. The underwear and clothes stall is open. Most of the vegetable stalls remain open too. The stalls selling flowers and kuih for worship are open too. I wonder if it is because this month is the Hungry Ghost festival for the Chinese. The kedai runcit is open. I am least familiar with the people of this stall, even up till my 13<sup>th</sup> day at the market. Every time I pass by, they always seem so busy and occupied with customers. And my most basic and first principle at the market is to not be a bother.

There are many clocks put up in the market—and I don’t mean the kind for sale. At least half the clocks displayed the incorrect time. I wonder if it is left up there from long time ago, or if the owner simply did not bother about it, since there are other clocks around. Although, sometimes the time shown on the clock seem very probably the correct time at different intervals, except I would find out later that it is half-hour lagging or ahead. All these clocks with its different timings and the significant number of them showing the “wrong time” seem to be metaphors for my encounters and reflection at the market.

By 10:30am, most wet stalls started to clean up and close. I noticed that there is a lot of usage of water in the market—mainly for cleaning. I'm not sure why this water and the use of water suddenly appear symbolic to me, for a moment. Another rat scurry across my vision, along the roof structure of the market. The immense heat emanating from the large fridges. The bodies within them—and in my imagination.



While waiting a long time for the bus near my house, I journal: “Today I need to do what needs to be done, whether it be dance, observe, or converse/speak with people.”

As I alighted from the bus in front of the market, I saw the Indonesian(?) woman—who works the night shift at a bar nearby—get on the bus. Her work uniform is a collared shirt with “Tiger Beer” printed on it. Junyi and I met her while at breakfast yesterday. She is a regular at the market for breakfast—evident in the way people greeted and exchanged with her at the table. She had shared a little to us about her family.

Why is “ritual”-watching so comforting in a hypnotizing way? I was watching the workers processing the chickens in a repetitive, efficient, and orderly manner: Chop off the feet, cut open the torso, remove the guts, cleave apart the thighs, break the neck and pull it apart with the attached layer of thick skin. Every move is so precise—hitting the joints exactly, no more or less energy than required is expended. While my eyes glued to the repetitive procedure, meaning is disassociated along with the consistent rhythmic pattern, and space is made for rumination...

The first hour as I wondered around the market, many people asked me, “No dance?” “Are you not dancing today?”

I ended up dancing for a whole hour non-stop, around 10:30-11:30am, which is when there is much less people in the market. Preceding it, I took about 45 minutes corporeally inhabiting and moving through the environment of people and activity, before feeling

“permission” to dance. Some of the thoughts that passed through my mind while dancing:

- Why does it feel like, in order to move (i.e. express) with my body (even if very small-scale and not taking up much space), I need to feel there is space (i.e. permission or acceptance) to do so?
- The moment my footsteps is without purposeful tempo—like most other people in the market, I immediately feel myself sticking out. Those around me perceive it, and I become very aware of it too. I feel that people are here making a living, and I am just here jalan-jalan.
- In trying to make sense of what I am doing, many people often ask me things that are perhaps more familiar and comfortable knowns or logic e.g. “Are you doing kungfu?” “Are you doing Tai Chi?” “Are you practicing for a competition?”

Today, I finally felt quite comfortable and uninhibited dancing in the market. The dancing body as an alternative channel for perceiving, getting to know, and experiencing this environment. I was determined to observe space for this alternative way of being. I trust that at least one person in this market will be able to connect—in the way of understanding or identifying with, and not necessarily to discern logic.

I made an intentional choice to wear a flowy dress today—most of the time I wear the most practical attire: T-shirt and shorts or pants—just to experiment with “sticking out”—something I’ve been inclined to avoid. One of the migrant employee of a chicken stall (who often tell me to dance) without any hesitation said to me that I’m better off wearing t-shirt and shorts.

A woman came up to me as she was leaving the market. She asked if I was practicing for a competition. Then she proceeded to explain that she simply wanted to find out

what it was that I was doing. She added, “If I had a daughter like you, I wouldn’t have let her dance around in such a place. You should not be on your own. Make sure you have friends with you.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Today I understood better why I had instinctively spent a whole hour just standing and not doing much (outwardly) behind that unoccupied stall on day#2. I had felt, and today I feel even more ascertained that my state of being in the market cannot be one of distanced performativity. Necessarily, while dancing, I should be able to have very plain eye-contact with people and coexist in the space through very plain and ordinary non-verbal exchanges. If I dance, it is not detached from, say, chatting matter-of-factly with someone: no big deal.

When not occupied, a Thai migrant worker told me he has been working here since 2005. He has four other siblings back in Thailand, alongside his parents. He has no plans to return to Thailand at the moment. He visits once a year.

Late morning, it was extremely sunny. The caged chickens remain under the sun outdoor. I felt nauseous from the smell of dead bodies. Perhaps the heat intensified it. I hope my avoidance from eating meat these few days can persist for long.

An aunty who sells kuih and rice dumplings was complaining about a Bangladeshi worker working for a seafood stall. She was not happy about him dumping the blackened water (from squid) on the floor of the market. This same worker had ordered some roti canai to treat my friends earlier this morning. A Chinese man, who works at another stall close by, usually help tapau roti canai for the migrant workers to eat mid-morning—a very short break from work.

Today is the first time I see the young man—the one who’s always asleep sitting cross-legged on the counter with his whole torso bent over—standing up. He was helping his mother(?) pack up chicken parts. He had his new hair cut yesterday.

On my way home, at the bus stop, I took me a few delayed seconds to recognize the man who had been laying on the market floor for charity donation. His legs had a condition that I am not familiar with. He was sitting upright on the bus stop seat wearing a shirt—different image from when he laid bare-torso on the ground. I was standing where I usually stood, under the sun just beside the bus stop. He shouted at me in English, “If you want to sit down, sit!” He sounded English-educated.

\* \* \* \* \*

I feel that today I had broken through some sort of awkwardness or inhibition to dance. I feel that it was necessary to continue dancing consistently every day for the short remainder of days we are here at this market. It took me seven days spending hours in this market and amongst the people to overcome the real and perceived barrier to dance. I think the gradual setup attained is much to do with consistency and continuity—with regard to people’s perception and tacit relationships formed very delicately.

I self-deduced that the relatively open and welcoming feeling I get from migrant workers in general may stem from the fact that they have the least stakes in the market stall. Also, any unusual or fun energy is perhaps most welcomed amidst the mundane morning of the same routine work. Perhaps it is because of such factors that they appear to be most open-minded and available for arts or “alternative occurrence”.

Today, I asked Doris about the man in the air-conditioned room with tinted windows—an insulated space in the middle of the market. She explained to me that he is a delegate of DBKL but that his duties might not be so relevant as compared to former days. For instance, now, the market stalls can be informally sublet by the renters themselves, and in any case they have their own elected president and committee of the market stall owners' association. I thought that this was a great example of how top-down power is made irrelevant or rendered ineffectual by local players.

Day 09

Wednesday

29 August 2018

As I was eating breakfast, "日本"(nickname "Japan"), also known as "阿黄"(Ah Wong), a one-man-stall-owner-chef-server of his minced meat dry noodle, very gently and kindly advised me, "Maybe it's better not to dance...People think you are on drugs, that you had some ecstasy pill." I thought to myself, perhaps when I was too happy that I felt so free to dance yesterday, I had a "distant look" at some moments. This could contribute to the impression of being on ecstasy (pill). I should really

stay grounded and not get carried away in my own world, in such an environment that is so purpose-specific and with regular-consistent-players-in-a-contained-space. I decided to be more aware of the stance that I take and the impression I might be giving, and be very present and available to greet or converse or stop dancing at any time—and never in my own reverie.

A thought came to me: If I were a young kid doing the same thing—dancing around, would it have been more acceptable? I recalled once I was rehearsing a site-specific work on a grassy slope in Singapore, and three police officers approached us and told us that someone had made a report about our activity—that we were rolling around on the grass. The police then added explanatorily that if we were young children, we would not have been reported, that it was because we were adults "behaving" like that, so it became a concern for some people.

I seriously consider, and not for the first time: Why do I do this—coming to the market to dance? I've performed in many theatres, big and small, locally and abroad. Maybe I feel insulated from the people I live amongst—people whom I meet in my neighbourhood every day, people I eat amongst, people I buy my groceries from, etc.

I was surprised to see a young Indian man (whom I'm so used to see working behind a grocery counter—I so easily labelled him as that after only one week) today standing behind a chicken stall counter chopping chickens! This small discovery made me think about how quickly I set assumptions and how little I actually know about a place and people, even with things as simple as straightforward facts (if facts are usually straightforward at all).

Today, again, I felt strongly about the multiple clocks hanging around the market, and about how many of them

seem to be about the right time at different times, like a metaphor for any time could be the right time, and whose to say what time is the right one, and that the "right time" is simply a matter of feeling or belief.

Today, a Malay man walked around the wet market playing what I think is a traditional Chinese string instrument erhu (二胡), busking. I watched him perform, moving through the market and playing in front of each stall for awhile. He would always bow slightly before and after he plays in front of the stall.

An auntie who owns a fruit stall spoke to me. She told me to call her Ah Wah (阿华) auntie. She was very friendly. Before I said anything, she told me she knew for sure that I must have my reasons for dancing in the market. She said her guess was that I'm either trying to build courage or practicing dancing in all sorts of environment. I did not expect her to have thought such. And no matter her guess was right or not, it was comforting to know I'm not so alien to at least one person in the market. She told me she also wishes to dance, to which I responded, "You can dance! Just dance. Even if only at home, you could play some music and just dance for yourself." She smiled and said, "But my husband says I'm crazy."

Today is a significant day. I felt tremendously that many people have come to accept my being in the market and dancing. Everyone seemed very relaxed, smiling, and comfortable. Prior awkwardness is replaced with direct looks (no more discreet), straightforward questions and conversation, direct smiles and laughs, or watching for no more than few seconds, not concerned about losing sight of any "new/strange" development, very used to—normalised. In a way, this was some kind of dream come true, where dance becomes invisible because it is so normalised.

When I was dancing by an empty stall, Kak Hanis (one of the Surabaya workers at a chicken stall) came over, after her stall closed at 10am, and sat on the counter I was at, and browsed on her phone. Her matter-of-fact approach and proximity was pleasant encouragement for me. Few minutes later, the mainland Chinese woman selling clothes at the adjacent stall simply asked me to help translate for their conversation. So I stopped dancing and helped them translate for awhile. Kak Hanis was 5-month pregnant with her second child. Her 18-year-old son works at the santan-processing stall, together with his father and grandfather. The son only studied till Standard 6 and then left school to work in the market.

Kak Hanis and another vegetable stall uncle took some videos of my dancing, when they were unoccupied.

"Tip Top Meat Sdn. Bhd." I saw the words printed on the inside of a wall cupboard at a pork stall. Some Chinese men and women I've never seen were pointing and talking, as if checking out features of the stall with the workers who were manning the stall then. Later, I asked the workers who the Chinese people were. Turns out, they will be the new owners of the stall.

The vegetable stall workers (mostly Burmese; the stall of which I stood for an hour behind their extra stocks counter on day#2) got so used to me. I had an interesting, calm and quiet space-sharing with them between aisles. Them moving around, and myself super mindful of spatial consideration for them. They didn't even look out for me while moving around arranging stuff, as if they trusted that I would definitely not be in the way, and we had this unspoken spatial dance for a sustained amount of time, while routine continue as usual for them.



Nearby, a senior auntie who chops up roast pig for sale said to me that it's very healthy for me to exercise in this manner: dancing. She was talking also to another woman of the neighbouring pork stall. This pork stall auntie then asked me where I came from. I told her I came from PJ. Then she clarified her question, "No, I mean whose child are you? Which is your parents' stall?"

A young man who sells chicken eggs told me that I should teach dancing to him and an older uncle of an adjacent stall. He said they already are good at singing, so it would be nice to learn dancing next. The older uncle is the one who's also member of an alumni choir group. I had asked a favour of him to store my bag at his stall, as my friends did not come to the market today. When I came back to retrieve my bag at the end of the morning, he sounded like a grandpa, "Look at you! What did you get yourself into? Getting all so sweaty!"

One of the few spots that I have not really spend much time is the two rows of fish stalls. Maybe because the lanes are narrower here and thus more crowded, and there is constant scaling of fish (scales flying in all direction). Somehow, in order not to be in the way, I ended up never really dancing or standing in this spot. At most, a brisk walk through. Although, today I was dancing nearby—visible from the fish stalls but not in the way—and a customer exclaimed in surprise, "Yo, what is she doing!?" And I heard the woman fish stall owner answered, "Oh, she's dancing. She's doing some kind of research. She does it through dancing."

As mentioned, I never spent much time in this fish stalls area and had never spoken to this stall owner before. But I guess she either knew from others by word of mouth or from my friends who sometimes walk around talking to people. It was interesting for me to encounter this small

example of transition on the part of the people working in the market—from being cautious or curious about me to "defending" or speaking on behalf of me.

Day 10

Thursday

30 August 2018

Ambition and ego are great stumbling blocks. Because I felt I had a huge breakthrough yesterday at the market, I self-confidently assumed that today will necessarily be the same or even better. AMBITION. Obviously, I soon knew I was so wrong. The expectations of today's experience were far from met. Perhaps my ego was too strong, I did not approach the process humbly and sensitively, or I was not being in the present. I was reliving/indulging in yesterday's small success.

I did my routine of paying respects to the Dato' Gong altar and the Hindu deities' altar at the market entrance.

Some stall owners would call out to me to dance at certain spots, either nearer to their stall so that they can see, or because they felt where I was dancing was too narrow or too slippery. Today, Kak Hanis asked me if she can video record my dancing for her friends.

I remind myself to be humble, respectful, and sensitive toward the space, the place, the environment, the people who make a living there. I need to listen better. After all, every time I feel "in place" is usually when I am most focused and most present in the place.

Doris said the uncle beside the traditional Chinese herbs' stall told her it is a good thing I am dancing. He said that I am giving back to society. Hmm.

While I was dancing near the auntie carving wild boar meat at her counter, her husband simply said to me, "You need to relax your middle back more. You are holding it too tensely." Turns out, this uncle used to do a fair bit of Latin dance himself. Then he continued to give me some more notes, on how to dance better.

While journaling, I retraced my experience of the morning. I realise that in dancing and spending time corporeally around the market, I have subconsciously developed a corporeal-map memory of the market. I also kind of know who runs which stalls and how many counters each stall takes up. Also, my memory of the people I encounter is so much connected or anchored to the geography/location within the market. For instance, if I meet an uncle from one part of the market (which is quite big surface area) at another part of the market, it might take me a while to recollect the context in which I place him in my memory-recognition.

Madam Chia, the woman who sells bead crafts that she handmade, asked me if I were interested to learn the craft. She told me that she teaches 1.5-hour lessons.

Day 11

Friday, Merdeka Day

31 Aug 2018

It takes time to inhabit a place and people, to spend consistent time over a sustained period of time, in order for some level of trust and relation building. With time, it gets easier to have casual conversation.

The woman who carves and sells wild boar meat—I think she only first encountered me dancing yesterday. (The market is very huge. When I dance somewhere it is not visible in another section of the market. Plus, this stall was not open for a few days.) She said to me today, “Why do you dance at this low-class place? You should go and dance in a park or at a public square. Otherwise, people will think there is something not right with you. Or... Aiyah, I don’t dare to say lah.” I asked what she really want to say, but she kept saying that she does not want to say it out. Then she said, “You are a young woman, dancing in such a place...”

What kind of place can one dance in? What kind of place have space for dance? What place is for dance? What place is dance? When is it disrespectful or inappropriate to dance? Is there places undeserving of dance? What is the place of dance?

Low-class, high-class, elite, the grand stage...

These few days, I have been thinking: Dance is the people. Dance belongs to the people. No one can really take dance away from you—I think...

Dance should not be only accessible to those with money and power. Dance should not just be a tool to be capitalized. It can be a people-language. It is not something to be owned or bought.

I wish that dance is not exclusive to special occasions or to majestic theatres. Of course, since history times, dance has been used as a symbol of class or status differentiation. But I think dance should not and can not be defined by those in power. Dance is so fluid and indeterminate and yet its power can come through in a gentle but giant sweep. Dance can be such a simple thing that it could very well be the best subversion or the best reclaim.

The market is a place possible for dance. People have bodies that can dance, if permitted.

Today, the walk-here-walk-there tea-delivery man (who walks the entire market to take orders and to deliver beverage to all the hawkers across the market) past by and told me to be careful not to kacau people do business. I had almost zero interaction or encounter with him so far. He said I might scare customers away. I don't know the percentage of people working in the market who feels the same. After he said that to me, I immediately stopped dancing. As I continue to walk through the market, I asked some of the stall owners if my dancing has been a disturbance to their business. Those I asked said not at all, please dance. But of course, I'm also aware that I was only approaching and asking those I am already friendly with.

I thought to myself: While I feel more and more people are accepting and friendly towards me, I also do not know how many might not like my presence or my activity of dancing in the market. After all, there remains perhaps 20% of the hawkers whom I never really spoke to directly.

While there are people who empathize with what I do—something I gather from the our conversations and exchanges—there are some who tell me to be careful. E.g. One uncle mainly said that he is worried that “some people” might trick me, drug me, and rape me! When I asked him to clarify who might be such “some people”, he said the migrant workers.

I wish I had continued the dialogue with him. I wonder if he knew that many of these migrant workers who work in the market rushes off after the job is done here to attend to their second job. Or, some would head home to sleep for a few hours before going to their overnight job. This uncle does not hire any migrant worker at his stall—just his wife

(I presume) and himself. I noticed that other local Chinese stall owners who hire migrant workers are friendly with the workers. I did get friendlier with the migrant workers in the past couple of days, both female and male. Just that, there are more male migrant workers than female, and the former is always louder, so maybe my interaction with them is more apparent.

Another matter was how some people seem to regard me as a little girl instead of a woman, either directly in words or implied. I wondered: If there were two or three dancers instead of just me alone, the context would completely change. It might be interpreted more as "young artists doing something" instead of a "young naive girl being drugged".

Because I have stopped dancing earlier after the encounter with the beverage-delivery man, many people asked me why they haven't seen me dance today, as I pass by their stalls. When I told them I was concerned about kachau business, they answered along the lines of "No lah, where got. When you dance, we all happy happy." I guess, some people welcome me. But I have not yet known everybody very well, so I would not know of those who might not share the same sentiment.

Again and again, I have doubts about my coming to this market to dance. What is the purpose? Where is the meaningfulness? After all, I do not live near here and this is not a market that I can come to consistently in the long term. These hawkers and workers will still come every day routinely to do business, to make a living. I am only just dancing for myself.

Is there need for meaningfulness?

Unless it is a disturbance or I am in the way of others, there is no harm to dance here, I think. I wish dance could

become so normalized one day that it is no big deal when dance happens. Dance that transcends class. What dance is not bound to class (and privilege)? Reclaim this freedom of expression? Especially, in today's manifold of unspoken regulating.

Day 12

Saturday

1 Sept 2018

I'm not sure when it started, but somewhere somehow my trajectory of this market research morphed into becoming more about "I need to dance", "I should try to dance in this particular spot that I have somehow skipped all this time", "I could try to dance in clear view of the stall owner whom I've been avoiding"...and less about studying the people and place, about inhabiting with awareness and focus.

Today is the final exhibition day. The exhibition is prepared by Peysien, Junyi, and Doris. Justin came to help too. After having tea with some visiting friends from the arts scene, I merely hung out a bit behind a non-operating stall counter. A migrant worker was resting on the counter, laying on his back and looking at his phone. His stall has packed up and closed. It is one of the vegetable stall that is completely manned by migrant workers. Many of them at the stall speaks fluent Cantonese. The one who looked and behaved most like the boss is a migrant worker from Myanmar. He told me he has been working here for 13 years now. I once encountered him taking the same bus with me leaving from the market. When I alighted at MidValley to switch bus, he too alighted and headed off in the direction of the KTM station.

Tomorrow is my last day at this market before entering into residency outside of KL. I should have some kind of farewell/thanks gesture to these hawkers and workers. Perhaps, I could present some kind of short farewell dance to each stall that I have had some kind of relation with, as a form of expressing my thanks to them for allowing and sharing with me these two weeks—almost.



I told Ah Wah auntie (fruits stall) that my process here is coming to an end. She said I should come visit when I have time again.

I thought about the various factors that led to my feeling of “permission” or “okay” to dance in the market. And I think one of them is timing—when the market is less busy or less crowded (quite naturally). Very possibly, the first three days here when I was feeling “unable” to move or dance, it was due to the early hours (peak time 6:30-9:30am), so it especially did not feel right to bring any external or self-initiated energies into the space. It feels irrelevant and inconsiderate. Still, it was useful to observe and inhabit the environment before 9:30am.

One or two days ago, in preparation for the Pasal Pasar exhibition, I needed to word the rationale or description for the video loop of my dancing. I came up with something along the lines of

“Away from the grand stage;

Closer to real people real events real life.”

However, since then, as a result, I feel I have confused my own research trajectory. The process became more about “I must dance, somehow”; or the emphasis was moved onto “expansion”, “spawning”, “spreading”, etc. It became something about my dance on their space, about me toward them—and less of me learning from the market, listening, researching, and being receptive.

Day 13

Sunday

2 September 2018

Today is the last day that I can come to the market. I hesitated a long time, unsure about the necessity of my visiting the market this time if I am not able to come again for a long time after this.

Last night, I decided that the ideal plan was for me to dance a short farewell dance to each market stall owner/workers that I have built some kind of relationship with, over the past days. Before dancing, I would let them know that it is the last day of my dance/research at the market.

As I walked into the market (such a familiar feat/routine for the past 12 days), I felt as if I was some popular person, as many stall owners and workers wave and greeted me with a smile or a joking question.

As if it were an utmost important ritual, I went first to the altars of “Dato’ Gong” and the Hindu gods/deities to pay my respects and to ask for well guidance and wisdom for today’s activity in the market.

Today, before I left the market for the last time in a long time, I had a very amicable and pleasant exchange with the three Chinese women who operate the chicken stall at the corner of the two downslope pavement near the wild boar meat stall. (For some reason, to do with timing I think, I had not really seen them much before. Most of the time, I only interacted with their migrant workers.) They had seen me walking to and fro the market that morning—now and then chatting with some of the women migrant workers who were off work or at free time. The Chinese women jokingly asked if I was reluctant to leave, and teased that I look like I was close to tears. They good-humouredly questioned me why I had not introduced myself to them from day#1, causing them to miss out on my dance till much later. They only noticed me in the second week. Perhaps—because I usually start dancing near their stall closer to 10am and after, during which they are already closing up. Or, maybe because I had felt less inhibited or had gravitated toward the migrant workers working at the

back of the stall and hadn't danced to the front of the stall where the owner-women are occupied at.

Their openness and friendliness made me wonder if I should've in fact introduced myself formally from day#1 to people who work in the market and let them know what I am doing in the(ir) market. What would be different? How would things have turned out? I can only guess.

Most of the time when I said goodbye, the responses include wishing of luck. Of positive remarks (negative ones, if any, did not find its way to me): A pork stall man-owner, who look to be in his forties or fifties, teasingly remarked that the presence of the four of us young people contributed to refreshing the atmosphere/aura (气场) of the market. The "cultural" and active choir member-uncle asked to jot down my name when I came to say goodbye. He is the one who interacted with us mostly about things cultural. He told me about his trip with his children to bring his grandson to Putrajaya on Hari Merdeka—therefore not opening stall on that day.

As I map through the wet market in my corporeal-embodiment memory, I find that I am relatively attached to the women stall-owners. They are impressionable markers in my visualisation of the space: the dried goods boss and her lone young Indonesian woman helper, sister of Kak Hanis; the co-boss of a vegetable stall who told me that she attends weekly (Chinese) dance classes in Cheras where she lives; the senior aunty who chops up pork parts who tells me that she always wanted to learn yoga but found accessing it too huge a challenge; the very quiet female boss of a vegetable stall, who looks to be in her forties or fifties, who has some Myanmar young boy and men work for her. There is also a fierce-looking senior woman who owns yet another vegetable stall as well as a

younger female boss of also a vegetable stall and has a dog with her which I initially mistaken as a stray.

I observed that quite a number of migrant workers work fluidly between different stalls. For instance, there is a young Myanmar man—he tells me he has been in Malaysia for more than 10 years already—with bleached blonde short hair, who starts work at a pineapple stall, and at around 9:30am, he joins the Alam Flora workers in their cleaning job—complete in the Alam Flora uniform vest, and then he goes on to help out at a vegetable stall at the other end of the market, where he tells me he guides the younger boys from Myanmar to get better at their job, whether it be calculating stock logistics or trimming and arranging the produce. One of the young boys that he was referring to works at both a vegetable stall and an adjacent fish stall, where he cleans and guts fish alongside with three other Myanmar men.

Over the days, I slowly gathered and learnt about deductions people had made when they first saw me dancing in and through the market. There were those who thought I was on drugs—but once that was cleared up, they asked me if I was training for a stronger sense of courage. Did they perceive my dancing as a courageous act? Another Chinese young man in his thirties or forties told me I should spend longer time here so that I can teach some of them some dance steps. I really wish I could. If I lived close to here and can do this in the long term, I would be curious about such development in a casual and natural way—taking the time that it needs.

There was also another Chinese woman who owns a bread and pastry stall. On day#7, she had expressed her strong interest to learn dancing, but never found time in her tiring daily routine. She finds it difficult to attend classes at night as she has to wake up at 3 or 4 in the morning. And in

the afternoon, she is usually very tired from the early morning and needs a nap. I was hoping to interact with her more in the days to come, seeing if some casual sharing could happen—but she did not open her stall for a couple of days after that, perhaps away for the long weekend.

I recall that it was on day#8 (when I danced uninhibitedly) that some senior women (a kuih stall-owner and regulars who ate breakfast there) had thought I was on drugs. Since then, I made more concerted effort to chat with them, as I spent more time journaling and drinking tea sitting at the same tables, so that they also see my “normal” side and feel more at ease to chat with me.

On a personal level, I feel that in these 13 days, I slowly observed and noted more about the people who work at the market, whether it be from their telling me or from my own observations—about seemingly mundane matters like what time which workers work at which stall, what time particular stalls close at, where else some of the migrant workers work at in the afternoon or in the night time, family members in the market amongst the migrant workers, etc.

Going forward, my curiosity include:

How does dance, if it does, help in my process and research in this case? Does it help by blurring definition of situations? Does it help by remaining obscure in its occupancy? Is it a disruption? Is disruption what I want? Did the dancing simply helped me to inhabit and take in observations over a long period of time (so long that people forget about me and the dancing becomes invisible), without people feeling creeped out by otherwise staring-observation?

At a more simplistic level, what does dance (arbitrarily) do to a function-specific space, over a long period of time?

