

Hijikata Tatsumi

The Words of Butoh

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The founder of *butoh*, Hijikata Tatsumi, passed away in 1986 at the age of 57. In contrast to another *butoh* founder, Ōno Kazuo who is 93 years old and still performing internationally, Hijikata never left Japan. Nonetheless, Hijikata's influence is worldwide and evident in films, photographs, writings, and the many dancers who were trained or affected by his art.

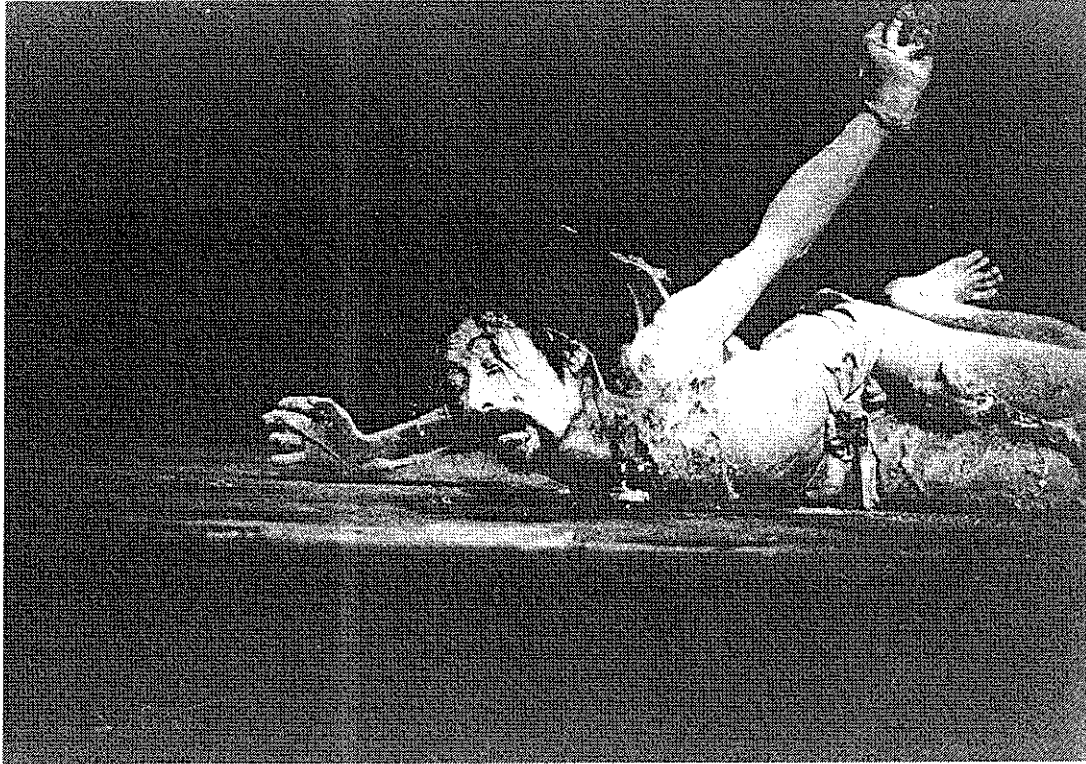
Hijikata's physical absence seems to strengthen his presence in the remnants of his life's work. A documentary film by Ōuchida Keiya of a performance of *Hōsōtan* (A Story of Small Pox, 1972),¹ one installment of a serial work entitled *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban* (Twenty-seven Nights for the Four Seasons, 1972), allows us to see a classic Hijikata dance: lying down on the floor, he wittches to the accompaniment of "Bailero" by Joseph Canteloube. Only a loin cloth covers his skinny body, his rib bones are clearly exposed, the result of many days of fasting. His white *butoh* makeup is sliding off his skin, like scabs off a healing wound. Perhaps this fallen person is dying but trying to get up, a situation and image that Hijikata often talked about. Through the blistering image of emaciation and death, this ugly figure reveals the beauty of life. Hijikata's *butoh* seems to contain the secret of being.

The word "butoh," now the accepted name of the genre, originated as *ankoku buyō* in the early 1960s. "Ankoku" means "utter darkness." "Buyō," a generic term for dance, is used in many compounds: for example, *gendai buyō*, modern dance; and *koten buyō*, classical dance. Later in the 1960s, *ankoku buyō* evolved into *ankoku butō*. The word "butō" is used in compounds such as *butō-kai*, a European-type ball dance, or *shi no butō*, the medieval European dance of death. That is, "butō" was used to refer to Western dance forms. However, according to the Japanese dictionary *Kōjien*, *butō* also means *haimu*, a specific ceremonial salutation at the imperial court in which a person flings the long sleeves of traditional Japanese dress and stamps the feet (Shinmura 1991:2037). "Tō" means stamping feet. Although a stamping movement is not typical of *butoh*, Hijikata created the term "ankoku *butoh*" to denote a cosmological dance which completely departed from existing dances and explored the darkest side of human nature.

Hijikata's relatively early death, self-mystifying character, and extraordinary works have made him a mythic figure. Recent efforts to reexamine his legacy have begun to expand our understanding of both the man and his work. In

*Hijikata Tatsumi at the
Hanumi Wharf in 1959
(Photo by Hosoe Eikō)*

The Drama Review 44.1 (1165) Spring 2000. Copyright © 2000
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November 1998 a week-long symposium about Hijikata was held at the Theatre Tram in Tokyo. Dancers, visual artists, poets, and scholars of various disciplines discussed aspects of Hijikata's life and career, such as his idiosyncratic use of language and his relationship with classical dance. One night was dedicated to a discussion by non-Japanese butoh dancers. The frank opinions of these dancers from various cultural contexts offered a valuable contrast to the insular tendencies of the butoh world in Japan. The Hijikata Tatsumi Archive was recently opened at Keiō gijuku University Art Center in Tokyo, and more sources are becoming publicly accessible: their abundant materials awaiting critical study. We are only just beginning to assess Hijikata, his butoh, and what he was trying to achieve in his life and his work.

This issue of *TDR* is probably the first publication in which Hijikata's words are translated into English in complete texts rather than in excerpts.³ Until now, only selections from his evocative writings have been translated, and usually presented with a number of photographs. Although they definitely stimulated the imagination of English-speaking readers, these partial translations were very limited, especially considering the vast numbers of words Hijikata left behind. Japanese readers can easily obtain several books of his writing, most notably the two-volume *Hijikata Tatsumi zenshū* (The Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi, 1998).

With this history in mind, we have decided to translate a range of complete texts dating from 1960 through 1985: a lecture, an interview, a conversation, and notes from his scrapbooks for butoh. We hope these writings will enable readers of English to understand the contexts and styles, the changes and continuity, of Hijikata's thinking and choreography.

Another criterion was to select pieces that relate directly to the performing arts. We have not included *Yameru maihime* (Ailing Dancer [provisional En-

1 Hijikata Tatsumi in *Hōsōtan* (*A Story of Small Pox*, 1972) choreographed by Hijikata at the *āto siatā Shinjuku bunka* (Art Theatre Shinjuku Culture) (Photo by Onozuka Makoto)

glish title], 1983), because this the longest of Hijikata's imaginative writings is being translated into English by Kobata Kazue and will be published by the end of the year 2000.

Words and Body

Despite being a man of the body words were essential to Hijikata. He was a voracious reader, and he wrote and spoke about his butoh on many occasions. He was especially fond of verbal battles with artists, poets, and writers, which he initiated during drinking bouts and which he considered a necessary process for his creations. In these drinking debates so to speak, he took words, that is, ideas from his interlocutors and threw riddles back at them. Numerous banquets and drinking sessions were held at bars, friends' houses, and the Asbestos Hall (Asbestos Kan),² which was both Hijikata's home and studio. Hijikata trained his dancers and choreographed works using words. Ultimately his dance was notated by words called *butoh-fu* (butoh notation). A tremendous number of words surround his dance.

But Hijikata's words are not easy. Often his writings are strange, equivocal, and incomprehensible even for Japanese or for people close to Hijikata. His sentences are sometimes incorrect according to Japanese grammar. He freely coined his own terms, such as *ma-gusare* (rotting space) and *nadare-ame* (dribbling candy). His writings often are like surrealistic poems. At the Tram symposium, Nishitani Osamu, a scholar of French literature who used to hang out at Hijikata's studio, pointed out, "Hijikata's writing is neither prose nor poetry—something different—and his Japanese is twisted" (1998). Uno Kuniichi, a scholar and an acquaintance of Hijikata who wrote *Arutō: Shikō to shintai* (Artaud Thought, and Body, 1997), responded, "[Hijikata] created something

2 Ashikawa Yōko in the "Sakura" (Cherry Blossoms) scene from *Hitogata* (Human Mold, 1976), choreographed by Hijikata Tatsumi at Asbestos Hall (Photo courtesy of Keiō gijuku University Art Center)



persuasive by disconnecting the joints of sentences" (1998) Hijikata's language implies meanings and feelings that logical language cannot convey. His words are fingers between which sand slips. Although his writings are strange, they are not necessarily unfamiliar or unapproachable. Hijikata's writings are both evocative and challenging.

When I first read the words of Hijikata, I felt that they were not clear Japanese; they were too crazy—I thought he was self-mystifying. However, after I took *butoh* lessons with Ashikawa Yōko, that feeling completely changed. Ashikawa, from 1968 one of Hijikata's most important disciples and his indispensable collaborator, faithfully maintained Hijikata's teaching after his death. As I learned and practiced *butoh*, Hijikata's apparently mystifying words became real and comprehensible. I was convinced that his words were an accurate expression of what he felt and thought. Undeniably, Hijikata created a smoke screen of strange behaviors and language, but this was all part of his conscious strategy to make a mythic image of himself and his work.

Onomatopoeia

One day in 1988, at a workshop held at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Ashikawa told participants to become *wet rugs*. Wet rugs? We lay on the floor in various ways. "Feel the weight of water within you, a rug." She suggested a feeling of wetness by using a Japanese onomatopoeia: "jyū jyū." The sound implies water sweating.

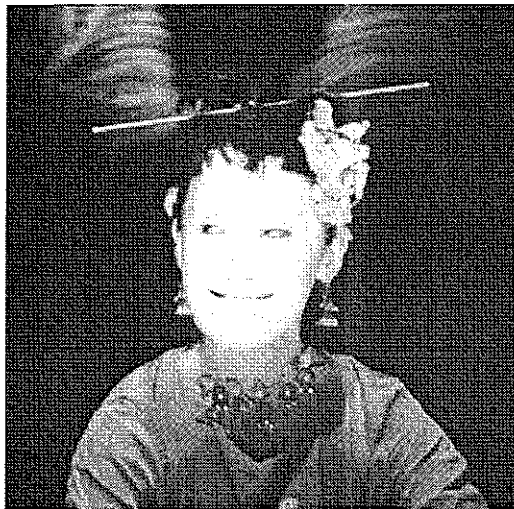
Onomatopoeia occupies an important position in Hijikata's language. Evocative sounds were the means to convey specific physical states and sensations. In Japanese, onomatopoeic words are often used as adverbs, whereas in English onomatopoeic words tend to be verbs or the noun forms of verbs such as "buzz" or "meow." For example, *neko ga "nyā nyā" naku* in Japanese, is "a cat meows" in English. "Neko" is cat. "nyānyā" is an onomatopoeic adverb, and "naku" means cry. And usually such onomatopoeias are simultaneously explanations and mimetic sound effects. They explain how an action is realized or what it results in. For example, the onomatopoeia *bisho bisho* indicates a state of "wet all through" (Kakehi and Tamori 1993).⁴ Japanese onomatopoeic language is designed to capture a physical sense rather than merely imitate or refer to a concept by means of a sound.

In *butoh* exercises such as those led by Ashikawa, one was supposed to be able to become a twisted wet rug or heavy with too much water. How to achieve this was up to each person. Ashikawa did not tell us what to do or how to behave; she simply gave us a few words. The participants were all adult women and some were modern dancers, and for all of us, it felt strange to seriously try to "become wet rugs." But in a little while I became sensitive to my own physical state of being; I felt freed from my daily self by becoming such a lowly thing on the floor.

After I took classes for several months in 1990 and 1991 at the studio of Hakutōbō (White Peach Room), a group that was originally created in 1974 by Hijikata with Ashikawa as a main performer,⁵ I came to understand that Hijikata had attempted to capture all kinds of emotions, landscapes, ideas, and so on, by using words that were physically real to him.

Exercises

In Ashikawa's class, there were routine basic exercises. One of them was called *mushikui* (insect bites). A student is first told, "An insect is crawling from between your index finger and middle finger onto the back of your hand and then on to your lower arm and up to your upper arm."⁶ The



3 Ashikawa Yōko in Hitogata (*Human Mold*, 1976) choreographed by Hijikata Tatsumi at Asbestos Hall. (Photo courtesy of Keiō gijuku University Art Center)

teacher rubs a drumstick back and forth across a drum, making a slithering sound. Then she touches those particular parts of the body to give some physical sense to the student. The number of insects increases one by one and finally. "You have no purpose. In the end, you are eaten by insects who enter through all the pores of your body, and your body becomes hollow like a stuffed animal." Each insect has to be in its precise place. One should not confuse or generalize the insects even when their numbers increase.

The most difficult part of this exercise was that one had to "be it," not merely "imagine it." This was emphasized in the class again and again. The condition of the body itself has to be changed. Through words, Hijikata's method makes dancers conscious of their physiological senses and teaches them to objectify their bodies. Dancers can then "reconstruct" their bodies as material things in the world and even as

concepts.⁷ By practicing the exercises repeatedly, dancers learn to manipulate their own bodies physiologically and psychologically. As a result, butoh dancers can transform themselves into everything from a wet rug to a sky and can even embody the universe theoretically speaking (Kurihara 1996).

The Body Is a Metaphor for Words

For Hijikata the body is a metaphor for words and words are a metaphor for the body. He said that the brain is merely a part of the body. Hijikata's statement finds an echo in recent work in cognitive science. According to the cognitive scientists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, contrary to the Cartesian view, "the mind is inherently embodied, reason is shaped by the body, and since most thought is unconscious, the mind cannot be known simply by self-reflection" (1999:5). They and many other cognitive scientists argue that language is physically based. One feels "up" and "down" in English, and *Kibun* (one's feeling) *ga agaru* (rises) and *ochikomu* (falls down) in Japanese.

In child development studies it has been observed that children empathize with objects as if they were human beings, projecting their own emotions onto them. The psychologist Heinz Werner called this "physiognomic perception."⁸ A two-year-old boy seeing a cup lying on its side said, "Poor tired cup!" Another called a towel-hook "cruel." Werner wrote, "During the physiognomic period of childhood it is the very absence of polarity, and the high degree of fusion between person and thing, subject and object, that are characteristic" (Werner [1948] 1961:72). Similarly, in his lecture "Kaze Daruma," (Wind Daruma) published in this issue of *TDR*, Hijikata describes placing a kitchen dipper in a field to show it the world outside. As close as Hijikata's ideas seem to those of cognitive scientists, linguists, and psychologists, he was also very different from them because he was a poet, always attempting to capture amorphous life—life that resists being settled in any particular form. Hijikata tried to create his own universe with his own language. That was one of the reasons he kept changing his themes and styles: he wanted to avoid getting trapped in a static form and losing life.

Hijikata saw the body in everything and attempted to capture it in words. In *Butoh no tame no sukurappubukku* (Scrapbooks for Butoh)⁹ a copy of a picture supposedly by Jean Fautrier is pasted onto a page and surrounded by handwritten notes, entitled "Zaishitsu hen II Fōtorie (On Material II

Fautrier) Hijikata perceived the body in this painting—as he mentions in an interview with Shibusawa Tatsuhiko published as “Nikutai no yami o mushiru” (Plucking Off the Darkness of the Flesh) in this issue. As Hijikata told Shibusawa, “Paintings, too, are created by human beings and reveal their ultimate ‘butoh quality (*butoh-sei*)’” The captured body was put into words: “a person composed of tactile sensations and particles” and “flying grasshopper” (see “On Material II Fautrier”). And they were realized as movements by a butoh dancer with the help of more of Hijikata’s words

Instead of liberating the body from language, Hijikata tied the body up with words, turning it into a material object, an object that is like a corpse. Paradoxically, by this method, Hijikata moved beyond words and presented something only a live body can express. That is the essence of Hijikata’s butoh. Hijikata saw human existence as inextricably part of the body. But this body only comes alive when it is chased in to a corner by words and pain—that is, consciousness. He rigorously practiced this point of view with his own body and life

The Emergence of Hijikata’s Butoh

Hijikata’s words dispel the misconceptions about butoh and his own work which have both been erroneously essentialized and stereotyped. Butoh is often seen as something essentially “Japanese” or “Tōhoku,” the northeastern region of Japan where Hijikata grew up. Some scholars too easily try to connect him with Zen Buddhism and other “Japanese” or “Eastern” elements. Others, particularly American critics, see butoh as a direct product of the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For example, discussing butoh and Pina Bausch’s dance theatre, dance critic Anna Kisselgoff wrote in the *New York Times* in 1984:

Each group uses images that include pain and suffering, that are often violent and that shock. Both are clearly part of a theatre in revolt. There are European critics who have drawn a connection between these trends and the countries in which they have grown—that is, the Germany that emerged from the Nazi camps of World War II and the Japan that emerged from Hiroshima. Apocalypse casts its shadow. (1984, sec. 2:1)

Four years later Vicki Sanders wrote:

Hijikata Tatsumi [. . .] was a teenager when the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He intended a career in classical dance, but just as the atomic assault forever altered the course of Japanese political history, so did its aftershocks indelibly mark the nation’s emerging artists and their attitude toward the aesthetic roots from which they sprang. (1988:148)

Yes, the war affected Hijikata greatly, as it influenced whole generations of Japanese artists and writers. And of course butoh contains a lot of “Japanese” elements. However, the origin of Hijikata’s butoh is far more complex.

Leaving Tōhoku in 1952, at the age of 23, Hijikata experienced a great shock when he arrived in modern Tokyo. “Naka no sozai/Sozai (Inner Material/Material)” an article which appeared in the program of his first recital, *Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai* (Hijikata Tatsumi Dance Experiences Recital, July 1960), is autobiographical and reveals much about his life and psychology at the time. Postwar confusion prevailed and the dramatic postwar economic growth hadn’t started yet. People were far from af-

fluent, especially young artists. But they were free and full of chaotic energy. World War II destroyed Tokyo physically but had liberated it artistically. The society's quick change in values—from the restriction of unquestioning obedience to the emperor-god to the 'free choices' brought by "democracy" made people suspicious of everything.

In Tokyo, Hijikata took various jobs such as a longshoreman and junk dealer, to survive while he kept dancing. His hunger was literal. As a young artist, he had nothing to lose.

Hijikata had a special feeling about his upbringing and where he came from. He was the sixth son and tenth child of 11 children. His parents farmed and also ran a *soba* noodle shop. Tōhoku was still an "underdeveloped" region of Japan at that time and the Tōhoku dialect was often the butt of jokes on TV.¹¹ The gap between Hijikata and the young urban artists he met must have been huge. He followed the intellectual trends of the time, voraciously reading French literature including works by Arthur Rimbaud and Comte de Lautréamont.

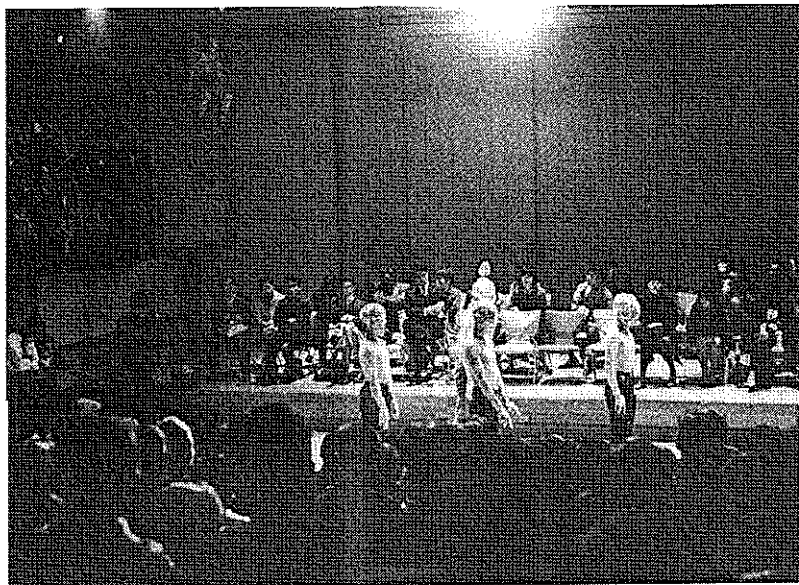
But Jean Genet was his favorite writer. Feeling alienated from the urban and the modern, Hijikata struggled to establish his own identity and create original work. Genet's paradoxical world captured Hijikata's imagination. Genet rejected by society, affirms himself as he is, rejecting society in turn, and constructing his own paradoxical ethos (see Genet [1949] 1964). Poverty became a virtue; lice were emblems of prosperity. Genet's imagination turned an inmate in his pink-and-white-striped prison garb into a gigantic flower at the beginning of *The Thief's Journal* ([1949] 1964). This paradoxical conversion became Hijikata's guiding aesthetic throughout his life: the ugly is the beautiful; death is life.

Kinjiki

Kinjiki (Forbidden Colors, 1959) is considered to be the first butoh piece. Its title was taken from Mishima Yukio's novel about male homosexual love. But the feeling and content were taken from Genet. The appearance of this performance was quite different from what we consider butoh now. Hijikata and Ōno Yoshito (Ōno Kazuo's son, exchanged a live white chicken as a symbol of love. As seen in photographs by Ōtsuji Seiji (19:130–31)¹² some movements resemble those of jazz dance, which Hijikata learned from taking lessons and dancing with Andō Mitsuko (who later changed her name to Noriko), one of his many dance teachers. But at the same time one recognizes symbolic postures that might be from Hijikata's modern dance background. And one also sees, even then, the rigid contained body that became the prototype of a male body in Hijikata's butoh.

Kinjiki caused a huge controversy in the mainstream dance world because of its theme, its sexually explicit gasping sound effect, and its use of the chicken, which Ōno Yoshito was supposed to choke to death between his thighs.¹³ As a result of the controversy, Hijikata, Ōno Kazuo, and other dancers quit the Zen nihon geijutsu buyō kyōkai (All Japan Art Dance Association) currently Gendai buyō kyōkai (Contemporary Dance Association).

At this time Hijikata met Mishima, as a consequence of having borrowed the title of his novel. Mishima, already a star novelist, became deeply interested in Hijikata's work. He often visited Hijikata's studio, encouraged him, and introduced him to important cultural figures. Especially significant among these was Shibusawa, an erudite scholar of French literature. Mishima was enthusiastic about Georges Bataille and the Marquis de Sade. Shibusawa's translation of de Sade's 1792 *Les Prospérité du Vice Part II* was seized by the authorities for obscenity, leading to a notorious 1960 court case involving prominent writers as witnesses.



4 *Anma: aiyoku o sasaeru gekijō no hanashi* (*Masseur. A Story That Supports Passion*, 1963) choreographed by Hijikata at the Sōgetsu kaikan Hall (Photo by Yamano Kazuko)

Shibusawa, the same age as Hijikata became a very close friend, providing him with a tremendous amount of insight into literature and contemporary thought. From this time on Hijikata greatly expanded his association with writers, poets and artists in other genres, leaving the narrow-minded mainstream dance world behind. He became transformed from an unknown dancer into a rising avantgarde performer.

"Keimusho e" (To Prison) published in *Mita bungaku* (The Mita Literature, 1961) is the direct result of Hijikata's new friends and interests. Studded with quotes from various famous Western writers such as Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Bataille, this sometimes clumsy article strikingly conveys the impact on Hijikata of his new environment and his receptiveness to new ways of thinking. Nietzsche and Bataille's ideas resonated with those of Genet, helping to form Hijikata's own paradoxical approach to art and life. In this early essay Hijikata almost buries himself in the writings of Marcuse, et al., yet emerges with his own strong presence by focusing on the body and his own experiences.

After *Kinjiki*, Hijikata's works continued to evolve in theme and style. In the 1960s, he primarily used male performers. Often the themes were at the time seen as "sexual perversion": homosexuality and transvestism. And he collaborated with many artists of the neo-dada and surrealist schools. In *Anma* (*Masseur*, 1963) he placed *tatami* mats in the audience area where old women played the *shamisen*¹⁴ and male dancers threw a ball back and forth, performed other athletic tasks, and even rode on bikes. This piece came closest among Hijikata's works to the Happenings that were often staged in Japan during that time by such artists as Akasegawa Genpei, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō.

In contrast, it should be noted that Hijikata created *Banzai onna* (Banzai Woman, 1959) about a woman who ceremoniously sent off soldiers to the front at a train station with *banzai*, and *Yome* (Bride, 1960), about a bride in the countryside, for the female dancer Onrai Sahina, a high school teacher and his partner at that time. These works were supposedly based on his own memories of growing up in Tōhoku. The so-called "return to Tōhoku" in Hijikata's work is usually dated to his late-1960s trip to the region with pho-

tographer Hosoe Eikō for the *Kamaitachi* (Sickle Weasel)¹⁵ project, which resulted in a photo exhibition (1968) and a book (1969) of the same title. In these early works were the seeds of Hijikata's 1970s Tōhoku kabuki series.

Change and Continuity

"Nikutai no yami o mushiru" is an interview by Shibusawa—printed in the intellectual monthly *Tenbō* (The Perspective) in July 1968—that was conducted before the performance of *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin: Nikutai no hanran* (Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Rebellion of the Body) in October of that year, in the midst of the student power movement in Japan. This interview reveals that Hijikata was in a period of transition foreshadowing a drastic change.

In *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin*, Western and Japanese elements clashed. With spasmodic movements, Hijikata, borne on a palanquin, entered the stage from the audience. A long kimono covers his naked body. In his hand he holds a golden phallus. The performance shows the influence of Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double*, translated into Japanese in 1965. Artaud influenced the new generation in the Japanese theatre, and Hijikata was no exception. The entrance with a golden phallus was reminiscent of passages in Artaud's "From Heliogabalus, or The Anarchic Crowned." In one scene, Hijikata wore a long dress and danced violently, his movements evoking the waltz and flamenco. In another scene, wearing a girl's kimono and socks, he jumped up and twisted as if disabled. Hijikata was attempting to mix what he acquired from without and what was taking shape from within: the merging of his avantgarde works and pieces like *Banzai onna* and *Yome*. The first part of the title *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin* clearly indicates that Hijikata was making a conscious change from an apparently "Western" focus to work that intensely examined his own body, specifically, a male body that grew up in Tōhoku, probably to liberate himself from the body.

After the performance of *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin*, Hijikata started to create pieces for Genjusha (Fantastical Animal Company), a group of women who worked in a smaller theatre, and Hangi daitō kan (Mirror of Sacrificing Great Dance), a group of both women and men. These became the foundation of the 1972 series *Shiki no tame no nijūshichuban*, which came to be described as Tōhoku kabuki. The series consisted of *Hōsōtan*, *Susame dama*,¹⁶ *Gaishi-kō* (Study of Insulator), *Nadare-ame* (Dribbling Candy) and *Gibasan*,¹⁷ each of which was a full-length evening-long performance and represented a different season of the year. All included Tōhoku themes, characters, sounds, etc. As the title indicates, the series lasted 27 nights, with each piece performed five or six times. This serial work was the largest of Hijikata's projects.

"Inu no jōmyaku ni shittosuru koto kara" (From Being Jealous of a Dog's Vein), written for *Bijutsu techō* (Art Notebook, 1969), gives a clear sense of this new stage in Hijikata's dance work. Although he had previously mentioned Tōhoku elements in his interview with Shibusawa, in this article he presented his ideas as based primarily on his memories. He also wrote that his older sister had come to live within his body. Around this time he began wearing a kimono with his hair hanging long or tied in a bun and speaking in women's language.¹⁸

In contrast to earlier all-male pieces, Hijikata's work during this time increasingly featured women.

5 Nimura Momoko (left) and Hijikata Tatsumi in *Hōsōtan* (*A Story of Small Pox*, 1972) choreographed by Hijikata at the *āto siatā Shinjuku bunka* (Art Theatre Shinjuku Culture). (Photo by Onozuka Makoto)



performers, although he wrote, "If blue veins can be seen through a dog's skin, there is no need at all for a woman's body" (see "From Being Jealous of a Dog's Vein") Despite this statement, he needed a woman's body to realize his new dances. He was greatly indebted to the rare talent of Ashikawa Yōko, who could bring into danced reality what Hijikata desired. One of his long-time male disciples, Waguri Yukio mentioned at the Tram symposium that Hijikata and the silent Ashikawa hid themselves away in a studio to create their dances (1998b). In these intense sessions Hijikata fired off words and Ashikawa expressed them in movements and wrote them down as butoh notation. They worked alone for hours. Nobody else was allowed to join. Ashikawa often taught the dances produced during these sessions to other disciples.

This intense collaboration between the two was necessary for the birth of Hijikata's new style of butoh. But it raised the question of whether it is always necessary to have an apparently hierarchical relationship between a controlling, directing choreographer and a dancer who passively realizes the choreographer's vision. And why did Hijikata need Ashikawa's female body? Was it because of the nature of his dance, or because of the nature of his personality?

Tōhoku Is Everywhere

Hijikata often said that Tōhoku is a foreign country. In an interview he stated, "Although it is Tōhoku kabuki, there is a Tōhoku in England. The utter darkness exists throughout the world, doesn't it? To think is the dark" (1985:17). He also mentioned that Tōhoku's historical past was as a colony which exported soldiers, horses, and women to central Japan (1985:18). Hijikata exhaustively explored where he came from. By doing so he ended up making Tōhoku into an imagined place beyond space and time. While, however, he used the "nativism" popular in early 1970s Japan, he did so in an extremely radical way. He was undoubtedly a shrewd entrepreneur and a superb artist at the same time.

The love for "raw nature" in many of its aspects—both beautiful and cruel, in the work of Hijikata—was to some degree caused by the dramatic economic growth in Japan from the 1960s onward. This growth was fueled by rapid and often environmentally heedless industrialization on a tremendous scale. Factories were built all over Japan. They produced extreme pollution in many areas, leading to any number of dire results including *minamata* disease, caused by mercury poisoning, and *itai-itai* disease, which is caused by cadmium poisoning. Landscapes and communities were destroyed; traditional social relations and mores were disrupted. The pervasive sense of loss permeating Japanese society gave rise to the desire to recapture a more idyllic and socially whole way of life thought to be qualities of premodern Japan. This return to an older, better Japan became a national cultural fantasy (see Ivy 1995). A number of people around Hijikata undeniably emphasized the "Tōhoku-ness" in his works. This Tōhoku-ness clearly matched the spectators' melancholic sentiments.

Hijikata's Tōhoku kabuki was enthusiastically accepted. It brought him an opportunity to present a new work at the mainstream Seibu Theatre which unlike his previous venues, is run by a large corporation. However, some intellectuals and artists now distanced themselves from Hijikata. Shibusawa was among them, but he was in the minority among butoh spectators.¹⁹

With *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban*, Hijikata opened up new ground. Through this success a number of young people without much dance training were initiated into his world. He stopped dancing himself at the age of 45 in 1973—for reasons that are not clear. After 1974 he concentrated on choreographing a series of performances at the small Asbestos Hall for Hakutōbō, the group he started with Ashikawa.

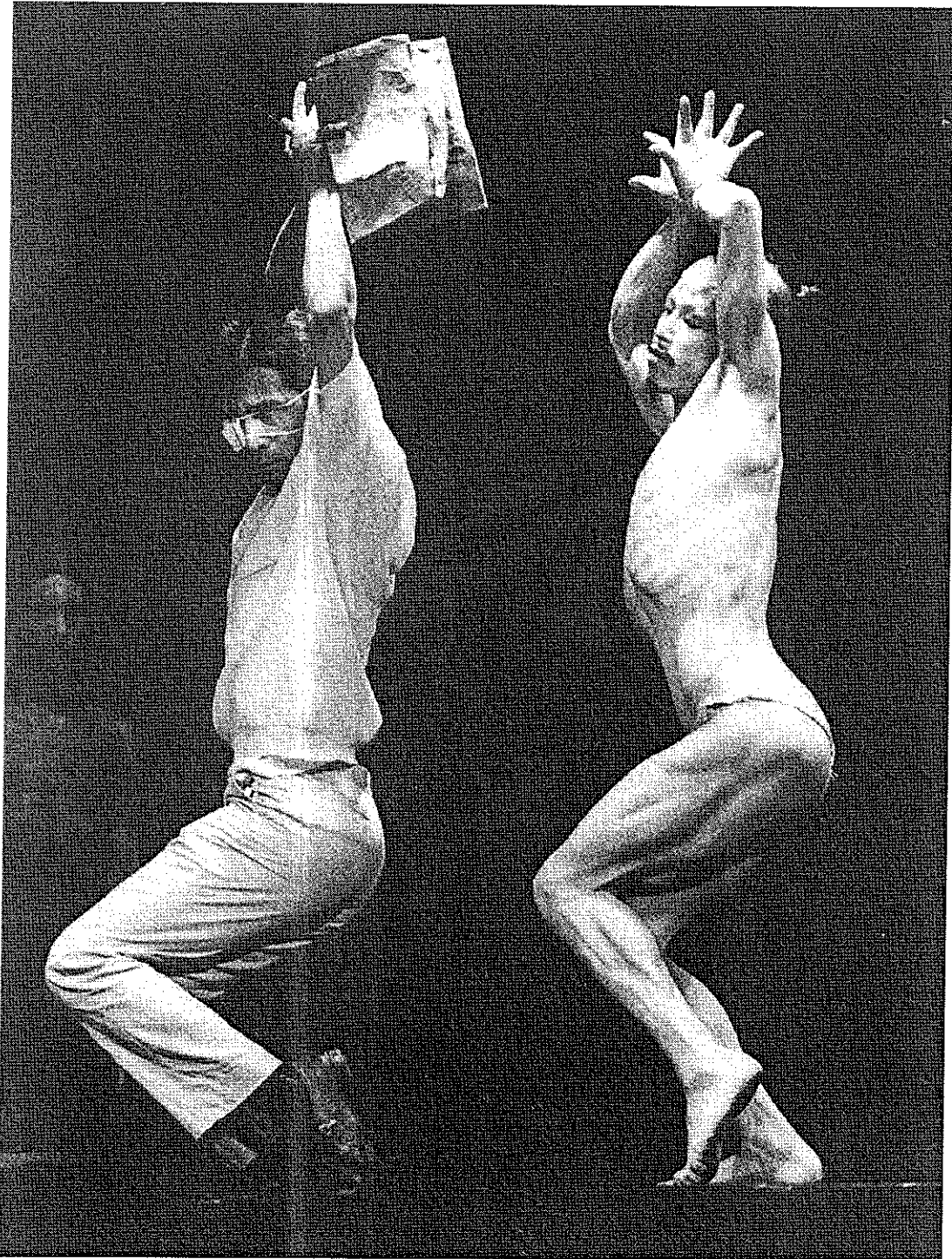
Every other month a new piece was performed. Hijikata's works became marked by a particular style. This was in sharp contrast to his work up to that point which always was changing. *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban* included kabuki-like outward movements, which Hijikata himself performed. Simultaneously, however, there were *Yūfu* (courageous woman) characters who bent their knees and backs deeply with their chins sticking out. This transitional phase preceded a new style of dance for Hakutōbō which was characterized by concentrated contained movements for female performers. The incredible transformation of Ashikawa into a bowlegged midget-like figure and the complete changes of her masklike facial expressions were striking and surprised the audience. What Ashikawa showed was the result not only of practical work on the body but of the words Hijikata bombarded her with as they worked alone in the studio. His words were metaphors for his body. He was trying to convey his body to her through his words. Ashikawa responded to this word/body procedure enormously. Ashikawa even said that an exchange of bodies occurred (1990:164). Hijikata's words—her actions: a methodology that used words to create definite forms was being established during this period.

Attitude toward Classical Performing Arts

The original title of 'Fragments of Glass: A Conversation between Hijikata Tatsumi and Suzuki Tadashi' was "Ketsujo to shite no gengo=shintai no kasetu" (Language as Lack and Temporary Construction of the Body)²⁹ It was published in April 1977 in *Gendaishi techō* (The Notebook for Contemporary Poetry). Although Hijikata's language sounds mysterious, he was actually very methodological and analytical. In this conversation, the theatre director Suzuki, a theoretical artist himself, constantly pulls the mystifying Hijikata back to a place where he must be analytical. This push and pull between the two experimental theatre artists clarifies some similarities and differences between the revolutionary dancer and the innovative theatre director who shared the same glorious period of Japanese underground performing arts.

In the conversation, moderator Senda Akihiko mentions that Hijikata used the phrase Tōhoku kabuki in reference to *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban* when he visited the dancer right before a performance of the piece. In 1973, an enthusiastic article, "Shi to iu koten butoh" (A Classical Dance Called Death) by Gunji Masakatsu, an authority on Japanese traditional performing arts, especially kabuki, also connected Hijikata with kabuki, defining kabuki as "wriggling in the interior of the womb among Japanese," and unlike current kabuki which is more about spectacle (1973:121). Gunji's article was published right after the performance of the *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban* and his words undoubtedly strongly influenced the discourse surrounding butoh.

Contradictorily, Hijikata himself emphasized, in the conversation with Suzuki and elsewhere, that his dance had nothing to do with established performing arts. But there are a number of examples from Hijikata's life that reinforce his connection with traditional performing arts. His friend, the poet Yoshioka Minoru, remembered Hijikata talking about the *kyōgen* piece *Tsungitsune* (Trapping a Fox)—now regarded as one of the most important works in *kyōgen*—which had been shown on television in 1973 (1987:62). He also witnessed Hijikata earnestly looking at *Nishiki-e* (multicolored ukiyo-e) and old woodblock prints at a used bookstore. One of the major genres of these prints is *yakusha-e* (actor prints) which depict kabuki actors onstage. Yoshioka stated that Hijikata received inspiration for *Shiki no tame no nijūshichiban* from these prints (1987:56–57). Hijikata was undoubtedly interested in the traditional performing arts and was affected by them. But he purposely avoided directly confronting "national/traditional performing



6 Hijikata Tatsumi (left) shows Tamano Kōichi his choreography for Nagasu kujira (Fin Whale, 1972) (Photo by Hosoe Eikō)



7 Hijikata Tatsumi in Gibasan (1972) choreographed by Hijikata Tatsumi at Art Theatre Shinjuku (Photo by Onozuka Makoto)

arts” such as *noh* and *kabuki*. In this, Hijikata was very different from Suzuki who encountered and used the traditional arts in a systematic and analytical way. The direct experience of nature was very important to Hijikata. In his conversation with Suzuki, while explicating his complex attitude toward the arts, Hijikata declared that Tōhoku’s spring season with its abundance of mud taught him to dance.

“Kaze Daruma” (Wind Daruma) is a lecture originally titled “Suijakutai no saishū” (Collection of Emaciated Body), given the night before the Butoh Festival 85. Butoh zangeroku shūsei—shichinin no kisetu to shiro (Collected Record of Butoh Confessions: Seven Persons Seasons and Castles) in February 1985.²¹ Hijikata spoke in a way designed to address a general audience. Toward the end of his life, Hijikata focused on “suijakutai” (the emaciated body). Probably one of the actualizations of this emaciated body was the ghostlike figure Ashikawa Yōko performed in the *Tōhoku kabuki keikaku* 4

(Tōhoku Kabuki Project 4) in 1985. In a man's kimono, Ashikawa moved as if she were floating, her eyes almost closed, as if her body was disappearing. This figure was strikingly different from those powerful presences she portrayed in works from the 1970s. Hijikata once wrote, "Since the body itself perishes, it has a form. Butoh has another dimension" (1998:295). He ambitiously attempted to erase the body and go beyond it, beyond anything with a material form. It was this "disappearing" that he was working on just before he died. Hijikata asked, "Where does a human being go after death?" This was the question he obviously confronted when he realized his own death was near. At the same time, he was still in the process of developing his notion of the emaciated body. In the lecture, Hijikata just barely touches on the theme of the emaciated body, quoting an ancient Buddhist priest, Kyōgai, then telling stories of "Kaze daruma" which Hijikata had relayed many times before. As butoh dancer Murobushi Kō² stated at the Hijikata symposium, "Butoh is not yet achieved" (1998). Butoh, for Hijikata himself, was an ongoing process—it never could be finished or achieved.

Conclusion

Hijikata stated in 1977, "Now is the very crucial moment when the world has become filled with all kinds of materials. Even when there were obstacles and resistant things in the past, we did not necessarily grasp what was lacking within you vividly" (1977:123). He experienced drastic social changes from postwar poverty to extreme materialism. He was very aware of how such changes influence the relationship between the world and the body: "The body is constantly violated by things like the development of technology" (1969:19). Today these changes are accelerating. The rapid development of computer technology, virtual-reality technology, and the internet have extended human possibilities for the future but seem simultaneously to be eroding or changing our sense of what is real. From this current context one can more clearly read that Hijikata's struggle was to present the real in a time when the body is constantly simulated.

Undoubtedly, the body is culturally constructed on some level, but is it just that? Hijikata called the body "the most remote thing in the universe" (in Ashikawa 1990:163). Quite a few of us seek the more real and go beyond mere relativism by examining the body intensely while trying to avoid the danger of essentializing it. Words can be a weapon to confront the body. Although a relationship between the body and language always existed, we are pressed to examine that relationship now because of the very nature of the epoch we live in. Hijikata's words and the documentation of his works provide a direction for us—but they also open up further questions. The translations presented in this issue of *TDR* will, I hope, create a larger space for examining the relationship between the body and language in both discussion and practice.

Notes

- 1 For the Japanese long vowel sound, the diacritical "̄" is placed over the vowel as in *buyō shūsei* and Tōhoku. However, words commonly used in English such as Tokyo, Kyoto, and *butoh* are left without diacritics.
- 2 Longer excerpts of three articles by Hijikata were translated in *Butoh. Shades of Darkness* (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988).
- 3 The father of Motofuji Akiko, Hijikata's wife, was an importer of asbestos. It is said that since he bought the place for his daughter, Hijikata named it Asbestos Hall.
- 4 According to linguists, Japanese has more of these compared to other languages, including English. There are several Japanese-English dictionaries meant explicitly for translating onomatopoeias and mimetic words into English. See Kakichi and Tamori's

- Onomatopoeia: gion, gitaigo no rakuen* (Onomatopoeia: The Paradise of Sound Effective Mimetic Words) for the specific nature of onomatopoeia in Japanese
- 5 When I was taking lessons Ashikawa had started working with director Tomoe Shizune originally a guitarist and composer and the group is called Tomoe Shizune to Hakutōbō (Tomoe Shizune and Hakutōbō)
 - 6 All quotes by Ashikawa are from classes during 1990/91 unless otherwise noted
 - 7 For readers who would like to experience this themselves a CD-ROM *Butoh Kaden* by Hijikata's long time disciple Waguri Yukio (1998a) is available Based on his work with Hijikata Waguri created this multimedia *butoh-fu* in which one can see how Hijikata used words for dance There are 22 segments of Waguri moving to Hijikata's words
 - 8 I am indebted to Amagasaki Akira's *Kotoba to shintai* (Words and Body 1990) for this connection of Heinz Werner's concept to Hijikata
 - 9 Hijikata made a number of scrapbooks filling them with words and images to create his art works
 - 10 Originally this article was untitled When this article was included in a book *Bibō no aozora* (Handsome Blue Sky) in 1987 an editor entitled it 'Naka no sozai/Sozai.'
 - 11 Tōhoku has always been considered a far-away frontier and has evoked mythical images for Japanese for centuries In the seventh century the Imperial Court sent soldiers to conquer its inhabitants, Ezo people who were considered to be the ancestors of the Ainu indigenous people mainly living in Hokkaidō Karafuto, and Chishima However there are recent archaeological studies suggesting that the Ezo were the ones who bore the Jōmon culture the original Japanese culture that began around 10 000 BCE and lasted until 500 BCE
 - 12 The Ōtsuji photographs are not performance photos but were taken at a studio
 - 13 The chicken didn't actually die according to both Motofuji and Ōno Yoshito
 - 14 A *shamisen* is a three-stringed instrument that became very popular in the second half of the 16th century
 - 15 *Kamaitachi* is a phenomenon in which skin rips spontaneously People used to think that an invisible weasel was responsible for splitting the skin, thus the name
 - 16 The title is equivocal and untranslatable, typical of Hijikata. *Susamu* is a verb that means that something especially a mind, grows wild or becomes rough, or that one does things as s/he wishes 'Dama' is *tama* The pronunciation is changed because it gets connected with another word Tama means a ball, and also a beautiful woman or a courtesan and a prostitute. I think that the title means 'a beautiful woman who became rough' or 'a prostitute who grew wild'
 - 17 As Hijikata explained, *gibasan* is a regional name for a particular seaweed that grows on the Akita coast
 - 18 Japanese language is gendered in terms of words style and pronunciation
 - 19 It should be noted that the butoh audience was a minority then in Japan and remains so However Ōno Kazuo and Sankaijuku led by Amagatsu Ushio are more or less recognized by mainstream Japanese audiences
 - 20 This is the only excerpt among the pieces chosen for translation in this issue. This was to maintain a balance with the other pieces since the original article is a few times longer than 'Wind Daruma' the longest of the others I chose sections that focus on the relationship between the body and language and Hijikata's attitude toward classical performing arts
 - 21 This was published as 'Kaze daruma: butoh zangeroku shūsei' (Wind Daruma: Collected Record of Butoh Confessions) in *Gendaishi techō* in May 1985 The lecture was given in February 1985
 - 22 Murobushi Kō (b. 1948) is a butoh dancer active in Europe

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