

BUTOH-FU.  
DANCE AND WORDS

DOSSIER

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Samantha Marenzi  
DANCE AND WORDS.  
INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2000 «The Drama Review» published one issue dedicated to butoh and Tatsumi Hijikata. Two years before then, and little more than ten years after the death of the dancer, his records were delivered to the Keio University Art Center to form the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive. «The Drama Review» published the English translation of some of Hijikata's writings, a chronology, critical interventions, a number of photographs. In her introductory essay, effectively entitled *The words of Butoh*, Nanako Kurihara wrote: «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<sup>1</sup>».

Naturally the existence of notations and the accessibility of records changed the course of butoh studies. Behind the great fascination for an obscure and extreme dance, for a new avant-garde, for a language that in collective imagery (especially in the West) managed to transfer to choreography the political revolts of the 1960s and Japan's shock after the war, behind the scandal and the power of flung and transfigured bodies, there emerged the full coherence of a performative culture, the full depth of a group of intellectuals, a community of heretics within the heresy, gathered around Tatsumi Hijikata. There emerged the techniques, the work methods, as well as the thought, the use of heterogeneous sources, the vortex of a dialogue between East and West, and between past and present.

It became clear to Western scholars too that butoh is not simply a dance style, and that Hijikata's notations are not the transcriptions of

<sup>1</sup> Nanako Kurihara, *The Words of Butoh*, «The Drama Review», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, p. 14.

movement. Butoh-fu is one of the levels of creation in which images, texts and their connection to choreographies generate the new language of a dance that breaks through the boundaries of theatre, even before expressing subversive contents or expressing itself in unusual forms. A dance for which a name needed to be invented<sup>2</sup>, to be later placed at the heart of authentic darkness. «Ankoku Butoh», the dance of darkness.

Differently from Hijikata's writings<sup>3</sup> and from the documents about his activity as dancer and choreographer (photographs, video fragments, audio files, articles, etc.), the beautiful notation scrapbooks do not crystallize a result but rather give account of a process. They allow us to reflect on the documents from different points of view, to use them for different purposes (including exhibitions), and to conceive of the archive as a dynamic, open system, perceived by the butoh community as something living as well as dangerous.

Our archive aims to be a genetic archive, focusing on evolution and constant growth. The basic idea is to set up a time axis from past to present to future, starting with documentation of the past and carrying out creations toward the future via current dialogues. An archive should be a space of formation with emphasis on processes moving along the time axis<sup>4</sup>.

With these words Takashi Morishita describes the management standards at the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive, which he directs.

During the opening of the conference *PSi Tohoku 2015 – Beyond Contamination: Corporeality, Spirituality and Pilgrimage in Northern Japan*<sup>5</sup> (Aomori, August-September 2015), Morishita spoke about Hijikata

<sup>2</sup> About the genesis of the name cf. Idem, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Hijikata's writings were released in Japanese language in two volumes under the title *Hijikata Tatsumi zenshū* (The Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi), Tokyo, Kawade Shobō, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Takashi Morishita, *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh. An Innovative Method for Butoh Creation*, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2015, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Organised by PSi (Performance Studies international) in collaboration with Keio University Art Center and Aomori Museum of Art, the conference was held in the Japanese region of Tohoku, where Hijikata originally came from, and offered an occasion of meeting and exchange among scholars and performers from all over the world. See *Performance Studies international Fluid States 2015 Tohoku, Japan: Select conference proceedings*, edited by Peter Eckersall, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2016 <<http://www.art-c.keio.ac.jp/publication/other-publication/psi2015tohoku-proceedings/>>.

and the archive. While introducing him, Stephen Barber stressed that Morishita's commitment was not only aimed at organising, preserving and making the archival materials accessible, but also at showing and presenting them (since the end of the 1990s they were exhibited in museums all over the world), and thus creating a new audience for Hijikata's work. Morishita started speaking, and now and again a strange crackling sound covered his voice. Part of the audience complained about it, it seemed like a technical problem, an anomalous fact within an impeccable organisation. What is most strange, is that nobody tried to solve it. Above the creaking, Morishita talked about Hijikata, of how he built a new environment for performance, a new way to use the body and conceive of dancing. He then talked of the many Eastern and Western techniques Hijikata studied, and the influence of his readings, Georges Bataille, Jean Genet. The noise grew stronger. Morishita, seraphic and obstinately indifferent to the background, talked about the spread of Antonin Artaud's thought, of the first performances by Japanese artists and the practice of happenings – forms of representation that during the 1960s opened up new scenarios and meanings to the physical presence of performers but risked removing the technique from stage practice. He talked about the scrapbooks collecting Hijikata's notations and of how the traces of the method he built are kept in the archive. In reply to some questions, he talked about the connection between the archive and the university hosting it, and about projects for the publication of unreleased materials. But the background noise became a real disturbance. It slowly took on a recognisable form. During his reading Morishita reassured his listeners. This wasn't microphone feedback. «What you hear are two voices»<sup>6</sup>, he explained. One is the voice of Hijikata in an old recording, very damaged in the first part. An obscure document. A really good way to let the archive speak. To let Hijikata speak, and secretly dialogue with him. There are two voices but Hijikata is not in conversation. The other voice is Artaud's, from *To have done with the judgement of god*. A document in the document. A dialogue blending different voices on legacy and archival materials as possible places for the stratification of time. Artaud's recording for the radio programme censored in 1948 became an extraordinarily precious object for

<sup>6</sup> Morishita's intervention can be fully consulted on the conference documentation page <<http://psi21.portfolio-butoh.jp/featured/rewind-psi-2015-tohoku/>> and from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss7w9Ku8V5s>>.

Hijikata, in the 1980s, one of the steps in his profound interest for the French poet, very intense since the 1960s.

The reference to Artaud is a symptom of Hijikata's relationship with writing, which spans through his artistic experience on many, very deep, levels. The three most evident ones are his relationship with literature, particularly from France, his relationships with writers and intellectuals of his time, and with writing itself – never a side activity for Hijikata, revealing a level of language research strictly connected to the radical experimentation he conducted on corporeal movement. Beside preserving the traces of his choreographic activity, the archival materials show Hijikata as a reader and as a writer engaged in the double task of liberating both body and language from automatism, emulations and social coercion, from the bonds of productivity, from the illusion of harmony, from the deceptions of history.

The different writing levels are already interlaced in the performance that marks the beginning of the *butoh* adventure (not yet under this name). In the context of dance, this adventure was inaugurated under the sign of scandal, and was handed over to historiography surrounded by mythical tones. *Kinjiki* (Forbidden colors), borrowed its title from Yukio Mishima's novel, and in its second, extended version, presented four months after the first one, in September 1959, it presented on stage the character Divine, which from the pages of Jean Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers* snuck under the folds of Kazuo Ohno's body, and continued to inhabit it in other performances unconnected to Mishima's title. Hijikata had already read Genet at the end of the 1950s<sup>7</sup>. The first translations of his works had appeared ten years before and in 1952 the Japanese version of *The Thief's Journal* was published – a book that left a very deep trace in the first text Hijikata wrote about dance, entitled *To prison*.

All the power of civilized morality, hand in hand with the capitalist economic system and its political institutions, is utterly opposed to using the body simply for the purpose, means, or tool of pleasure. Still more, to a production-oriented society, the aimless use of the body, which I call dance, is a deadly enemy which

<sup>7</sup> About Jean Genet in post-war Japanese culture and the great influence of his writings on Hijikata and Ohno, cf. Stephen Barber, *Hijikata: Revolt of the Body*, Chicago University Press, Solar series, 2010, especially pp. 28-30. (First edition: London, Creation Books, 2005).

must be taboo. I am able to say that my dance shares a common basis with crime, male homosexuality, festivals, and rituals because it is behavior that explicitly flaunts its aimlessness in the face of a production-oriented society. In this sense my dance, based on human self-activation, including male homosexuality, crime, and a naive battle with nature, can naturally be a protest against the “alienation of labor” in capitalist society. That is probably the reason too that I have expressly taken up with criminals.

There are some common points in the taciturnity of criminals, and there are crushing mistakes that extend straight on. I am always dragged by the legs of the young criminals today who pass me by. They are legs which have never carried politics as accomplices for horsing around. Youth who chase far beyond suspicion the internal medicine and surgical knife, which today’s civilization dispenses to them. I wager reality on a nonsensical vitality that has purged the echo of logic from my body and I dream of the day when I am sent to prison with them. In prison I will learn to play football. They are the legs of criminals with no need to learn how to stand in such a place. I am studying that kind of “criminal dance”<sup>8</sup>.

The way in which literature acts on Hijikata’s creative process goes beyond the fascination for themes, already marking a break from the dance repertoire in which never so much emphasis was given to homosexuality, crime, social violence. Even when Hijikata’s choreographies depart from a narrative development, the thought of poets and writers he recognised as fathers marked his research by creating the conditions to let the word act on the dance in an indirect way.

Genet remained a preferential reference for Hijikata as dancer and choreographer (as for example in *Divinariana* for Ohno<sup>9</sup>, 1960 and *Butoh Genet* for Mitsutaka Ishii, 1967). Other references are Isidore Ducasse, known as Comte de Lautréamont, author of *The Song of Maldoror* to which the French surrealists gave posthumous notoriety, and loved by Artaud (*Disposal place – Extract from The Song of Maldoror*, 1960), and Artaud himself, who lent the scene of Heliogabalus’s procession

<sup>8</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *To Prison*, «The Drama Review», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 44-45, originally published as *Keimusho e*, «Mita Bungaku», January 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Ohno, well known in Europe, is rarely mentioned in this Dossier. The University of Bologna hosts a Kazuo Ohno Archive that contributes to the studies with conferences, researches, translations. See for example *Butō. Prospettive europee e sguardi dal Giappone*, edited by Matteo Casari and Elena Cervellati, Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti e ALMADAL, 2015 <<http://amsacta.unibo.it/4352/>>, and Kazuo Ōno and Yoshito Ōno, *Nutrimento dell’anima. La danza butō/Aforismi e insegnamenti dei Maestri*, Macerata, Ephemeria, 2015.

to Hijikata's most famous performance, the solo performance of 1968 *Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Rebellion of the body*<sup>10</sup>.

Hijikata was initiated to Artaud by the writer Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, a refined French scholar, who ended up in a long and controversial court case for translating Marquis De Sade's novels. Even before Artaud's books were translated<sup>11</sup>, his thought, his history, his poetry and ideas about theatre entered Hijikata's imagery through his long conversations with Shibusawa, who was open to real dialogue, of the same age as Hijikata (like him born in 1928, he died one year after the dancer, in 1987), very knowledgeable and attracted by the dark side of knowledge, from Medieval demonology to black magic, from eroticism to the poetry of the *poètes maudits*. An enlightened figure. His name completes the title of an important choreography by Hijikata, *Rose-colored dance – A la maison de Monsieur Shibusawa*, from 1965.

Hijikata's relationship with writing, as well as with literature, has to do with his intellectual biography, and with the network of connections that nurtured his creation of a new dance, meaning new movements, new topics, new methods, new sources of inspiration, new productive strategies, new patterns of interaction with spectators, new aesthetics, new forms of collaboration with other artists, new pedagogy – and also, a new language.

<sup>10</sup> *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin: nikutai no hanran* is elsewhere translated as «Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese people: Rebellion of the Body» (or «Revolt of the Flesh»). About the English translation of the performance title cf. Bruce Baird, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh. Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> *The theatre and its double* appeared in Japanese in 1965, (in Italian, aside from previews in the magazine «Sipario» in 1965, it was completely translated in 1968 for Einaudi, while in English it had appeared for the New York Grove Weidenfeld in 1958). As early as 1962 Shibusawa dedicated one of his writings to Helio Galabala, and read Artaud in original language. A partner in dialogue for Hijikata throughout the 1980s, bringing back to him from France the tape with the recording of *To have done with the judgement of god*, is the philosopher Kuniichi Uno, a student of Gilles Deleuze, who in 1987 edited the Japanese translation of *A thousand plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari, and in 1992 the translation of *To have done...* by Artaud. In 1984 Hijikata used Artaud's recording in a choreography for the dancer Min Tanaka and in 1986, shortly before his death, he planned with Uno a work titled *Experiment with Artaud*. About Artaud's voice, and Hijikata's voice, cf. Stephen Barber, *Hijikata: Revolt of the Body*, cit., p. 104.

Scholars of Hijikata, some of whom appearing in this Dossier, agree on the fact that his writing should not be read as a corollary to the dance. Writing and dance are intertwined, but writing represents a parallel artistic path, and a remarkable contribution to the Japanese literature of the 1960s and 1970s. In this sense, since Hijikata's writings are still partially unreleased, and for the greatest part untranslated, the most authoritative studies require, from Western scholars, a deep knowledge of the Japanese language and of Hijikata's intellectual development, by which he forced the language to say something that did not exist before being nominated. Hijikata's language is the language of his writing, his essays, his interventions, his memoirs; it is the language that dialogues with the images in the choreographic notations of his notebooks; it is the work language, spoken, representing the shared body of knowledge between the choreographer and his dancers, collaborators, students.

Yoko Ashikawa, the dancer who was the "symbol" of the corporeal metamorphosis investigated by Hijikata in the 1970s, the protagonist of his most structured butoh, describes the daily work sessions:

I had to be very receptive, and his demands were physically very extreme. For almost ten years our daily routine began with his drumming on a small drum stretched with animal hide, [...] and with his words, which he uttered in a stream like poetry. When we danced, the images were all derived from his verbal expression. Without the words we could not dance, so it was like following a poem<sup>12</sup>.

Hijikata was surprised, Ashikawa continues, «at the similarities between writers' creative processes and his own»<sup>13</sup>.

In any case, the word does not limit its action to its literal meaning. It is a word bearing real consequences. As in that old track that disturbed Morishita's speech, in Hijikata's words something is unveiled and something is hidden, inviting us to look deeper, beyond the flashy scandal and the hypnotic charm of his dance. Always, beside containing elements of his personal research, Hijikata's words are crossed by tensions between the past and the present, between different artistic languages, between the body of the dancer and that of the human being.

<sup>12</sup> Yoko Ashikawa, *Dance: Intimacy Plays Its Trump*, in Mark Holborn, Ethan Hoffman, *Butoh. Dance of the dark soul*, New York, Aperture, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, p. 18.

In the archive, the documents that more evidently present these stratifications are the notation books, or scrapbooks, composed of images cut out from art magazines and commented in a language that is both poetic elaboration and work language. As previously said, *butoh-fu* means *butoh notation*. It is not a system of symbols meant to transcribe the dance. The notations do not come after the choreography. Combining the outlooks of different scholars, we can define them at the same time as a field of exchange between master and students (as they probably answer to the need of formulating a language and contents for the transmission of movements that goes beyond the rendition of a form), as the formulation of a method (which classifies corporeal movements and states by assigning names that point to the universe of iconographical and thematic sources substantiating them), as objects of art and memory (an authentically heterogeneous repertory to which montage gives a rhythm and dilates associations).

Hijikata probably started using the notations from the mid-1960s. The traces of choreographic genesis emerge from the comparison between some scrapbooks and his last, great solo performance, *Rebellion of the Body*, of 1968, after which he only appeared in chorus performances. He danced publicly for the last time in 1973 and then with great intensity dedicated himself to teaching and to the creation of choreographies for his dancers, moving away from the more experimental structure of the first performances and producing materials that were more structured and refined, very characterised in style. Morishita suggests a direct connection between Hijikata's departure from the stage and the use of notations as the building of a solid method that could survive the performative dimension. A method is a delivery, it allows the passage of dance experience from he who creates it to other performers, and it requires the fine-tuning of a vocabulary and the creation of a universe of shared associations. To avoid exhausting its purpose in the form of movement and in the execution technique, this passage requires a system that can engender a chain of hidden meanings, the connection to perception and imagination exercises, the suggestion of a mental condition. In this way some words start to display a number of meanings. The name of Bacon becomes the indication of a movement containing the characteristics of squares associated to some qualities of the body – like torsion, transfiguration, fusion – while also carrying biographical memories – the suicide of the painter's lover –, and all the words and

gestures used in the workroom to inspire the imagination connected to Bacon and make it a real movement, previously inexistent, inevitably requiring indications about movement mechanics too. Here is the power of a word, reverberating from the body to the page and, in this like in many other cases, including the power of images.

Images are the most consistent components of the scrapbooks, almost making them a visual guide for the creation of performance<sup>14</sup>. Beyond the use of surrealist association techniques, decontextualisations and collages, which place the issue of their interpretation in art-historical terms and disconnect them from the systems of movement transcription revealing them as the place for genesis, the complex system of scrapbooks reveals a level of connection to images that is very conscious, not only aesthetic – precisely as it happens for the relationship between Hijikata and literature. The scrapbooks are maps of Hijikata's choreographic thought. They show a process that resists its performative result. They include different kinds of images: masterpieces of Western art, especially from the twentieth century (Picasso, Klimt, Bellmer, Bacon, Michaux, Giacometti, Dubuffet – sometimes fragments of their works from which Hijikata cut out single characters, fragments of the human body, facial expressions), but also from painting art of the past (an entire scrapbook is dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci – then there are Grünewald's and Altdorfer crucifixions, and Bosch's beggars), reproductions of ancient Iranian artifacts and Roman friezes, Japanese art – and photographs from outside the realm of art to be used for their subjects, especially animals. At times the interest for images is mostly formal, connected to positions, attitudes, and it shows a glimpse of the work on real bodies that pose resistance to the (often informal) outline of one's figure. In other cases the focus of interest lies in the content, the theme, the story or the "spiritual" dimension of the image: what cannot be seen of the figure. Therefore, the transfer process to choreography is not only aesthetic and imitative, it has to do with what composes the

<sup>14</sup> For a reading of the scrapbooks in the perspective of visual arts cf. Kurt Wurml, *The power of image. Hijikata Tatsumi's scrapbooks and the art of Butô*, PhD Dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2008. The thesis presented a detailed indexing of the iconographic apparatus of the scrapbooks, and proposes a compared reading between the images used as source of inspiration for the dance and the photographs documenting the performances.

dance, the way in which the imagination acts on the body filling up the movement and transforming it. The movement is filled up by making it dense and intensifying presence, and transformed by marking a dance that is commonly defined as metamorphic rather than expressive.

We are facing the atlas of a performative culture that is born with Hijikata but declares all its roots, extending in many different directions in the past. For example, considering the great influence of French writers on the evolution of his artistic development and the in-depth knowledge of his partner in dialogue Shibusawa, it would be interesting to read the activity of the scrapbooks against the background of the Bataille of «Documents», thus beyond the fascination for the topics of evil and eroticism articulated by the French writer – by looking at the organisational methods for materials and knowledge, at the use of the residues of one culture to produce thought instead of cataloguing the culture, to liberate forces instead of archiving meanings. Thus the topic of method in Hijikata goes beyond the topic of method in choreographic creation. Looking at the scrapbooks in relation to the work with his students and dancers, thinking of their connection to the spoken side of practice and looking at the relationship between the images and the poetic notations – in themselves concrete indications even when their link to the images is not always understandable –, what is evident is that the search for a work language pervades the images, the writings, and the dance – a language that arises from the encounter of these three sources. The powers enclosed in these forms reverberate on all levels of Hijikata's work, a work in search for principles. For this reason his work shares many common points with the research of some Western directors contemporary to him. I am thinking here of Jerzy Grotowski, or Eugenio Barba, and their capacity to identify principles recurring in performative cultures distant from one another as for time period and cultural tradition<sup>15</sup>. Their names invisibly flicker behind the themes presented in this Dossier: the suspension of the ego as a necessary dimension for the transmission relationship, pushing theatre training to the boundaries of personal initiation; the use of invisible materials

<sup>15</sup> About the recurring principles, and as methodological indication for a series of references among theatre cultures, see the book by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991 (and following editions).

in support of training; the search for truth in voluntary action; the interconnection of body language experimentation and spiritual path; the action of personal and collective memory on the actor-dancer's practice; the implementation of a work language that can render power and reality to words, a public language that keeps some secrets. Principles, as Artaud wrote, are like dolphins, «once they have shown their heads, hurry to dive back into the obscurity of the deep»<sup>16</sup>.

Not only did Hijikata deal with issues common to the theatre reformers of the second part of the twentieth century, allowing us to read his experience outside the confines of dance genres but, like them, he also took up the work from where the masters of the past had left it. He chose his fathers. Some are European poets and men of theatre, in their turn often influenced by the vision of Eastern traditions. In Hijikata's experience, they appear as a current that dives deep and reemerges irregularly through space and time, a channel for the transmission and regeneration of theatre culture following a non-linear development, a passage often facilitated by books – again, by the word.

The opening writing of this Dossier immediately delves into the space of the relationship between body and word, the space of direct transmission and of Hijikata's words. It was written by the dancer Akira Kasai. They too are the words of a master.

The Aomori conference, attended by all the scholars involved in this Dossier, for some of them ended with an event outside the programme. Kasai had organised a meeting in his space in Tokyo that included the performance of an Italian dancer, Alessandra Cristiani, and two theoretical talks – one given by myself about Antonin Artaud, and one by Maria Pia D'Orazi about the idea of butoh in Italy<sup>17</sup>. Bruce Baird and Katja Centonze managed to change their plans and attend the evening which, after days of reflection on documents and on the risk for butoh to be transmitted as dance style and empty form, offered the occasion to

<sup>16</sup> Antonin Artaud, *Le théâtre alchimique*, in *Le Théâtre et son Double*, here quoted from Artaud, *The theatre and its double*, translated by Mary Caroline Richards, New York, Grove Press, 1958, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Alessandra Cristiani presented her solo performance *Ophelia*, which inaugurated a study residence in the eurhythmy school directed by Akira Kasai in his Tenshi-kan (The home of angels). The event marked an important step in the project of collaboration and research that we have conducted with Kasai and his company for years.

rethink the power of Hijikata's legacy in present times. There, concretely and outside of any metaphor, the importance of memory merged with the topicality of dance. From there it was important to start again, to reflect on the relationship between writing and dance method, between language and corporeal practice, between master and pupils, and between documents and artistic processes. I would like to thank all the scholars who accepted my invitation and opened up reflection trajectories on these themes. Especially Bruce Baird and Katja Centonze, also for their collaboration in the contacts with the archive.

Baird, author of a very important book on Tatsumi Hijikata<sup>18</sup>, delves here into the issue of the disproportion between the spread of butoh images<sup>19</sup> and the accessibility of performance. The circulation of photographs conveyed the aesthetics and the idea of butoh but risked depriving it of the method of dance creation. A method that goes beyond movement techniques, that privileges choreographic exactitude above improvisation, that establishes a precise relationship with the audience. The issue is to move from the images and words *about* butoh to the images and words *of* butoh, outside of the descriptive role transgressed by Hijikata, by using images and words to transform the dancers and their performances. Baird, who has at length collaborated with the archive and worked extensively on the documents, raises the problem of how active dancers received some operations for the interpretation and

<sup>18</sup> I advice readers to see his *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh. Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits*, cit., about a number of the topics mentioned in this introductory essay, especially about the necessity to liberate language from social constraints, beside physical movement, and about the related dialogue between Yukio Mishima and Tatsumi Hijikata.

<sup>19</sup> In this Dossier no space is dedicated to the topic, worthy of further investigation, of the butoh photo and film documentation, including the famous collaborations of Hijikata with visual artists contemporary to him. Beside the books by the authors of this Dossier and the bibliography included in the essays here collected, see the contributions by Mark Holborn about the collaborations between Hijikata and the photographer Eikoh Hosoe: *Eikoh Hosoe*, collection Aperture Master of Photography, Köln, Könemann, 1999; *The demon myth: Kamaitachi*, in Idem, *Black sun: The eyes of four. Roots and innovation in japanese photography*, «Aperture», vol. 102, spring 1986, and the afterword to *Ba Ra Kei. Ordeal by roses. Photographs of Yukio Mishima by Eikoh Hosoe*, New York, Aperture, 1985. About the same topic, see also my *Corpo, spirito, immagine. Il Kamaitachi di Eikoh Hosoe e Tatsumi Hijikata*, in *Le religioni e le arti. Percorsi interdisciplinari in età contemporanea*, edited by Sergio Botta and Tessa Canella, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2015.

transmission of Hijikata's method. I would like to mention here briefly an aspect that was purposefully neglected in the choice of this Dossier's investigations, and which instead plays a relevant role in the archival activity for the creation of new documents. I am referring here to the collaboration of some of Hijikata's students, namely Yukio Waguri and Moe Yamamoto, not only for the compared reading of theirs and their master's notations, but also for a series of executions that transform written indications into real movements that can be filmed, catalogued, and archived. In this operation words become real actions again, and the documentary archive directly confronts the archive of movements stored in the physical memory of students, the only ones who can decipher Hijikata's writings in terms of dance.

Writing here on behalf of the archive is Takashi Morishita, whom I thank for the authorisation to publish excerpts from his book *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh. An Innovative Method for Butoh Creation*, a gift he gave to the Aomori conference participants, an important document to share. In his experience, Hijikata's word is not only the object of study, it is the direct memory of a process that maintains the exactitude of writing, creates names to make things exist, and the energy of the spoken word, animated by gestures and physical presence<sup>20</sup>.

Stephen Barber's essay opens up an extremely interesting vortex on the relationship between dance and visual arts. By observing the use Richard Hawkins makes of Hijikata's scrapbooks in artistic projects intended for museums, he offers a complex trajectory to read into the relationship between the choreographer and his sources, and between preparatory materials and art objects, (which in Hijikata's notation system overlap) by using the reproductions of twentieth century masterpieces as tools for dance, and by generating an artistic product that assumes a new value outside of its context, and of its nature.

<sup>20</sup> In one section of the book not included in this Dossier, Morishita recounts his arrival at Hijikata's Asbestos Studio with the task of transcribing texts and speeches in view of publication. Even though the agreement with the publisher concerned the delivery of a finished manuscript, Morishita was asked to transcribe the speeches to maintain the great liberty of associations and of language by which the dancer expressed himself while moving inside his work space, and recalls the extraordinary change in register when he was dictated texts that Hijikata pronounced in structured form. Cf. *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh*, cit. p. 44.

Barber writes extensively about the relationship between Hijikata and his sources, not exclusively but especially literary ones, in his book *Hijikata: Revolt of the Body*, developed around other objects of study for the author, including Antonin Artaud<sup>20</sup>.

Katja Centonze's perspective brings the word back into the heart of the dance problem. Hijikata's definition of the body, of a specific quality of the body, different from the athletic body and from the everyday body, the search for a name that corresponds to a specific energy, that becomes explosive compared to all the others, compared to the context, for its power to be different. Centonze has translated and written about Hijikata, in very many speeches she has let his presence emerge by penetrating inside his body of writing.

Maria Pia D'Orazi<sup>21</sup> transfers the role of the word from the definition to the transformation of the body: from Hijikata's elaboration – who trained his awareness along with his physical body – to Akira Kasai's journey – who inherited the word as a tool for creation and knowledge and recovered its power beyond the meaning. In Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmy, Kasai finds a technique for the investigation and composition of the human being, merging language and movement and using the power of vocalization, with the capacity to bring the body back to its origins, to that place of contact with universal forces, to a space for creation.

In Italy Kasai was and is the protagonist of a long pedagogical and creative process. My acknowledgements to him go much beyond his highly precious contribution to this Dossier.

In this Dossier we have chosen to respect the authors' choice about the order in Japanese names. The essays by Takashi Morishita, Bruce Baird and Katja Centonze, comply to the surname name convention. The introduction and the essays by Stephen Barber and Maria Pia D'Orazi, and connected bibliographical indications, use the Western standard (name surname).

As for the transliteration, our choice was to use the standard in English language (butoh for butō or butô) in all the essays, except for bibliographical indications to essays and books that use different transcriptions.

<sup>20</sup> Among Barber's books: *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs*, London & Boston, Faber and Faber, 1993; *Artaud: Terminal Curses. The Notebooks 1945-1948*, Chicago University Press, Solar series, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Pia D'Orazi has recently curated the Italian edition of Akira Kasai, *Un libro chiamato corpo*, Dublin, Ardigiland, 2016 [*Karada to iu shomotsu* (A book named body), Tokyo, Shoshi Yamada, 2011].

Akira Kasai  
THE AWARENESS OF THE *DIVINE*  
IN TATSUMI HIJIKATA<sup>1</sup>

A quiet beast's caution  
a maiden's deliberate truthfulness  
a king's arrogance  
a sigh putting on make up.  
He has the clear vitality of a Japanese boy  
and an old lady's soft muscles,  
without weight like a dog's fleeting shadow,  
he uses words like striking lighting,  
his voice sounds like a storyteller's,  
even if he drinks till he collapses the light in his eyes stays bright  
in one instant the colour in his eyes imperceptibly moves and changes,  
to generate a second of thought his pupils twitch in all directions,  
and when nobody's there he sings at the top of his voice.  
In the shadow of his body he keeps a hidden art  
he skilfully steals the word of animals,  
he smiles in mockery of the gods,  
but in front of the *fish in the front* he bows his head.  
So long ago did the feeling of hate evaporate...

...and in the end, whatever words I may use, it will always be impossible for me to describe Tatsumi Hijikata.

I saw Hijikata for the first time in 1963 at Sōgetsu Hall in the *Kōreikan shigaku* recital by Masaki Dōmoto. At the time I was

<sup>1</sup> By courtesy of the author, we here present the English version of the text by Akira Kasai, *Tatsumi Hijikata no (kami) Ishiki*, published in *Tatsumi Hijikata Zenshū* (Tatsumi Hijikata, Complete Works), Tokyo, Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2016. My acknowledgements to Maria Pia D'Orazi, contact person for Kasai in Italy, and to the translators Daisuke Kurihara and Gabriella Sacco. [Ed.]

focusing on the study of modern dance under the guidance of Takaya Eguchi; I went to see the performance because I was told that Jean Neveau, who was my pantomime teacher, would be on stage with Hijikata.

On stage there was a bare-chested man with black trousers, short hair shaved on the sides; the only sound in the hall was the sticky noise his body produced every time he fell on the synthetic floor.

What I was seeing was something I had never seen in the twenty years before then. Something that I could only define as *pure movement*, even extraneous to any kind of dance movement, something from which all meaning and every image had been cancelled. The moment he entered my visual field this *pure movement* like sharp blade pierced my body which until then had been impregnated by the word. This manifestation of purity went beyond the expressions I later learned from Hijikata himself: *rose colored dance, darkness, dream of an embryo, step of the person sentenced to death, Tōhoku, heresy of heresy, corpse who stays standing with all its strength*.

The *instantaneousness* of the movement was such that it didn't allow imitations, reproductions, revisions: it couldn't even be made a subject of study because later, despite my long association with Hijikata, he never showed me again what he did during that first performance. In that *pure movement* life and death, assertion and denial kept their precarious balance on the sides of the same scale.

In *Anma*, performed again in Sōgetsu Hall in the autumn of that same year, the solemnity of *pure movement* found its solid base in the structure; dissected and crystallised images of fragments of Japan materialised on the tatamis placed directly on the stage: the Tōhoku, hens, men wearing *juban* [traditional undergarments] inside out, improvised baseball matches among friends, a musician playing incredibly long violin strings, old women playing shamisen...

Until his last theatre play, *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin: nikutai no hanran* (Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Rebellion of the body) performed in 1968 at Nihon Seinenkan, the original image of Japan continued to flow in Hijikata like a karstic stream. We could define it as a struggle between the image of the word in the Japanese language and Hijikata's body. We find here Hijikata's dandyism in his ambiguous relationship with the word – something that allowed him to communicate in daily life but that he avoided using as a simple tool to

convey meanings. The result of this struggle manifested clearly in the shape of dance but was also crystallised in a book published in 1983, *Yameru maihime* (The Ailing Dancer): essentially it is a butoh space realised through the word.

«See, insects live even without breathing. Look at that lopsided insect coming this way. It must be some being trapped in one of his reincarnations».

There is no doubt that the book beginning with these words was written in Japanese, yet the text ends up excluding every meaning attributed to the language to this day; if we add the fact that it is written in the language of peasants we'll see that the reader can end up in a peculiar dimension. It is Hijikata's *pure movement* that seems to infuse new life into the Japanese language.

I danced in *La maison de Monsieur Shibusawa* performed in 1965 at Sennichidani Kōkaidō and the following year in *Tomato* at Kinokuniya Hall: that's when I danced for the first time on Hijikata's choreography. Later his method became the basis of my choreography work: it was about cutting «the air drenched in blood» with one's body made blade. Every slightest movement was defined and definitive: it was the precision of somebody dissecting a fish that's still alive. That was the first pure movement I received from the outside. Hijikata said: «when that *person* appears in the village, the blacksmith goes back to being a blacksmith, the priest goes back to being a priest, the cook goes back to being a cook: there is no other choice».

The *person* in question must be the dancer. Besides, Hijikata's imagery contains the pair *craftsman – god*. The *god* that Hijikata met in this world was almost a *craftsman*. When the dancer appears, the *gods* can do nothing else than regain their original form. It is the gods who sacrifice the existing to the form. I remember that one evening Hijikata and myself were alone in Meguro's studio when suddenly the phone rang. He said to me: «Shibusawa is coming...». Accidentally at that moment there was nothing to drink, it was past midnight. Hijikata quickly washed his face and grabbed a 10.000 yen note saying: «Shibusawa is God, Shibusawa is God...». «What?» I replied, but the conversation ended there. Half an hour later Hijikata made the wine seller who lived nearby get out of bed and came back with a bottle of Johnnie Walker black label.

Somewhere Hijikata has written: «the refined savagery of a teenage craftsman named Shibusawa». The phrase «teenage craftsman» can also become «teenage emperor» or «teenage god». Later, while spending time at Meguro's studio, I couldn't help letting this thought rise inside of me: the thought that sooner or later the pure movement flowing out of Hijikata would transform into form and method inside of me.

Bruce Baird

DANCING IN AN ARCHIVE  
OF (DIGITAL) EVOCATION

In May of 1959, the founder of butoh, Hijikata Tatsumi, exploded onto the dance scene in a dance portraying an older man having sex with a younger man, and then causing the younger man to kill a chicken<sup>1</sup>. In a subsequent manifesto, Hijikata argued that his dance «must spout blood»<sup>2</sup>. This was clearly a dance born from the desire of its performers to stage undeniably striking performances. In time, photographic and filmic records of butoh performances have spread far and wide and in many cases been more widely viewed than the performances themselves. Those powerful photographic and filmic images have come, in turn, to set expectations for what butoh is and should be. A counter force has also shaped butoh. Although less well known, the dancers have sought to use the power of words and images to evoke movements and alter their own performances. Linking the power of the images of butoh to the various evocative powers that the dancers used in creating butoh is crucial for a more full understanding of butoh and for an understanding of how butoh itself has been understood overtime.

Hijikata was a ringleader of a small group of dancers who sought new possibilities in bodily expression in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Early performances appropriated idioms from Fluxus, neo-Dadaism, surrealism, and happenings. Eventually, Hijikata began to go beyond simply creating powerful images, and began to consider how to use

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this dance, see my *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh: Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012, especially Chapter 2 *Forbidden Eros and Evading Force*.

<sup>2</sup> Hijikata Tatsumi, *Inner Material/Material*, translated by Nanako Kurihara, «TDR», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 36-42 (39).

words, images and evocation in creating his own dance. This time, he was exploring not only about how to move the audience, but also how to move the dancer as well. To oversimplify a complex issue (and one that is treated in more detail elsewhere in this issue), Hijikata embarked on quest to generate and modify dance movements through the use of various kinds of imagery and evocative work<sup>3</sup>. I prefer the umbrella term «Hijikata Method» for this loose constellation of experiments, with the proviso that calling it a «method» overstates the extent to which Hijikata sought to organize these experiments into a formal method.

Everything began with observation, and few people in the world were better and more minute observers of the world than Hijikata. He sought to discover new sources for movements, but also to understand himself and the ways he had been formed and socialized. He observed people and animals, but also reproductions of art works in art magazines. The next step was collection and record keeping. He (or a scribe) would make notes and sketches in notebooks, and also cut out reproductions of paintings, sculptures, and other art forms, and paste them in scrapbooks (and make further notations about them). Finally came transmission. In dance classes, he would demonstrate movements, and then tell and show how to modify them in various ways. He might begin with a step, pose, or simple etude. Then he would tell his dancers what to imagine while doing this movement. He might use a picture culled from an art magazine while doing this and tell them to mimic a shape or capture a tone or quality from the image. He might instruct the dancers to imagine doing the step as different characters, in different settings, to different onomatopoeic sounds, or to different smells. Or he might engage the dancers in a surrealist preparation for the role, in which they would imagine all sorts of strange things like flowers blooming inside their chests, their shoulders solidifying into glass and then shattering, or artists living inside their stomachs. At each moment along the way, he would demonstrate to them how the imagination should alter their movement. Interestingly, the material the dancers were expected to master was overwhelming, so with his encourage-

<sup>3</sup> For a full treatment of this transformation, see *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh*, cit., especially Chapter 5 *My Mother Tied Me on Her Back: Story of Smallpox*.

ment, the dancers brought along their own notebooks and furiously took their own notes.

Hijikata would then organize these movements into careful choreography. However, this mentally and physically structured choreography did not sit well with all the dancers, who were used to the prior more chaotic art form. Many of them claimed that improvisation was the only way to do butoh. So there was a split between the performers who primarily practice improvisation and the ones who created highly structured dances employing a dizzying array of visual, aural, tactile, gustatorial, and olfactorial imagery prompts. Often the audiences were unaware of this use of imagery and assumed that all dances were improvisational. And in fact, the early photographic collections and filmic records of butoh were mostly concerned with how bizarre the performances were. Photographic collections such as Hanaga Mitsutoshi, *The Butoh* (1983); Heardter and Kawai, *Die Rebellion des Körpers* (1985); Marc Holborn, *Butô: Dance of the Dark Soul* (1987); Asbestos-kan, *Body on the Edge of Crisis* (1987), and Viala and Masson-Sekine, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (1988), provided striking images, background essays and interviews with the dancers, but little sense about the craft of the dancers or how they went about creating their dances. Similarly, films and videos such as Edin Velez, *Dance of Darkness* (1989); Michael Blackwood, *Body on the Edge of Crisis* (1990); and Chris Bollard and Richard Moore, *Butoh: Piercing the Mask* (1991) featured visually jarring dances and interviews with dancers and critics, but again little indication about how the dances were created.

This state of affairs began to change when one of Hijikata's later dance students, Mikami Kayo, published her book *Utsuwa toshite noshintai: Ankoku butô gihô e no apurôchi* (Body as Receptacle: An Approach to the Techniques of Ankoku Butoh) (1993), which was an in-depth analysis of Hijikata's choreographic methods<sup>4</sup>. Mikami outlined a taxonomy of movements and explained the ways that the movements fit together into longer sequences. The second half of Mikami's book contained the transcriptions of her own notebooks she had taken during

<sup>4</sup> Mikami Kayo, *Utsuwa toshite noshintai: Ankoku butô gihô e no apurôchi* (Body as Receptacle: An Approach to the Techniques of Ankoku Butô), Tokyo, ANZ-Do, 1993. For an English translation, see Kayo Mikami, *The Body as a Vessel*, Birchington, UK, Ozaru Books, 2016.

rehearsals with Hijikata (supplemented by notes from other dancers). It also contained some drawings, but without a demonstration of the movements and the way that Hijikata understood a particular sequence of words to create or alter a movement, it was impossible get any idea of what her notes referred to. But for the first time, scholars and observers began to understand how Hijikata and many other butoh choreographers in his lineage were able to achieve the effects they desired on stage.

The year 1998, was a watershed for the study of butoh, with three important events (two of which happened within two days, January 21 and 23). The first was the publication of Hijikata's collected works. This two-volume set collected nearly all of Hijikata's writing into one place (including 120 pages of unpublished materials). It also contained approximately 95 pages of what were called «butoh-fu» or «butoh notation». This «butoh notation» was subdivided into several categories. The first was 14 pages of transcribed typeset notes (similar to those in Mikami's book). These were followed by 40 pages of facsimile reproductions of handwritten notebooks (which included drawings and sketches, again similar to Mikami's notes). Finally came 44 pages of photographic reproductions of scrapbooks<sup>5</sup>. In the scrapbooks, Hijikata had cut out paintings from arts magazines and taped or glued them into a notebook, and then written (or had a scribe write) notes around pictures (usually detailing a pose, quality, or costume to be taken from a painting)<sup>6</sup>. People now had relatively direct access to the notebooks and scrapbooks and thus more clues about how Hijikata went about creating his performances.

The collected works were followed two days later by Waguri Yukio's *Butô Kaden* (Butô Flower Transmission), CD-ROM (1998)<sup>7</sup>. Waguri was a student of Hijikata's from 1972-1979, and then later he

<sup>5</sup> Hijikata Tatsumi, *Hijikata Tatsumi Zenshû* (The Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi) (hereafter HTZ), edited by Tanemura Suehiro et al., Tokyo, Kawade Shobô, 1998, 2, pp. 159-254.

<sup>6</sup> For an in depth analysis of the scrapbooks, see Kurt Wurml, *The power of image: Hijikata Tatsumi's scrapbooks and the art of butô*, PhD Dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Waguri Yukio, *Butô Kaden*, CD-ROM and Booklet, Tokushima, Justsystem, 1998. It is currently available as DVD-ROM and also an app. See <[http://www.otsukimi.net/koz/e\\_bk\\_outline.html](http://www.otsukimi.net/koz/e_bk_outline.html)>.

founded the Kozensha butoh troupe. His CD-ROM was packaged with a booklet, *Butô-fu* (Butô Notation). Waguri's CD-ROM contained fewer movements and imagery exercises (88 in total) than either Mikami or the collected works, but featured small video clips of him and other dancers performing the movements or sequences, so one could get an actual feeling for what the movement would have looked like on stage, or how the imagery work lead to a particular movement. Unlike, Mikami, there was relatively little attempt to explain how the movements fit together into a larger whole, but Waguri tried to organize the movements thematically to highlight several of Hijikata's concerns. The movements and photos were connected with hyperlinks so that the viewer could bounce from one movement to a related movement. Waguri noted that each dancer took different notes, and he was clear that his work was but one interpretation of Hijikata's methods (rather than being a definitive presentation)<sup>8</sup>.

A brief detour is necessary to examine this term «butoh-fu» (butoh-notation) (used both in the collected works and in Waguri's CD-ROM and booklet), which is a bit of a misnomer. The notebooks (by the dancers, Hijikata, and his scribes) contain various notes and sketches including scene descriptions, sequences of movements, and movement diagrams. The scrapbooks contained cut-out photos of various art works, written imagery exercises, and various ideas about costumes, and poses. For example, in the scrapbook entitled «Melting Candy» (Nadare ame), beside a cut-out of the 1917/18 Klimt painting, *The Bride*, Hijikata's scribe has penned: «There are several faces in the shawl; movement which traces ..... one more fleshification which captures these»<sup>9</sup>. As Waguri observed, this is not the kind of notation which would allow anyone to restage these movements, such as musical notation, or Laban notation, although someone who had trained with Hijikata could reproduce some portion of the movements<sup>10</sup>. Rather, the notes were simply a way for Hijikata to remember an idea, or they anticipate asking the

<sup>8</sup> See Waguri Yukio, *Butô Kaden*, cit., «Analysis» Disc A.

<sup>9</sup> *Htz* 2, p. 228.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the differences between butoh-notation and other kinds of notation, see Waguri Yukio, Waguri Yohana and Kuniyoshi Kazuko, *Butô-fu as Dance Notation in Butô-fu*, Booklet accompanying Waguri Yukio, *Butô Kaden*, CD-ROM and Booklet, cit., p. 18.

dancer to adopt pose or facial expression, or asking the dancer to use an atmospheric element from this painting as an imagery prompt to alter a movement. Or in the case of the dancer's own notebooks, they were notes for the dancer to remember what she had been taught in the overwhelming wash of words and images in the studio.

Finally in 1998, The Keio University Art Center (original English translation, «Research Center for Arts and Arts Administration, Keio University») received a consignment of Hijikata's materials from Hijikata's wife Motofuji Akiko. By chance a professor at Keio University knew Motofuji and convinced her to consign to the University her collection of materials, which she was having trouble storing and managing herself. The archivists were interested in butoh, but even more interested in exploring digital archiving strategies (for which they had received a large grant from the Japanese government)<sup>11</sup>.

We might linger over the English translation «Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration». The Arts Center had two main goals. The first stemmed from the recognition that the archive was housed in a university and thus the center had the desire to use all the knowledge-gathering and knowledge-disseminating resources of the university as they dealt with the corpus. They explicitly called themselves a «research center», thereby acknowledging that they would not merely store materials for others to use, but also track the outside research about the corpus, and analyze the materials themselves and produce original research about them<sup>12</sup>. The addition of the concept of «arts administration» acknowledged the role of the Arts Center within a web

<sup>11</sup> See Sumi Yôichi, *Genetic Archive: Basic Historical Concepts for Construction*, in *Genetic Archive Engine: Hijikata Tatsumi Dancing in a Digital Forest*, Tokyo, Research Center for the Arts and Art Administration, Keio University, 2000, pp. 3-10 (3). The Arts Center did hire Hijikata's long-time assistant, Morishita Takashi, who had a specific interest in butoh. He had worked with Hijikata since the early 1970's, and even taken dictation on some of Hijikata's notebooks and scrapbooks. He had already been working with Motofuji to organize Hijikata's materials and helped in founding the Hijikata Tatsumi Memorial Archive in 1987.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the «research archive» within the context of the larger university, see Maeda Fujio, *Reconstructing an Artistic Performance: Tatsumi Hijikata Archives and the Research Archive System*, in *Barairo dansu no ikonoroji: Hijikata Tatsumi wo saikôchiku suru* (The Iconology of Rose-colored Dance: Reconstructing Tatsumi Hijikata), edited by Sumi Yôichi et al., Tokyo, Research Center for the Arts and Art Administration, Keio University, 2000, pp. 34-45 (35).

of museums, galleries, and other organs for which art is an activity to be administered.

One can basically understand the second impulse of the digital archivists by imagining that it would be useful to have corpus specific searchability for Hijikata's entire oeuvre or a corpus specific set of search terms. There is not much point in having Hijikata's name turn up in a library database (or internet) search for the term «dog» or «candy». Most users would find this to be an annoying distraction. However, Hijikata once equated feeling jealous of a dog that was being beaten by children with the ability to dance well<sup>13</sup>. Similarly, he entitled a scrapbook «Melting Candy». So if the archive could digitize all of Hijikata's notebooks, photographs, films and essays, and put key word tags on the photographs and films that might have something to do with «dog» or «candy» then researchers could easily compare all the uses of the word «dog» or «candy» across Hijikata's entire output to see if they could come up with a better understanding of what Hijikata had in mind when he talked about a crippled dog or melting candy<sup>14</sup>. (Ideally, this would be similar to the way that one can now compare the use of terms across James Joyce's output because of the online availability of searchable texts such as *Finnegans Wake*<sup>15</sup>). The archive also anticipated the problem of photographs and filmstrips which might not come with their own keywords (unlike essays), so they invited interactions with outside researchers who could supply them with key words that they could tag to individual items in the collection. Because of financial concerns and copyright reasons, the archive has not been able to provide the level of access implicit in the initial impulse (short of visiting the actual archive). However, the archive has still been important for transforming how scholars have understood butoh.

<sup>13</sup> For Hijikata on the connection between a wounded dog and butoh, see *From Being jealous of a Dog's Vein*, translated by Kurihara Nanako, «TDR», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 56-59. For my own analysis of this passage, see Baird, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh*, cit., pp. 131-134.

<sup>14</sup> Maeda Fujio, *Reconstructing an Artistic performance: Tatsumi Hijikata archives and the research archive system*, cit., pp. 42-44.

<sup>15</sup> See «Index to Finnegans Wake», <[http://caitlain.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=66&Itemid=53](http://caitlain.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66&Itemid=53)>.

Since Benjamin's influential essay on the ways mechanical reproducibility changes the experience of art, scholars have been more attentive to the ways in which the form of an art matters. In this case, the archive has necessarily been more focused on the things that are easy to reproduce mechanically and thus easy to archive than those parts of artistic practice that do not lend themselves to archiving as readily. Namely, the archive has had more traction with photographs and notebooks/scrapbooks, than it has with the vagaries of live performance. This has led to the archive cooperating in the publication (predominantly with museums) of collections of essays accompanied by photographs, posters, and other ephemera of Hijikata's practice, such as tickets, programs, and even reproductions of the art works in Hijikata's private collection that were created by other artists<sup>16</sup>. These exhibition catalogues (sponsored in part by major art museums) had the effect of locating Hijikata firmly with the wider art world of surrealism, neo-Dadaism, conceptual art, poetry, reportage art, and post-war photography, but did relatively little to elucidate the contours of Hijikata's particular interventions in these worlds. The archive also concentrated on the information about Hijikata that could be revealed from the notebooks and scrapbooks. To be sure, the archive has at its disposal several film recordings of Hijikata's dances, but even then, the archive has not made them widely available, and researchers have been forced to visit the archive in order to see them.

Over time, the archive has expanded its activities. One guiding principle of the archive was the «genetic archive engine». This imagines the archive not just as a repository for materials, but also imagines that the archive can play a role in tracing a genetics of artistic practice. However, again, this was a more viable strategy for analyzing the physical materials that the archive possessed than it was for analyzing the dances themselves. One particular example was the publication of a booklet ostensibly about the 1965 *Rose-colored Dance*. In it, an archivist traced usage of thematic elements within the poster for the dance<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> The predecessor to the Keio University Art Center, the Hijikata Tatsumi Memorial Archive (founded in 1987), collaborated with the Akita Senshu Museum of Art in 1991 and the Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art in 1997 on exhibition catalogues. Both contain similar elements, performance photographs, posters and invitations, and works by other artists in Hijikata's private collection.

<sup>17</sup> A full color reproduction of the poster can be found in David Goodman,

In this evolution, in 1964, neo-Dada painter and set designer Nakanishi Natsuyuki was experimenting with how colors complement and contrast with each other. He created a painting in which he reproduced the figures of Gabrielle d'Estrees and her sister the Duchess of Villars from the famous Fontainebleau painting *Gabrielle d'Estrées et une de ses soeurs* (~1594) but covered their faces with pink and green paint. When the influential graphic designer and illustrator Yokoo Tadanori made the poster for the dance, he borrowed the figures and the coloring in their faces, placed them within the ovals normally used for household portraits of the Emperor and Empress, and depicted Gabrielle d'Estrees' lowered fingers covered with a similar pink paint as if she had just dipped her fingertips into a can of Akebono brand pink salmon<sup>18</sup>. Sometime in 1965 or 1966, when Nakanishi revisited the theme, he retained Yokoo's ovals around the two figures and the pink paint on d'Estrees' fingertips, but jettisoned the can of salmon. Through this "genetic" evolution, we can see an idea that started with Nakanishi, traveled to Yokoo, and then went back to Nakanishi, but retained traces (genetic material?) of Yokoo's intervention.

However, there is a sense, to give credit where credit is due, that the professional archive was merely picking up on something that the non-professional archivists at Hijikata Tatsumi Memorial Archive had already been doing. A 1997 museum catalogue had already noted the cross fertilization in evolution in the themes in Nakanishi and Yokoo's paintings and poster. The exhibition catalogue editors, Morishita Takashi and Yamazaki Yôko included Yokoo and Nakanishi's work with a brief explanation of the temporal trajectory from Nakanishi to Yokoo and back to Nakanishi<sup>19</sup>. Then later they included a reproduction of Nakanishi's 1968 photographic collage, in which Nakanishi took the elements from Cezanne's «The Card Players» and

*Angura: Posters of the Japanese Avant-garde*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999, p. 72. For the analysis, see Yanai Yasuhiro, *Sakuhin kaisetsu* (Explanation of the Works), translated by Bruce Baird, in *Barairo dansu no ikonoroji: Hijikata Tatsumi wo saikôchiku suru* (The Iconology of Rose-colored Dance: Reconstructing Tatsumi Hijikata), cit., pp. 25-31.

<sup>18</sup> Yokoo's choice to have d'Estrees' fingers dipped into pink salmon transformed the fertility symbol of the original into explicit female-female homoerotic imagery.

<sup>19</sup> Morishita Takashi and Yamazaki Yôko (edited by), *Bijutsu to butô no Hijikata Tatsumi ten*, Itô, Shizuoka, Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art, 1998, p. 20.

Millet's «The Evening Prayer» which he had included in his variation on Yokoo's variation and restaged them using collage photographs of people breathing through gas masks<sup>20</sup>.

Now, it will be easily seen that the analysis tells us much more about Nakanishi's paintings and Yokoo's poster than it does about Hijikata's dance. This again highlights the difficulty that the archive had dealing with the dances in and of themselves, rather than physical objects such as paintings and notebooks. However, archivist Morishita Takashi expands outward from the hint provided by Yanai to write about Hijikata's strategy to «intermix two opposing images» and makes explicit the connection between genetics and sexual contact to speak of «a butô dancer and an artist violat[ing] each other»<sup>21</sup>. Thus we see the archivist creating a reading of Hijikata's general artistic practice from the evidence provided by a specific exchange that Hijikata facilitated. We can expand on this to speculate that Hijikata may have appropriated his technique for pulling poses and qualities from paintings for reproduction in his dances, in part, from Nakanishi's technique for taking poses from paintings and reproducing them in his own subsequent art works.

Because butoh performances often happened in small theaters in dim lighting, there was a tendency for photographers to use black and white film to capture the performances in sub-optimal light. This use of photographs stripped the color from the performances, and thus made the performances seem more serious and classical than they would have seemed to the actual audiences. This tendency was exacerbated by the photographers themselves when they could have done differently. Hosoe Eiko's wildly influential *Kamaitachi* (Sickle-Weasel) was largely shot outdoors in natural light. However, Hosoe chose to shoot in black and white rather than in color. Lost was the lush greenery of the leaves, the brightly colored flowers, the yellow of the hanging stocks of ripened rice,

<sup>20</sup> Idem, p. 34, and for the explicit details about Cezanne, and Millet, compare with the much fuller and more detailed later account by the professional archivist/curator Yanai Yasuhiro, *Sakuhin kaisetsu*, cit., p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Morishita Takashi, *Hijikata Tatsumi no butô to Barairo dansu* (Tatsumi Hijikata's Butoh and Rose-colored Dance), translated by Bruce Baird, in *Barairo dansu no ikonoroji: Hijikata Tatsumi wo saikôchiku suru* (The Iconology of Rose-colored Dance: Reconstructing Tatsumi Hijikata), cit., p. 7.

the brown of the clods, and the colors of the kimono and yukata that the subjects wore. In time, the archive began to correct the black and white focus in butoh photography by including color photographs as well. In 2005, the archive (in collaboration with the Okamoto Taro Museum of Art) published a 200-page exhibition catalogue which for the first time featured color photographs of Hijikata performances. Restored were the mottled reds, pale pinks, oranges, bright purples, greens, and blues of the performances from 1972 and beyond. Then later, the archive was able to extend this intervention back in time by publishing a spread of color photographs for the 1968 piece *Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People: Rebellion of the Body* in the pamphlet *Hijikata Tatsumi's Rebellion of the Body; Imagery and Documents of Butoh 1968*<sup>22</sup>.

There has been a danger in the archive as well. Some butoh artists have criticized the archive for the focus on Hijikata's use of notebooks and butoh notation. Proponents of the improvisation faction of butoh, and Tanaka Min in particular, have argued that a focus on dance notation serves to codify a practice that Hijikata intended to be quite fluid and experimental at every turn<sup>23</sup>. In part, this reflects the long-term tendency of the archive towards the written and visual material. Despite the existence of visual, verbal, aural, tactile, and olfactorial elements in Hijikata's transmission practice, the archive has continued to base their analysis in the original term butoh-fu (butoh notation), but begun to call Hijikata's activities «notational butoh».

Whether in response to this criticism, or because of the limitations in the prior sources (Mikami's book was limited to written descriptions of imagery exercises, and Waguri's CD-ROM contained only a relatively small number of Hijikata's exercises), the archive has begun to try to bridge the gap between the materials and the dances themselves. The archive brought in dancers including Waguri himself, Kobayashi Saga, and Yamamoto Moe to demonstrate movements and explain the imagery exercises used to achieve them. Again, perhaps because of lack of

<sup>22</sup> *Rebellion of the Body; Imagery and Documents of Butoh 1968*, edited by Maeda Fujio et al., Tokyo, Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration, Keio University, 2009, pp. 46-47. The archivists were also able to ascertain through photographic evidence that the dance contained slightly different scenes and costumes on the two different nights. See, *Assemblage: Rebellion of the Body*, pp. 9-27.

<sup>23</sup> Tanaka Min, personal conversation.

resources, the archive has not been as forthcoming with the results of these interviews as one might have liked, but eventually they resulted in a non-circulating DVD-ROM, «Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh» (2008), which explained Hijikata's working method and featured clips of dancers performing movements<sup>24</sup>.

Two recent activities show how much the archive has transformed over the years. The first of these is the publication in 2015 of a bilingual dance script for Hijikata's dance *Costume en Face* (with Ugly Duckling Press)<sup>25</sup>. The *Costume en Face* booklet consists of the notebook Yamamoto Moe wrote for the movements in the dance with the same name. It is the closest thing we have to an actual script for a Hijikata dance (although the introduction notes that there were changes made between the compilation of this notebook and the actual performance, and Yamamoto was not technically able to dance all of the movements listed in this booklet)<sup>26</sup>. Happily, in 2015, *Costume en Face* was used by Paul Lazar and Annie-B Parson of Big Dance Theater to create an original dance piece, *Resplendent Shimmering Topaz Waterfall*. Lazar and Parson had no knowledge of any Hijikata's actual dances and only watched segments of the original dance hours before the premier, so the dance was based solely on the process of associations evoked by Hijikata's words (as recorded by Yamamoto).

Another outcome perhaps related to the criticism that the archive was in danger of freezing Hijikata's practice was the institution of a series of roundtable discussions featuring dancers from different points in Hijikata's career. These round-table discussions (featuring dancers such as Seisaku, and Ishide Takuya) have provided a more

<sup>24</sup> *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh* DVD-ROM, Hijikata Tatsumi Archive, RCAA and Research Institute for Digital Media and Content, Keio University, 2008. Full disclosure, I served as the narrator for some segments of the English version of this DVD.

<sup>25</sup> Yamamoto Moe and Hijikata Tatsumi, *Costume en Face: A Primer of Darkness for Young Boys and Girls*, translated by Sawako Nakayasu, Brooklyn, NY, Ugly Duckling Press, 2015; but see also the publication of an expanded version of the prior work of the archive, Morishita Takashi, *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh. An Innovative Method for Butoh Creation*, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2015, pp. 49-60.

<sup>26</sup> Morishita Takashi, *Introduction*, in Yamamoto Moe, *Costume en Face*, cit., p. 9.

granular view of Hijikata's artistic practice era by era and moment by moment.

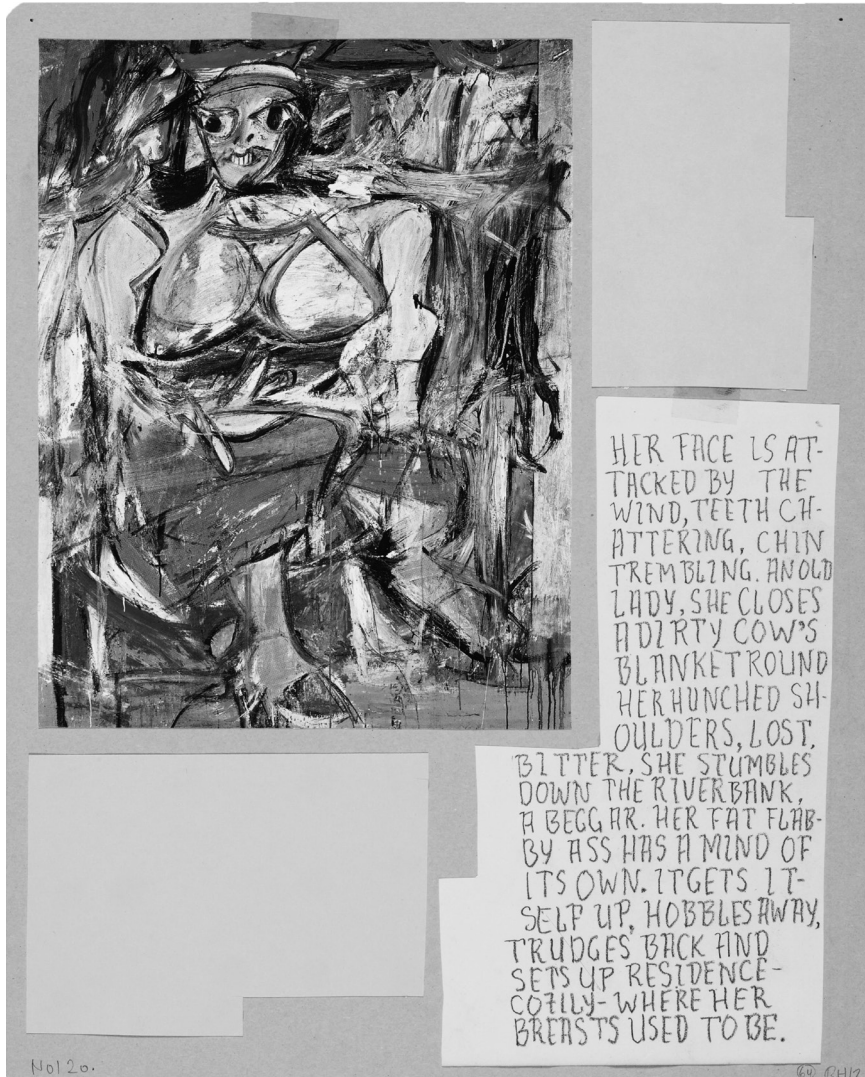
Whatever the case about the limitations of or dangers inherent in the archive, as with Big Dance Theater, artists have begun to use the archive in all sorts of interesting ways. The visual artist Richard Hawkins created a series of collages, «Ankoku Series» (2012), that took their inspiration in layout and/or themes from Hijikata's collage-style scrapbooks<sup>27</sup>. In Hijikata's «Melting Candy» scrapbook, one page, has a black and white cut-out in the upper left hand corner of William De Koonig's *Woman, I* (1950-1952 – this painting itself was a product of collage techniques). Hijikata (or a scribe) made sketches of what appears to be an arm and a torso, and scrawled in the remaining three-quarters of the paper several opaque notes such as

«Large nurse hat»  
 «From vapor/steam woman»  
 «The geisha's Cupid night after being a geisha»  
 «Affix this expression to the old woman who is angry»  
 «[do the] Mallard lowly»  
 «This hair style, important»  
 [Illegible – Bladder/arm/leg/light?] «that descends over and over (rustling)»  
 «Bacon's beard which can sit»  
 «Dragonfly-Maya Rökkou»  
 «Last»  
 «Pink—important»<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See Richard Hawkins interviewed by John Arthur Peetz, *Richard Hawkins*, «ArtForum», February 29, 2012, <<http://artforum.com/words/id=30413>> and Agnieszka Gratza, «Richard Hawkins: Tate Liverpool» *ArtForum* nd. <<http://artforum.com/picks/id=45678>>.

<sup>28</sup> See *HTZ 2*: 231. My thanks to Yuki Yoshimura and Richard Hawkins' translator, Taka Yamamoto, for assistance in decoding Hijikata's handwriting. See also Richard Hawkins, *Richard Hawkins: A Talk as Part of Theory of Achievement*, Yale Union, Portland, Oregon, Aug. 2, 2015 [unpublished presentation].





Richard Hawkins, *Ankoku 64 (Woman - ass in front)*, 2012,  
Collage, 18 1/8 x 15 1/2 x 1 inches (46 x 39.4 x 2.5 cm) (RHw.291),  
courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

Usually an arrow or line connects one of these notes to a spot on the painting or another note. We might presume that «Large Nurse Hat» indicates a possible hint for a costume for a character in a dance, and «Affix this expression to the old woman who is angry» requires the dancer to adopt the expression of de Koonig's woman at a certain point in a dance.

In *Ankoku 64 (Woman – ass in front)*, Hawkins has positioned a full color version of de Koonig's painting in roughly the same spot on the paper, and substituted in a longer more unified hand-written text (all in capital letters):

Her face is attacked by the wind, teeth chattering, chin trembling. An old lady, she closes a dirty cow's blanket round her hunched shoulders, lost. Bitter, she stumbles down the riverbank. A Beggar. Her fat flabby ass has a mind of its own. It gets itself up, hobbles away, trudges back and sets up resident cozily where her breasts used to be<sup>29</sup>.

Immediately one realizes that Hawkins is substituting poetic text for Hijikata's notes, but these texts are not entirely divorced from Hijikata's notes. In Hawkin's *Ankoku 65 (Woman – ass in front)*, we see a differently colored print of the de Koonig painting located in a different place on the paper (as well as de Koonig's *Woman, II*) with a large Japanese calligraphic «Vapor Woman» (Yuge no onna), and a small gloss in English «A Woman made of Steam»<sup>30</sup>. Thus we see that even if this could not be called a direct translation, in *Ankoku 64*, Hawkins has captured Hijikata's preoccupation with one bodily part substituting for another, and in *Ankoku 65*, Hawkins has echoed Hijikata's concern with steam, mist, vapor and other atmospheric elements that can entwine with, mix with, and obscure other things.

The American modern dancer Trajal Harrell has begun a decade long project similarly based on Hijikata and Ohno's methods called «In One Step are a Thousand Animals». Harrell has always been

<sup>29</sup> See Richard Hawkins, «Ankoku 64 (Woman – ass in front)» Collage, 2012, Green Naftali Gallery, <<http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/richard-hawkins3#11>>.

<sup>30</sup> See Richard Hawkins, «Ankoku 65 (Woman – ass in front)» Collage, 2012, Green Naftali Gallery, <<http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/richard-hawkins3#16>>.

prone to mixing genres – a recent project was to think about Judson Dance Theater and Harlem voguing. He visited the Art Center and saw Hijikata's 1985 *Tohoku Kabuki Plan IV* (a work which owes much of its aesthetic to the fashion runway) and was blown away by it. He also looked through Hijikata's notebooks and scrapbooks and was taken with the way that Hijikata was looking at so many artists across so many times and places. He began to get a sense (as can be seen from the title of his project) about the ways that Hijikata would fill up movements with so many evocative words and images in order to help the dancers deepen the affective power of the performance. Thus far, Harrell's project has resulted in several performances such as *Used, Abused and Hung out to Dry* (which was an attempt to vogue Hijikata)<sup>31</sup>; *The Return of La Argentina* (a «fictional archiving of Kazuo Ohno's renowned solo piece *Admiring La Argentina*»); *In the Mood for Frankie* (a mediation on Hijikata's principal danseuse Ashikawa Yoko, and modern dance choreographer Katherine Dunham)<sup>32</sup>; and *The Ghost of Montpellier Meets the Samurai* (based on the premise that Ellen Stewart of La Mama contrives to get Hijikata Tatsumi and *nouvelle danse* choreographer Dominique Bagouet to meet in Manhattan and create a dance together)<sup>33</sup>.

Harrell's recognition of Hijikata's attempt to fill one step with a thousand animals, nicely returns us to Hijikata's method of harnessing the power of evocative language and images to generate novel dance steps himself and to help his dancers modify dance steps and increase the power of the dances. Surely Hijikata's attempts to create and fill his own movements must stem from a desire to try to engage his dancers in the same way he engaged his audience, and from a realization of the various techniques used by other artists who sought to move people. It has taken some time for the full details of his artistic experiments to reach the wider world, and at times butoh has been in danger of being

<sup>31</sup> Brian Siebert, *Glimpses of a Rave; Spasms of Distress: Trajal Harrell at the Museum of Modern Art*, «New York Times», 14 February 2013, p. C16.

<sup>32</sup> «Trajal Harrell: In One Step are a Thousand Animals», Museum of Modern Art, <<http://www.moma.org/calendar/performance/1451?locale=en>>.

<sup>33</sup> Sheila Regan, *Review: Harrell's 'Ghost' pays tribute to three giants of contemporary dance*, «Star Tribune», March 12, 2016, <<http://www.startribune.com/harrell-s-ghost-pays-tribute-to-3-giants-of-contemporary-dance/371882211/>>.

reduced to striking images (devoid of any context or technique), or to just another attempt at dance notation, rather than people understanding the full visual, aural, and tactile range of Hijikata's experiments in evocation. In part, this has happened because images and the written word are more storable and portable than the performances themselves. The principle archive of Hijikata, the Keio University Art Center, has not always skirted these dangers successfully, but the archivists have always been committed to basic research to understand Hijikata more fully, and the archive has evolved over time to answer the needs of that research. As one can see by looking at the current activities of the archive, and at the new visual and performing arts coming out of those activities, the archive is helping the world of butoh and its offshoots be every bit as alive as the genetic metaphor would suggest.

Takashi Morishita  
HIJIKATA TATSUMI'S NOTATIONAL BUTOH.  
AN INNOVATIONAL METHOD  
FOR BUTOH CREATION  
[excerpts]

PREFACE  
TECHNIQUES OF BUTOH AND DISCOVERY OF METHODS

**Introduction**

*Not Expressing*

Hijikata Tatsumi often said that expressing was a base impulse. If Butoh became a means of expression, it would be «begging and prostrating itself» – an «adjusted form of Butoh» manifesting «obedience and jealousy»<sup>1</sup>.

Hijikata often said that he had let his sister into his body<sup>2</sup>. He stated that his sister, who was deceased, said to him: «Although you devote yourself to dancing to express something, what can be expressed emerges through something not expressed, does it not?»<sup>3</sup>?

According to Hijikata, his sister was his Butoh teacher.

It is not clear if the story was subjectively true for Hijikata, an experienced illusion, or something he fabricated with the intent to mystify. Moreover, it is difficult to understand his Butoh from such remarks.

<sup>1</sup> *Inu no joumyaku ni sitto suru koto kara* (From Being Jealous of a Dog's Vein), in the monthly magazine «Bijutsu Techo», May 1969, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> First known reference was in the program for the «Cross Talk Intermedia Festival» (February 1969).

<sup>3</sup> *Kaza daruma* (Wind Daruma), in *Hijikata Tatsumi Zensyuu II* (Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi II), Tokyo, Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1998, pp. 110-122.

In any event, neither in words nor in dance did Hijikata «express» straightforwardly. There is no way for us to understand the creator or his Butoh but to read between his lines.

Onstage, he is nothing but expression. Butoh dancers studying under Hijikata endured teaching like a *koan* of *Zen*: they were told not to express when going onto the stage, the place to express; likewise, while they were on the stage, they were told not to express. But when Hijikata told them not to express, the nature of his Butoh must have been in those words. It may be that two ideas are suggested by the statement «Butoh is not expression».

One is that Butoh is not the expression of an idea using the body as a tool. Hijikata's Butoh, rather, is body art whose expression is a «convulsion of existence».

The other idea is that the method in Hijikata's Butoh is to «express without expressing», and this was accepted by the Butoh dancers who studied under him.

This Butoh cannot be deciphered through existing codes. But if one could simply say that this is why Hijikata's Butoh is an original body expression, it would be the end of the discussion. In this book<sup>4</sup>, we will attempt to reduce Hijikata's Butoh to simpler forms so that this body art, which cannot be described by the concepts or formats of conventional dance, can be understood.

We will also attempt to address whether Butoh can be handed down as artistic expression. Is Butoh a transitory expression? Is it an expression merely of one's individual experience? We will consider those questions, along with whether the method («express without expressing») and Hijikata's method of creation-Butoh Notation can be shared and handed down to following generations.

### *Handing Down Butoh*

Dance on the stage is intrinsically fleeting, of which Hijikata com-

<sup>4</sup> The author refers here to the book from which these excerpts are taken: Morishita Takashi, *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh. An innovational method for butoh creation*, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2015. The writings here published are the reprint (with some cuts) of the preface and the first chapter, pp. 7-32. [Ed.]

mented, «it will survive because it disappears»<sup>5</sup>. Although it disappears as a temporal occurrence, it can be retained in the viewer's memory. Indeed, because of the one-time-only nature of the experience, performing arts may impress themselves upon the viewer quite strongly. And it goes without saying that what a dancer's body has experienced and absorbed does not disappear easily. Still, how can a theatrical art be known by those who do not see it? How is it possible to convey what has disappeared?

No matter how much one is told of masterly performances in the classical arts, in time, they exist only in the imagination. [...]

Dance performances by Hijikata himself or performances that were directed/choreographed by him are in the recent past; many people have written about them or recorded images of these performances, and dancers who were taught directly by Hijikata can still describe them orally. In addition, Hijikata wrote and spoke a great deal, particularly for a dancer, and a complete collection of his writings has been compiled.

So it may indeed be possible to get to know Hijikata's Butoh by various methods. The question is how useful that will actually be.

For example, Hijikata's writings were poetic metaphors, full of self-concealment and distortions, rarely developed logically. In classical performing arts, no theories of drama were constructed as they are in modern and present theatrical art. Rather, there were *geidan*: talks by the masters on their art. The style and content of Hijikata's writings, given his lack of desire to theorize Butoh, are closer to *geidan*.

Accordingly, although his writings and remarks may be helpful in understanding the background for Hijikata's Butoh and his mental world, they are less helpful to a search for his method of dance creation or his techniques and skills; nor do they help us to divide forms into constituent parts that can be grasped conceptually.

Thus, putting aside whether Hijikata's writings should be called *geidan* or not, they may only be useful for gaining an understanding of a taste of his talent and the essence of Butoh. They should not be overlooked, but it certainly does not encompass the whole of understanding Butoh.

<sup>5</sup> In this way Hijikata frequently used paradoxical expressions when he talked about his view of Butoh to his pupils.

How much, for example, can we see Hijikata's Butoh duplicated in the Butoh currently being performed? This may seem to be the most effective way to understand his Butoh – but, in fact, it is a dead end. Today's Butoh is diverse, and we are barely able to determine coordinate axes or a frame of reference on which to distribute it. Butoh itself has proliferated beyond logic. In these circumstances, the likelihood that Hijikata's Butoh has been faithfully passed on is close to nil.

Yet we should study the available materials and the comments of knowledgeable people; these exist in sufficient quantity to be useful. Indeed, solid discussions of Hijikata's work should be basic studies for more thorough investigations, but few have taken place in reality. Having such discussions is premised on the assumption that the methods and techniques of his Butoh can be clarified.

For that, there is no other way than to take steady steps forward, counting as we go. [...] we will sort out Hijikata's activities by time, dividing the history of his Butoh into six periods, confirm Butoh styles and methods historically, and extract issues to be discussed. [...]

## 1: Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh

### *Dawn of Butoh: Avant-garde Declaration*

Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh is considered to have begun with the work «Forbidden Colors» (*Kinjiki*) first seen at a performance by new members of the All Japan Art Dance Association (*Zen nihon geijutu buyou kyokai*) in May 1959. At the time, a brief profile of Hijikata was released: «Studied under Ando Mitsuko, respects Ohno Kazuo like an older brother, and was strongly affected by Jean Genet»<sup>6</sup>. That very short comment was a first glimpse at the influences on Hijikata's body and mind when he was in his late 20s and into his 30s.

From 1959 until 1961, he was involved in three theatrical productions. Hijikata first organized 650 EXPERIENCE Society (*650 EXPERIENCE no kai*) and created the work «Six Avant Garde Artists» (*Rokunin*

<sup>6</sup> Pamphlet for the sixth public performance by new dancers sponsored by the All Japan Art Dance Association (May 1959).

*no avant-garde*). Declaring it to be avant-garde, Hijikata released the work with five other artists in different genres. «Six Avant Garde Artists» was performed once in 1959 and once in 1960<sup>7</sup>.

He participated twice in performances «Women Avantgardists' Dance Recital» (*Joryuu avant-garde*), a dance recital by 20 female dancers studying under Tsuda Nobutoshi<sup>8</sup>.

In 1960 and 1961, he held his own recitals, «Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE Society» (*Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai*). For both events, Ohno Kazuo and six or seven other dancers performed together.

When his work «Forbidden Colors», released in 1959, became, along with Wakamatsu Miki's «Situation» (*Joukyou*), the focus of criticism from the mainstream of All Japan Art Dance Association because of its radical themes and expressions, Hijikata joined in the activities of avant-garde dancer Tsuda Nobutoshi, who defended the works. It was after this experience that Hijikata held his first recital based in the Tsuda Dance Studio, later Asbestos Studio (*Asbestos kan*).

With this in mind, the time from 1959 to 1961 is obviously the first period of Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh, in which he declared his art to be avant-garde and took off in an experimental direction. During this time, as he struggled in the gap between denial and creation, hiding himself in his writings, he oscillated between the fact and the idea, demonstrating a part of the thought process behind the creation of Butoh.

In this period, owing in part to influences from European literature, including Jean Genet and Comte de Lautréamont, his dance forms must have been simple and easy to be understood, although his performances were often embellished.

<sup>7</sup> Other avant-garde artists in the performances were Mayuzumi Toshiro, Moroi Makoto, Kanamori Kaoru, Wakamatsu Miki, and Donald Richie in the first performance; and Mayuzumi Toshiro, Tomatsu Shomei, Terayama Shuji, Kanamori Kaoru, and Miho Keitaro in the second performance.

<sup>8</sup> There were approximately 20 new modern dancers, including many students of Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako.

*From Anti-Dance to Rebellious Body*

In 1962, Hijikata took over the Tsuda Dance Studio from Tsuda Nobutoshi, renaming it Asbestos Studio. The period from 1962 – when he began operating at the studio – to 1966 is the second period in Hijikata's creative life. In June 1962, he staged his first performance at Asbestos Studio, «The Inauguration of the Leda Association Secret Performance No.1» (*Leda no kai hossoku dai-ikkai kouen*), which he created and directed.

In August, he danced in «Lost War Banquet» (*Haisen kinen bansankai*) with neo-Dada artists, including Kazakura Sho and Akasegawa Genpei, and musicians of *Group Ongaku*, including Tone Yasunao and Kosugi Takehisa. It was an unusual – perhaps even far-out – event organized by avantgardists declaring themselves anti-art, anti-music, and anti-dance. In reality, it was «Art as Action»<sup>9</sup>.

In 1963, «Masseur: A Story of a Theater that Sustains Passion» (*Anma: aiyoku o sasaeru gekijou no hanasi*) reunited all the avant-garde artists who had performed in «Lost War Banquet». Hijikata also collaborated with avant-garde artists in «Rose-Colored Dance» (*Barairo dansu*) in 1965 and «Instructional Illustrations for the Study of Divine Favor in Sexual Love: Tomato» (*Seiai ontyougaku sinan zue: Tomato*) in 1966. Organized by Hijikata, these collaborations show that his activities had developed into an art movement, extending beyond the genre of dance.

From the existing pictures and images of «Masseur» and «Rose-Colored Dance», it is difficult to grasp the entirety of Hijikata's expression, but these sources do tell us that Hijikata was absorbed in something both anti-art and anti-dance.

A third period of Hijikata's creative life comprises just two years. In 1967 and 1968, he staged Butoh performances for his four pupils – Takai Tomiko, Ishii Mitsutaka, Nakajima Natsu, and Ashikawa Yoko – one by one. Hijikata himself directed, organized, and choreographed all of them, and danced in the performances for Takai and Ishii.

A solo performance, «Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Rebel-

<sup>9</sup> There is no printed material for the event. There are records of verbal comments by Akasegawa Genpei, a participant, and the recollections of Kazakura Sho and Yoshida Yoshie.

lion of the Body» (*Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin: Nikutai no hanran*), in October 1968, can be called a compilation of Hijikata's Butoh. It showed viewers the overwhelming power of Butoh and established its reputation as full of madness and violence and eroticism.

Notably, the second period was characterized by the Hijikata who *didn't* dance, whereas the third period was characterized by the Hijikata who *danced*.

### *New Butoh: Style and Method*

After performing «Rebellion of the Body», Hijikata did not perform on the stage again until 1972, except to make a guest appearance. In 1970, however, he organized young Butoh dancers at Asbestos Studio, primarily Ashikawa Yoko and other female dancers, forming a group *Genjusha*, and continued a series of small performances over a considerable period. He revealed his own ideas on Butoh through a catchphrase «Sacrificing Great Paragone of Butoh (*Hangi dai tou kan*)» and started including it in the name of the performance.

The fourth period in Hijikata's creative life spans from the formation of *Genjusha* to when a major performance was staged in September 1972 to commemorate the formation of *Harupin-ha*. There emerged a new Butoh, characterized by the dancers' painting their entire bodies white and dancing in a bandy-legged manner.

Having waited until the time was ripe to return to active performance, in October 1972, Hijikata performed «Twenty-Seven Nights for Four Seasons» (*Siki no tame no nijuu-nana ban*), a performance which has quite a long teaser «Sacrificing Great Paragone of Butoh: Performance to Commemorate the Second Unity of the Ankoku Butoh School (*Hangi dai tou kan: Ankoku Butoh ha kessoku kinen kouen*)».

The performance – five works performed over 27 consecutive nights – must have been the most important one in the history of Hijikata's Butoh. He took full personal charge of the performance, engaging not only in organization, direction, and choreography, but also stage setting, music, and costumes. He danced one dance completely without standing up – it was, as he described, a dance in which he could not stand up.

«Quiet House» (*Shizuka na ie*) in 1973 followed as an extension of

«Twenty-Seven Nights for Four Seasons». Hijikata also performed as a guest dancer in «The Phallus Myth» (*Youbutu sintan*) by *Dairakudakan Temputenshiki* in October of the same year. This would turn out to be his final stage appearance.

This year, 1973, is categorized as the fifth period of Hijikata's Butoh, important because he created new dances never seen before, and performed them himself.

### *Artistic Achievement: The Period of Butoh Notation*

In 1974, Hijikata formed another group at Asbestos Studio, *Hakutobo*, which consisted mainly of women, with Ashikawa Yoko as the central figure; his earlier group, *Genjusha*, was also female-dominated. Hijikata created (directed, organized, and choreographed) a series of 16 works for *Hakutobo* by the end of 1976.

These three years, 1974-1976 were the sixth period of Hijikata's Butoh. Created by Hijikata based on Butoh Notation and accepted by his dancers, in this period, the Butoh that had emerged in the fifth period was crystallized into dance reaching unprecedented heights of elaborateness, and which stands today as Hijikata's ultimate artistic achievement.

In 1977 and 1978, no longer operating at Asbestos Studio, Hijikata directed and choreographed works for his pupils and also participated twice in festivals overseas. After 1978, he receded from both work and public life, even disengaging with friends and acquaintances. In 1985, a year before his death, Hijikata resumed vigorous work. This paper, however, will stop in its explorations. Rather, in our search for the form of Butoh, we will look at the 18 years from 1959 through 1976, comprising six periods, as the history of Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh creation.

When considering the form of Hijikata's Butoh and how it might be handed down to following generations, we should not deal with Hijikata's Butoh inconsiderately. To achieve our aim, we will primarily look at Butoh in the fourth, fifth and sixth periods as outlined above. The reason for this will emerge naturally in the discussion hereafter.

## 2: Thoughts and Methods of Hijikata Tatsumi

[...]

### *Archetype of Butoh: the Extreme of Physical Expression*

In the third period, Hijikata danced. As previously mentioned, a compilation of this activity was «Rebellion of the Body». Before the performance, he declared: «I will dance as much as I can at the Nippon-Seinenkan. I will risk my dancing»<sup>10</sup>. He also stated, «The time has come to clearly show Hijikata Tatsumi by Hijikata Tatsumi»<sup>11</sup>.

This was not an experiment in artistic creation, but a performance – using his body to the maximum, risking himself – to make the existence of dancer Hijikata Tatsumi known to the world. Although reactions were mixed, the work had a strong impact on artists, performers, and intellectuals of the day, and established the reality of Ankoku Butoh.

Butoh as seen in «Rebellion of the Body» expressed the body itself. Hijikata reduced his body by fasting, appeared on stage with a body like a steel frame, and performed to the ultimate level of physical expression, neither seeking a theme outside the body nor any means of help outside the body. Violence and eroticism of the body, the convulsion of its existence, were shown together.

As a solo work of Hijikata, this was an integration of the dance history he had experienced, from Neuetanz and classical ballet to show dancing. The form of the Butoh in the recital is easy to understand as well.

Neither Ohno Kazuo nor Kasai Akira participated in the recital. Following the statement «show Hijikata Tatsumi by Hijikata Tatsumi», the performance manifested his individuality, and it could not be imitated by another dancer.

The original title of the recital is «Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese», but it is commonly known as «Rebellion of the Body», not something envisioned by Hijikata. Suggesting a declaration of intent

<sup>10</sup> *Garumera syoukai* Hijikata Tatsumi, monthly magazine «Bijutsu Techo», April 1968, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Nikutai no yami o musiru...* (Plucking Off the Darkness of the Body...), in the magazine «Tenbou», Chikumashobo, July 1968, p. 107.

by the body against the power outside the theater, and taking on the character of the time, it became a performance symbolizing the year 1968 – the «Seasons of Rebellion»<sup>12</sup>.

It was the time of the body. In declaring his own theatrical concept, Kara Juro, a great leader of the underground theater, also advocated the «Privileged Body Theory (*Tokkenteki nikutai ron*)». Saying that «it starts with the existence of the body» and asserting that the «spirit of a dramatic player lifts the play», Kara declared himself to be a riverbed beggar (*Kawara kojiki*), a reference to the pariah status of pre-modern *Kabuki* performers, and asserted that he was himself a *Kabuki* player in a world across truth and fiction. As his master, Hijikata, had rejected modern dance, so Kara thoroughly criticized *Shingeki* (New Theater), which had descended into literature<sup>13</sup>.

In the period when the boom in underground theater – which rejected the idea that a player’s body was subordinate to the play and tried to overturn the formula of «player = body to the play = literature» – was approaching its peak, Hijikata’s «Rebellion of the Body» was an anthem praising the transcendence of the body.

In the 1960s, the words “body” and “emotions” were commonly used to refer to a pair of concepts. «Rebellion of the Body» was the expression of the body itself by the emotions of an individual (Hijikata). It [was] also the expression of the emotions by Hijikata’s body.

In the 1960s and 1970s, in the third and fourth periods of Hijikata’s Butoh, his comments often included the phrases «a tamed body», «to scrutinize their own bodies» and «to find the straying self that had lost its way within their own bodies»<sup>14</sup>. These words expressed the foundation of Hijikata’s view of the body, a presupposition for the rebelling body, and the starting point in the creation of a new Butoh thereafter. That is, they form the thought underlying Hijikata’s Butoh itself.

<sup>12</sup> The expression «Rebellion of the Body» was used by Tanemura Suehiro in his review of the photo exhibition *Kamaitachi* (Sickle Weasel), «Bijutsu Techo», June 1968, pp. 22-23.

<sup>13</sup> *Tokkenteki nikutairon* (The Privileged Body Theory), in *Kosimaki Osen*, Tokyo, Gendai Shichousha, 1968, pp. 3-78.

<sup>14</sup> *Otoko wa itido sinde haiagare* (Men Have to Climb Up after Dying Once), in the monthly magazine «Ushio» January 1973; *Nikutai no yami o musiru...* (Plucking Off the Darkness of the Body...), cit.; and *Ankoku no butai o odoru majin* (A Daemon Staging Ankoku), in «Mainichi Graph», February 1969. Others.

Hijikata Tatsumi's dancing around this time cemented the image of Ankoku Butoh and inspired many who decided to dance Butoh. Dances in the period were, however, never handed down just as they were. The image of «Butoh on the edge of crisis» made a strong impression as an archetype of Butoh, and then as a matrix of Butoh, along with the Butoh spirit of Hijikata Tatsumi.

### *Notational Butoh*

In the 1960s, only Kasai Akira, who danced under the direction of and choreography by Hijikata until 1967, distanced himself as an independent Butoh dancer, removing himself from any further direct relationship with Hijikata. Kasai was then influential from the end of the '60s through the early '70s, and, with his critical ability which criticized even Hijikata's «Rebellion of the Body», his mystical view of Dance, and among other things, his talent of a born dancer.

Although we can compare the two men in various ways – noting, for example, that Hijikata's dance is terrestrial and Kasai's is celestial – this paper attends to the point that Kasai valued improvisation, whereas Hijikata rejected it in creating his Butoh. When a person of that time intended to become a dancer and had to decide which master to follow, this difference – with or without improvisation – was the critical factor.

In this respect, Hijikata's Butoh from the fourth and sixth periods had Butoh Notation (*Butoh-fu*) as the base and method of its creation (i.e., not improvisation), while Kasai took a negative view of Butoh Notation. In Hijikata's Butoh, images were sought through Butoh Notation, concrete images of dances were made, and technique and skill gave form to them.

The form of Hijikata's Butoh was greatly shaped by Butoh Notation found in this period. Studies on this will be increasingly called for hereafter, and will make clear whether Butoh could be handed down or not, as well as provide guidelines for evaluations of Butoh.

*Butoh Notation in the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive*

The Hijikata Tatsumi Archive contains Hijikata's Butoh Notation from Asbestos Studio, written on scrapbooks, B5-sized notebooks, and *Mozousi* (large-sized western paper), hereinafter called Butoh Notation A<sup>15</sup>. A road to studies on Hijikata's Butoh thus opened up when the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive was founded, allowing scholars to access these materials<sup>16</sup>.

In 1998, when the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive was founded in the Keio University Art Center, Butoh Notation was featured in art books and magazines, including *Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi (Hijikata Tatsumi Zensyuu)* and Tv programs. Obviously, though, the Butoh Notation closest to the actual words and movements transmitted by Hijikata is the full collection in the archive.

In that same year, the CD-ROM *Butoh Kaden* was edited and produced by Waguri Yukio, and thus Butoh Notation, with accompanying explanations, became accessible to the public. As a result, it became widely known that each of Hijikata's pupils possessed his or her own Butoh notebook, which could be called «Butoh Notation» (hereinafter called Butoh Notation B)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> The Hijikata Tatsumi Archive took pictures of all pages of Hijikata's 14 scrapbooks, processed them into digital color images, and made them available to the public. Whether they are called «Butoh Notation» or not has been, and will be, an issue, but it is not one taken up here. In the chapter *Butoh seisei no source tositeno Butoh Notation* (Butoh Notation as a Source for Butoh Creation), in my book *Hijikata Tatsumi no Butoh: nikutai no surrealism, sintai no ontology* (Tatsumi Hijikata's Butoh: Surrealism of the Flesh – Ontology of the «Body»), Tokyo, Keio University Press, 2003, I offer my personal opinion that they do qualify as Butoh Notation.

<sup>16</sup> *Utawa tositeno sintai: Hijikata Tatsumi – ankoku Butoh gihou eno approach* (The Body as a Vessel: An Approach to the Technique of Ankoku Butoh), by Mikami Kayo (Tokyo, ANZ-Do, 1993), was a pioneering work released prior to this time. It is highly respected particularly because the author undertook the difficult task of studying Butoh's techniques linking Hijikata's view of the body and «Butoh Notation» based on only a limited number of the latter.

<sup>17</sup> At present, the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive comprises Butoh Notation privately compiled and published by Waguri Yukio, notes on Butoh by Tamano Koichi comprising three B5-sized notebooks, notes on Butoh comprising of 17 B5-sized notebooks held by Kobayashi Saga, and notes on Butoh by Yamamoto Moe comprising of a B5-sized notebook (photographed).

What matters here is the existence of Butoh notebook, rather than its content. At its simplest, the existence of Butoh Notation means that Butoh is regulated into a certain form, and such Butoh can be handed down.

Can the same thing be said about the Butoh Hijikata himself danced? We must conclude that it is difficult for Butoh to be handed down via Butoh Notation, insofar as we have found. In this discussion, I have briefly described the Butoh Notation A in the archive<sup>18</sup>. There is a group of materials that led Hijikata to images and creation, notes from which we, in turn, can get a glimpse of his method of creation. There is also a group of materials that Hijikata wrote as scripts for his works.

The Butoh Notation B of his pupils is a record of Hijikata's words and instructions on movements during practice sessions. Some clearly state sequences of positions and movements in specific Butoh works. Although we cannot derive all the details, Butoh Notation B is closer to notation than Butoh Notation A.

In any event, both Butoh Notation A and B are the best – and most essential – materials for understanding Hijikata's Butoh during the subject periods.

### *Butoh in the Age of Butoh Notation*

There are many things that we must know to obtain a good understanding of Hijikata's performances from the fourth to sixth periods. Unfortunately, many will have to be omitted for space and time. Moreover, in this section, we dare to omit introduction of Hijikata's dance, and will talk instead about his pupils being given Butoh Notation, approaching in the process a cross-section of his Butoh.

Although Butoh Notation was assumed to exist in the '60s, we consider it to have arisen at Asbestos Studio in the '70s. Why, though, did it come into being? Obviously, the main reason was that Hijikata needed to teach Butoh to his pupils. It is important to note, however,

<sup>18</sup> *Hijikata Tatsumi no Butoh souzou no houhou o megutte* (About Hijikata Tatsumi's Method of Creating Butoh), in *Genetic Archive Engine*, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2000, pp. 57-80.

that Butoh Notation was born inevitably in the process of Hijikata's structuring of a new method of dance, the creation of Butoh techniques.

After «Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese» in 1968, Hijikata seemed to enter a long silence. During that time, he devoted himself to creating a new dance/Butoh – a dance that had never been seen. What is that resultant new Butoh? Of course, it cannot be described in a word. If I dare to define it according to the context of this paper, the dance can be described as being avant-garde, though with reminders of the classics; being an expression, it goes beyond expression.

This Butoh embodied Hijikata's isolated struggle for creation over seven years, from the fourth to the six periods.

Some felt awkward when confronted with Hijikata's new Butoh. For example, saying he had been acquainted with Ankoku Butoh School (*Ankoku Butoh ha*) dancers for a decade, Ito Morio was critical after seeing «Finback Whale» (*Nagasu kujira*) performed by the *Harupin-ha* in September 1972. «(Butoh) can exist purely with the body itself; that is, it can exist in unprecedented, privileged circumstance, the raw body under natural light. That precious body is now obsessed with how to enter a cozy stage framed by lights, sound, set, and props, and how to leave it»<sup>19</sup>.

Ito had thought that Hijikata and other Ankoku School (*Ankoku-ha*) dancers had significant influence on those who claimed themselves to be avant-garde from the '60s through the '70s. «As its name implied, Ankoku School was always in the shadow of a taboo and, exactly because of it, made people feel unimaginably eerie». Ito said that it then became like a «dance in a circle in the daylight»<sup>20</sup>.

Whether we can say Hijikata's performances thereafter were «cozy» and his dance was «dance in a circle in the daylight» or not, it was certain, as Ito pointed out, that Hijikata's Butoh went in the direction of a «cozy stage framed by lights, sound, set, and props».

Did Hijikata's Butoh degenerate into fast-food expression? Did Hijikata shed the avant-garde, intending to become a conventionalized classic? Or did he convert to being a modernist who «was spurred on and went wild over *Noh* and *Kabuki* plays»<sup>21</sup>?

<sup>19</sup> Ito Morio, «Bijutsu Techo», November 1972, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Screen Stage*, in Hanada Kiyoteru, *Koten to Gendai*, Tokyo, Miraisha, 1967, p. 195.

### Tohoku Kabuki and Classical Dance

Hijikata's performance of «Twenty-Seven Nights for Four Seasons» in 1972 created a sensation; people were astonished and admired Hijikata's Butoh world, which emerged from the back of the banner reading Sacrificing Great Paragone of Butoh, and a drop curtain *Tohoku Kabuki*.

*Kabuki* scholar Gunji Masakatsu gave a series of highly spirited and profound comments in admiration of Butoh, saying that «on the solitary hell of his performance, he now stands certainly on one leg – although very slowly. If you don't call it a classic, what else can it be called»<sup>22</sup>? His review, titled «A Classical Dance Called Death» (*Si to iu koten butoh*), was filled with excitement after he had witnessed performances that could not be described in the modern language of art and expression.

The performance «Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese» in 1968 would appear again here, but let us put this aside. In any case, did Hijikata accept that his Butoh was called a «classical dance»? It was Hijikata himself who prepared catchphrases seemed impertinent to those who had experienced his performances – *Tohoku Kabuki* – until that time. Gunji Masakatsu did not call this performance classical dance simply because of spectacular catchphrases or Japanese designs in the performances, but because he found classicality in Hijikata's dancing itself.

At the same time, people were doubtful about Hijikata's return to classical dance, or to «Japanese traditional performance», sometimes even causing them to suspect that something important was still being hidden.

Accordingly, it was quite natural for the following question to be asked: «What do you think of Japanese traditional performing arts? It seems to me that severe criticism and confrontation of the existing traditional performing arts is implied in your Butoh, as in plays by Suzuki-san»<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> *Si to iu koten Butoh* (A Classical Dance Called Death), «Bijutsu Techo», February 1973, pp. 121-123.

<sup>23</sup> *Ketujo tositeno gengo = Sintai no kasetu* (Language as Absence = A Makeshift Setting of the Body), a talk with Suzuki Tadashi, in the monthly magazine «Gendaishi Techo», April 1977, pp. 108-126.

The question came from Senda Akihiko, the moderator of the talk session between Hijikata and Suzuki Tadashi, and Hijikata avoided answering it directly. Although Senda repeated the question, Hijikata's answers were consistently mystifying. Giving up, Senda then spoke to the other participant. Suzuki Tadashi talked about his own understanding, that it was «to logically clarify how to critically confront» tradition and all things Japanese.

It may be presumptuous for me now to speak on Hijikata's behalf, but he seemed neither to be critical of traditional performing arts, nor to be confronting them.

If Hijikata had answered such questions «logically», an outline or direction of the Butoh that he tried to develop in that period would be much clearer, which would be most helpful to our understanding of Butoh, but it is too late for that now. Even after this talk, Hijikata never did take it upon himself «to clarify logically», as Suzuki Tadashi did.

### *Techniques and Discovery of Methods*

Putting aside what Hijikata thought of traditional performing arts, Suzuki Tadashi's directorial methodology and thoughts on the bodies of actors are certainly very similar to those of Hijikata. Suzuki was openly critical of current traditional performing arts: «So acting only exists when the actor/actress exists on the stage with reality. That is to say, it is beyond technocracy because a standard does not exist outside of the actor/actress. He or she cannot but go into the inside to thus become extraordinarily sensitive about how words strike the self, and the condition of the body»<sup>24</sup>.

Let us also consider what Hijikata said: «Why not put a ladder on one's own body and go down inside it? I urge them to pluck off the darkness of the body and eat it. But they instead release the self to outside of the body, externally»<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Nakamura Yujiro and Suzuki Tadashi, *Gekiteki gengo* (Theatre Language), Tokyo, Asahi Bunko, 1999, p. 130. First reference in *Energy taiwa* (Energy Talk), 1976.

<sup>25</sup> *Nikutai no yami o musiru...* (Plucking Off the Darkness of the Body...), cit., p. 105.

As did Kara Juro, Suzuki insists that the body of an actor/actress should not become just an instrument of words – a criticism of modern theater’s tendency to place too much importance on the play. Minimizing the importance of the performing techniques of the player, Suzuki demands the player’s bold presence. To avoid actors/actresses relying on conventionalization or conceptualization, he puts the body of his actors/actresses in a state of *dépaysement*, collages in surrealist contexts.

This view of Suzuki’s on theatrical performance and method of direction is strikingly similar to that of Hijikata on Butoh. Hijikata also rejected the idea of dances expressing themes conceptually. His skepticism about expression and wariness of conventionalization were fundamental to his Butoh creation.

In addition, regarding «theatrical performance as an unnatural act», Suzuki requires players «to use their bodies in contrived, difficult manners»<sup>26</sup>. Practice sessions amounted to severe training for the players, to the point of inducing physiological pain. Although Suzuki was openly critical of the contemporary traditional performance arts, his training methods, from breathing to gesturing, were based on those of the traditional arts.

Butoh is more an «unnatural act» than a theatrical play. Hijikata’s training sessions at Asbestos Studio were also physically painful and caused mental stress, although training at Asbestos Studio did not reflect the ways of the traditional performing arts to the extent that Suzuki’s methods did.

Awareness of the classics, however, leads to awareness of the «method» of Butoh creation. If theatrical critic Gunji’s comments were accurate, regardless of whether Hijikata himself expressed such thoughts, Hijikata must have been well aware of method and technique in the traditional performing arts.

A comparison with Kara Juro in stage plays was often made when considering Hijikata’s Butoh in the 1960s. But in the 1970s, Hijikata was expected to speak out about Butoh, as the theorist Suzuki Tadashi was doing.

<sup>26</sup> *Jikan to kuukan* (Time and Space), (a conversation between Ota Shogo and Suzuki Tadashi), in the monthly magazine «Shingeki», October 1974, p. 42.

As previously mentioned, if the 1960s are associated with a hard age of «rebellion» and «the body», the 1970s were a soft age of «method» and «system». Changes in Hijikata's Butoh occurred in parallel with such changes in the paradigms of the times.

Hijikata, however, never tried to explain theoretically the philosophy behind the Butoh he was developing or the direction he intended. Nor, needless to say, did he ever clarify the methodology of Butoh creation or the actual performance techniques involved.

Nevertheless, it is strange that when Hijikata was vigorously engaged in performance, neither critics nor spectators ever asked him about the methods or techniques of Butoh.

For example, Nagao Kazuo, a scholar and critic of *Noh*, thoroughly examined Hijikata's Butoh in the time of *Hakutobo*. It was, however, only many years later that he spoke about techniques in Hijikata's Butoh. After watching lessons by Hijikata in August 1984, nearly 10 years after a series of performances were made by *Hakutobo* in the mid-1970s, Nagao commented with surprise: «I discovered very deeply that Butoh has its own techniques... I have tried to understand them by comparing them with “*Kurai*” (lofty tone) in *Noh* performances<sup>27</sup>».

Recognizing that Butoh techniques were different from those of modern dance, classical ballet, and classical Japanese dance, Nagao understood that the techniques Hijikata advocated were «techniques to discover the self» and were «physical techniques as well as mental techniques».

This means the techniques of Hijikata's Butoh has to be discovered from the outside.

It took nearly another 10 years until Butoh Notation became available and former pupils began speaking out – namely, after the death of Hijikata in 1986 – for the methods of Hijikata's Butoh creation to be widely discussed at all.

In such circumstances, we will have to address the contents of Butoh Notation rather than its existence itself. We will look at each line of Butoh Notation until we unravel each piece. Regardless who does the work, it will be a long effort.

Finally, the Butoh Notation our study focuses on is beyond nor-

<sup>27</sup> «Nihon Dokusho Shimbun» of September 24, 1984.

mal dance notation. Nor it is just the material kept in the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive. A vast quantity of images, illustrations, icons, and words of Hijikata; body gestures of the dancers whom Hijikata taught; and images recording Hijikata's own dancing are included in this study.

We will begin our work by analyzing and clarifying those Butoh Notation to establish the form of Butoh whose methods and techniques can be brought to light and possibly handed down to generations hereafter.

## CHAPTER I NOTATIONAL BUTOH WORDS, STRUCTURE AND THOUGHTS

[...]

### *Notational Butoh*

As mentioned in the previous paper, study of Hijikata's Butoh progressed greatly after Butoh Notation was made known in various media after Hijikata's death<sup>28</sup>. While he was alive, Hijikata barely talked to outsiders about his method, remaining silent on such subjects as techniques of Butoh creation, methods of choreography, or how to conduct practice sessions. It can easily be imagined how much of a shock learning of the existence and the contents of Butoh Notation was to those involved in research on Hijikata's Butoh.

<sup>28</sup> Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh Notation was never taken up while he was alive. After his death, Hijikata's pupils published his words, called «Butoh Notation» in the book *The Body as a Vessel: An Approach to the Technique of Ankoku Butoh*, by Mikami Kayo, and the CD-ROM *Butoh Kaden*, by Waguri Yukio. Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh Notation, left at the Asbestos Studio in the form of scrapbooks, is printed in monochrome in *Collected Works of Hijikata Tatsumi* (Tokyo, Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1998). Color images of the pictures and viewing materials are accessible electronically via the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive and online (limited access).

In his later years, whenever Hijikata held an open session of Butoh<sup>29</sup>, it was attended by a range of participants – in addition to young people who desired to be Butoh dancers, veteran dancers who had already spent 10 or 20 years in the Butoh world were there. They obviously wanted to learn directly from him. These were also golden opportunities, they thought, to learn the secrets of Hijikata's method.

Critics who were present at those so-called open practice sessions were also astonished<sup>30</sup>. In these sessions, a method of creating Hijikata's Butoh was shown that could not possibly have been grasped from simply watching a performance of the finished product on the stage; it was the first time the public had seen what went into making such a performance.

Notational Butoh, which is considered to have started in the 1970s, deepened over the years. The number of images Hijikata gathered and the quantity and type of words used to induce movements continually increased; in particular, he collected words helpful to imagine movements. With more words, the number of movements increased not just arithmetically, but geometrically in their variations.

In addition, with time, advancement in the skills of pupils made further precise movements possible. Not only did the number of words increase but also their phase-applications changed, from words to stimulate the human intellect and then sensitivity, to those to stimulate the nerves and create movement<sup>31</sup>.

Now, putting the historical aspects of Butoh Notation aside, the focus will be on two important elements of Butoh via Butoh Notation (Notational Butoh) that make it possible for Notational Butoh to be handed down. One of them is, of course, Butoh Notation itself: cause and effect, meaning media and result. The other is the relationship between master and pupil, for which Butoh Notation was the medium.

<sup>29</sup> From 1984 to 1985, a total of six open sessions were held, known as «Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh Seminars (*Hijikata Tatsumi Butoh kouza*)». The invitation flyers included phrases such as «an Open Class on Butoh Techniques» and «From a Collection of the Emaciated Body to Fusion of Forces: Measuring Distance in the Body».

<sup>30</sup> For example, comments by Nagao Kazuo in the «Nihon Dokusho Shimbun», September 24, 1984.

<sup>31</sup> According to Ishide Takuya, a Hijikata's pupil of very late in his life, Hijikata was working at the time on how to express «materials», such as metal.

*Requirements of Butoh Notation: Master and Pupil*

First, we will examine the critical relationship between master and pupil. A piece of writing by Hijikata Tatsumi titled «Sensitivity from Which Ankoku Butoh Emerges» (*Ankoku Butoh no toujou kankaku*) describes the inside of Asbestos Studio and its residents: «Ashikawa Yoko's room is a tatami room on the right end of the second floor on the east side of the building; Kobayashi Saga's is also a tatami room on the left end of the second floor; Nimura Momoko's...»<sup>32</sup>. Hijikata didn't refer at all to dancing or practice sessions, but rather tried to depict Asbestos Studio, their communal living place, as if a video camera were moving around, and described the figures living there in metaphorical, indirect terms.

Asbestos Studio was a place for Hijikata to practice as well as to live. In addition, it became a special theater for him. There, master and pupils lived a sort of communal life. This communal element in which master and pupil existed side by side can then be considered a condition of the creation of Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh.

In contemporary art, unlike in classical performing art, the state of the relationship between master and pupil is rarely at the core of creation. At Asbestos Studio, however, there was a substantive link between the master-pupil relationship and creation of the art.

Regarding the master-pupil relationship, Uchida Tatsuru's mentor-student theory, based on studies by Jacques Lacan and Emmanuel Lévinas, should be noted<sup>33</sup>. Lévinas talks about mentor and student in handing down the Talmud of Judaism and discusses the relationship between Huang Shigong and Zhang Liang, two military men, in conveying the secret of military tactics, a subject also taken up in *Noh*. Lacan introduces Chevalier Auguste Dupin and Minister D from Edgar Allan Poe's «The Purloined Letter». He also discusses the mentor-student of *Zen* priest, which Lacan referred to as a model for a good mentor-student relationship. The interesting nature of mentor-student relationships is revealed in such situations.

<sup>32</sup> Hijikata Tatsumi, *Ankoku Butoh no toujou kankaku* (Sensitivity From Which Ankoku Butoh Emerges), in *Bibou no aozora* (Handsome Blue Sky), Tokyo, Chikumashobo, 1987, pp. 220-222.

<sup>33</sup> Uchida Tatsuru, *Tasya to sisya* (Others and the Deceased), Tokyo, Kaichosha, 2004, pp. 47-61.

What Lévinas, who studied the Talmud with his teacher verbally, learned was “manners”. A student does not learn variable knowledge or information from his or her mentor. Rather, the student learns “manners” that help to extract unlimited wisdom from the sacred texts<sup>34</sup>.

What a student learns from his mentor, then, is not finite interpretations or knowledge, but how to learn. According to Lacan, a teacher does not give answers; students must find the answers themselves<sup>35</sup>.

As mentioned in the preface, *Noh* scholar Nagao Kazuo, who watched a series of Hijikata’s open lessons, was astonished: «Butoh techniques are sui generis». They were, he said, «techniques to find the self» or «mental techniques»<sup>36</sup>. The mental component and emotional impact of Butoh indicates that it is a form of artistic expression that extends beyond mere dance.

How is such a mentor-and-student relationship established? According to Uchida Tatsuru, «one first becomes a student»<sup>37</sup>. One does not become a student after the mentor provides someone with knowledge or skills; one becomes a student after becoming aware of complete defeat. “Mystery” has something to do with this. One becomes a student out of the desire to pursue the mystery cast by the mentor.

Hijikata, too, often asked the young people who visited Asbestos Studio a riddle. In his essay, Kara Juro said that, living under Hijikata Tatsumi, Hijikata often asked him a riddle<sup>38</sup>. Hijikata was indeed a «mysterious person» as Matsuyama Shuntaro referred to him<sup>39</sup>. He made his existence an enigma. An enigma is inherently attractive, and Hijikata’s creation of a personal and professional mystery must have ensured that many people entered Asbestos Studio in pursuit of the riddle.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> An article by Nagao Kazuo in the «Nihon Dokusho Shimibun», September 24, 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Uchida Tatsuru, *Tasya to sisya* (Others and the Deceased), cit., p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Kara Juro, *Waga tomo Hijikata Tatsumi* (My Friend Hijikata Tatsumi), «Nihon Dokusho Shimibun», April 9, 1979.

<sup>39</sup> Matsuyama Shuntaro said, «What a totally mysterious person», in the pamphlet for the performance *Honegami touge hotoke kazura* (Corpse Vine on Ossa Famine Ridge), October 1970.

In the 1970s, many young people visited Asbestos Studio, desiring to be Butoh dancers or admiring the world of *Ankoku* (darkness). These youngsters who came to «first become pupils» have bound themselves to their master, Hijikata, by absolute obedience. In those days, Hijikata did not hesitate to publicly call male pupils hired workers (*sakuotoko*) and female pupils maidservants (*gejo*)<sup>40</sup>.

The mentor-and-student relationships advocated by Lévinas and Lacan are very similar to the ones Hijikata established with his pupils.

This master-and-pupil relationship was essential for Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh. Or, rather, it can be said that Notational Butoh existed based on the master-and-pupil relationship.

### *Words of Butoh Notation*

Next, we will address the idea of Butoh Notation intermediating between master and pupil – the Butoh method itself – rather than as a part of the method of Hijikata's Butoh.

Butoh Notation is a collection of words Hijikata Tatsumi gave to his pupils. They were not compiled by Hijikata himself. Hijikata spoke them during his lessons and his pupils wrote them down in their notebooks, which will be a form of Butoh Notation (*Butoh-fu*). Although the “-fu” in the *Butoh-fu* literally means “notation”, words in the notebooks are not meant to represent the movements of Butoh systematically or consistently. Nor did they encode movements by signs or diagrams so that others could reproduce the body's physical movements. In this respect, it cannot properly be said that Butoh Notation is literally notation as it is not a fixed, replicable encoding system. Moreover, Hijikata did not establish the Butoh Notation as a theory, which is why his pupil Waguri Yukio could edit it into Waguri/Butoh Notation.

<sup>40</sup> As commented by Hijikata, for example, in an interview with the «Asahi Shimbun», October 1972. This type of discriminative language was obviously antisocial and against the trend toward respecting human rights, and thus Hijikata may have spoken intentionally in this manner. Together with the fact that traditional performing arts – born from and involving discrimination – were employed in Hijikata's Butoh in the 1970s, this suggests there is much to be considered.

As the creation of Butoh Notation has been already outlined<sup>41</sup>, I will not repeat the explanation here. However, it is worth repeating that Butoh Notation was, in essence, a manner whereby a master conveyed words verbally to his pupils during practice sessions, and those words aroused physical movements.

Waguri/Butoh Notation was compiled systematically so as to recall physical movements according to the written work (*écriture*) of pupils who had taken down words spoken by their master (*parole*), in accordance with Hijikata Tatsumi's method.

Let us look at some examples of Waguri/Butoh Notation. In the contents, gestic items are numbered 1 to 60. These items include:

- 1) Redon's Darkness
- 2) Goya's Darkness
- 3) Bacon... and so on.

Each is named for a modern European painter, and images of their paintings immediately emerge. Another set of gestic items follows:

- 12) Swamp Space
- 13) Burnt Down Bridge
- 14) Auschwitz

These seem to try to express places, making you imagine a specific scene. Then we have:

- 17) Solomon's Palace
- 19) Turner Space
- 20) Front and Back of a Mirror

These seem to expand an image based on concrete personal names, and then enter abstract, extensive spaces. Next we see another grouping:

<sup>41</sup> Morishita Takashi, *Hijikata's Method of Butoh Creation, Genetic Archive Engine: Hijikata Tatsumi Dancing in a Digital Forest*, Tokyo, Keio University Art Center, 2000, pp. 48-77.

- 31) Bull
- 32) Bird 1
- 39) Flower 1

These make us think of dance movements that express the concrete shapes of animals or plants. Next comes:

- 46) Republic of Nerves
- 47) Flower of Fretfulness
- 48) Henri Michaux

These remind us that dance requires movement through the reaction of nerves. Similar expressions of oversensitivity are:

- 50) Queer Figure
- 51) Neurotic
- 52) Psychiatric Ward

Finally we have:

- 68) Evaporation
- 70) Light

Did Hijikata also try to express natural events, not only objects? How did he relate them to the body?

I just listed some items from the contents of Waguri/Butoh Notation that can fully remind us of Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh Notation, but which go in search of more concrete images of movements – therefore, let us refer to these attempts to describe the form as Waguri/Butoh Notation. Here, it is difficult to decide which items would be best to illustrate Hijikata's Butoh movements. To look at it from a different perspective, however, this also means that it doesn't matter much which items we select – all are relevant to examining Hijikata's movements.

For example, when we open the page under «21. Strange Prince», we find items 1 to 4. Item 4 will be referred to hereafter as «A».

#### **Item 21-4 [A]**

A Three-layer Face is on Bellmer. A Bundle of Lights Runs from

the Cheeks. The Bottom of the Neck is Scoped out. Hair on the Back is Burning. Pomegranate Teeth. Face of a Bull and Wings on the Back. A Tail Grows and the Pelvis is Open. Putting a Cat on One's Bosom. The Neck is Stretched and the Wings on the Back. When Pushing the Cat Out, Bellmer is Higher and a Balloon on the Back. The Left Hand is on the Table and Steam at the Feet. A Man with a Pockmarked Face. Helpless Face. Evaporation of a Dog. Expression of Crayons. Shaking Bicycle. Dissection and Going Mad. 5 Iterations of Baby Moths; Repeat. Glider, Soaring Infinitely. Becomes Like a Stick, *Kinkato* Candy. Nijinsky.

Item «29. Whoopee» in the gestic contents of Waguri/Butoh Notation contains items 1-6; the fifth is «Chagall's Bird» (hereafter «B»).

#### **Item 29-5 [B]**

Chagall's Bird. Horse's Neck. Girl. Light in the Eyes. Sightline. Pollen. Person of Stone. Person of Michaux. Thundering. Wols. Monkey Jumping from a Shadow. Dead Tree. Maya's Thin Cubic. Girl Seeing a Rainbow. Crayon. Pockmarked. Thread at the Tip of a Finger. Lightning Bug's Flash. Shaking the Buttocks Backward. Table. Chick.

#### *Deciphering Butoh Notation*

In the filming of A, performances from «A Three-layer Face» to «Nijinsky» were filmed as a series of consecutive movements, whereas in B, a dancer performed each item as an individual movement, filmed accordingly.

Although there were differences in movements between A and B, the images we first envisioned when looking at the written characters (vocabulary and phrases) were almost identical between A and B. Even though the words were written down and structured by Waguri Yukio, a pupil of Hijikata's, they were certainly groups of words provided by the master – Hijikata himself. The word groups directed the movements (gestures).

Groups of words written down by Hijikata's pupils are certainly poetic and metaphorical. They should, however, be taken neither as arbitrary nor abstract. For Hijikata Tatsumi, each one of those words was

necessary for the body and, thus, can direct actual movements of the body. Put another way, it can be said that each movement of the body carefully weighs every word and phrase.

Still, those who have not directly studied under Hijikata can scarcely imagine the specific movements just by seeing a series of these words, as presented in the gestic forms noted down by Waguri or others. Yet insofar as they are words of Butoh Notation, they must be significant in directing movements; they act as signifier.

Butoh Notation is a text consisting of aggregate signifier. Butoh Notation meant the “expression” of Hijikata, which was handed down to his pupils through his oral directions. Waguri/Butoh Notation also can be considered to be a text. Vocabulary and phrases seen in A and B can be signs or morpheme comprising a text.

As mentioned previously, it was difficult for audiences in Hijikata’s time to decipher his theatrical performances. Now, however, we have been provided with Butoh Notation which certainly gives us clues. Until we have deciphered Butoh Notation we cannot decipher Hijikata Tatsumi’s Butoh.

If we can assume a signifier for each sign, the text may be deciphered. There are, however, obstacles in ascertaining the former.

First, we must identify what words in Waguri/ Butoh Notation indicate. In order to do that, we must understand the codes that Hijikata used when he spoke the words of Butoh Notation. Thus, we must start by identifying Hijikata’s interests, knowledge, and way of thinking.

Second, we must understand that the words are spoken for the sake of evoking movements (gestures). But we know Butoh Notation only through characters. There are almost no words by which we imagine the corresponding movements. In his lessons, Hijikata verbally conveyed words to pupils, accompanied by movements. It goes without saying that in order to decipher Butoh Notation accurately as text, we must know the words and associated movements taught by the master at a training place.

This is why we have filmed movements according to Waguri/Butoh Notation to build up a collection of images. As already mentioned, 180 items Waguri/Butoh Notation were filmed. The above and B are only two of these items. In these two items alone, there are 52 movements. Simple calculations would suggest the existence of some 4,500 movements within Waguri/Butoh Notation. There is actually some du-

plication, so the actual total is not that high, but can still be easily put at more than 3,000. The number of movements covers only those Hijikata gave to Waguri or that Waguri was able to apprehend. In fact, substantially more movements than this figure – likely beyond our ability to guess – were created by Hijikata<sup>42</sup>.

In his work, Hijikata created such an enormous movements (gestures) and his pupils were required to master them. Pupils had to immediately imagine movements just by hearing the words of the sign (the name of the movement) that had been given<sup>43</sup>.

### *Structure of Butoh Notation*

The number of movements shown in Butoh Notation undoubtedly vast, if not actually beyond counting. We must look now at the content. When simply reading A and B, the group of words can be classified assuming certain characteristics. Based on these characteristics, what each word means may be clarified and grouped together with movements (gestures). This paper, however, has no room to go deeper into that avenue of study. Instead, we will consider a structure for Butoh Notation.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty said: «Words are not merely signs of things or significations, but dwell in things, and need to be means to convey significations. So, for those who speak words, the words are not to translate thoughts already completed in a work, but to complete those thoughts»<sup>44</sup>.

We are trying to review Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh by converting his words into signs. In his dance described by words, however, his words are not simply signs. Unlike words that serve to translate ex-

<sup>42</sup> On an audio tape recording of Hijikata Tatsumi's voice choreographing his pupil Ashikawa Yoko, we can hear Hijikata saying to her: «There are dances for a two-ton truck. Why can't you do what is needed immediately?».

<sup>43</sup> After Hijikata has established his Notational Butoh, he gave each pupil the names of their schools and choreographed their performances if granting them licenses, and sent them out of Asbestos Studio: Yamamoto Moe's *Kanazawa Butoh-Kan*, Waguri Yukio's *Kohzensha*, and Nimura Momoko's *Asbestos Studio's Matsushiro Branch*.

<sup>44</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception: A Selection of Works*, translated by Nakayama Gen, Tokyo, Chikumashobo, 1999, p. 16.

isting movements, these direct new movements to be constructed in reality.

It is, of course, not individual motion that was created from Hijikata's words. In Butoh Notation, there should be methods to integrate movements and link them to each other. If there are any systematic methods that command the body, time, and space comprehensively and link movements together, then, we should clarify them.

Beyond that, linked or combined movements must link to other linked or combined movements, all of which combine together in a work of Butoh to form a comprehensive whole<sup>45</sup>.

Hijikata Tatsumi performed intensively from 1974 to 1976. During this time, whenever his Butoh was created, the "movements" or movement catalog of Butoh increased and was eventually developed to an excessive extent through this continual creation.

In public performances during the period, Hijikata performed all-new creations, but his activities could be said to demonstrate processes for structuring new Butoh works, rather than displaying complete new works. Instead of «translating thoughts», he tried to «complete thoughts».

At the end of 1976, Hijikata Tatsumi discontinued the series of public performances, as if a state of maximum entropy had been reached.

[...], even if we try to understand the accumulation and combination of "movements" in engineering terms, such as cell > stack > module, the combinations are innumerable. In short, works can be structured in unlimited variations. Let us compare these movements and works to LEGO blocks. Industrially produced, LEGO blocks are standardized and available in a limited range of forms. Yet you can enjoy making an infinite number of things by using them in various combinations. Even if the movements created by Hijikata Tatsumi are standardized ones, there are thousands of them; the diversity of their combinations exceeds those of LEGO blocks, offering endless possibilities for recombination and creative expression<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> This structure may be understood as cells, stacks, and modules, as used in architectural and computing fields. The minimum unit is the cell; cells make stacks; and stacks make modules.

<sup>46</sup> Hijikata's Butoh is often called «Stylized Butoh», but that is too simple and easy a way to categorize or define it. It is not possible to squeeze Hijikata's Butoh into a framework of form consisting of a limited number of styles.

The following opinion of Jean Baudrillard seems consistent with Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh: «Whether we are dealing with prison cells, electronic cells, communist cells, or microbiological cells, we always search for the smallest, the indivisible, element, the organic synthesis of which will follow in accordance with the givens of the code. The code itself is nothing other than a genetic, generative cell in which the myriad intersections produce all the questions and all the possible solutions from which to select»<sup>47</sup>.

Nevertheless, developing new movements continuously is the burden of creation. In order to create new movements, it is necessary to call for new signs and new codes to convey the meanings of the new signs. In the context of our investigation here, we will use a series of words and signs introduced from Waguri/Butoh Notation. Some examples are:

- a) Face of Bull or Neck of Horse
- b) Bellmer or Wols
- c) A Bundle of Lights Running from the Cheeks or Steam at the Feet

Item «a» movements includes movements expressing visible forms, and anyone can understand the codes for them. In item «b», these are movements associated with images that Hijikata presented together with his words, and the codes may be commonly understood based on that. In «c», they are movements born of feeling invisible things and it would be difficult for different individuals to perceive the same codes; they are extremely subjective.

Eventually, we will have to work on deciphering each word=sign that Hijikata Tatsumi presented. In doing so, we will have to interview his pupils and thoroughly study the books of paintings and collections of poems Hijikata possessed, referring in the process to the collection of images of movements that we are working on. In that way, we will be able to reach a consensus understanding of the codes by which movements created by Hijikata may be deciphered.

We may also, then, be able to understand Hijikata Tatsumi's knowledge and interests, but I wonder if we will ever be able to catch

<sup>47</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, translated by Imamura Hitoshi and Tsukahara Fumi, Tokyo, Chikumashobo, 1992, p. 138.

up with his thoughts. For example [...] what are the codes to express the motion of an “object” without any visible form?

### *Thought of Butoh Notation*

Knowledge of the Talmud was originally passed on verbally from master to pupil, as described by Lévinas, and the process seemed always to have involved hot arguments. Uchida said: «Interpretation of “signs” in sacred texts, which disclose God’s wisdom, is left permanently open and permanently pending»<sup>48</sup>. In other words, the purpose is not to settle disputes or give a final interpretation, but to open dialogue about the Torah and its teachings.

In Butoh Notation, signs specifically showing postures or movements are rarely found. There is, furthermore, no direction of time, which should be essential for theatrical art. Butoh Notation, in fact, may be the extreme of Hijikata Tatsumi’s thought – which is to say, «wisdom» itself. How did his pupils face that «wisdom»?

We have, thus, come back to the matter of the master-and-pupil relationship. We should refer to the thoughts of Hijikata’s pupils in Notational Butoh, but this will have to wait for some other time. For now, we will simply say that in Notational Butoh, pupils were deprived of their own subjectivity, their own self-consciousness. Only those who managed to suppress their egos could participate in Hijikata Tatsumi’s Butoh.

This fact is close to the essence of Hijikata Tatsumi’s Butoh. Although Butoh is regarded as existential, expressionistic dance, the method of Notational Butoh as considered in this paper seems to be based on denial of that type of Butoh.

After 1968, when he performed *Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Rebellion of the Body*, Hijikata Tatsumi rebuilt his Butoh in the 1970s. We must clearly understand the ideological basis of this revision of his concepts and art. Here, two points are to be mentioned. One is an understanding of structuralism, which emerges upon denial of existential thought. J. M. Domenach stated:

<sup>48</sup> Uchida Tatsuru, *Tasya to sisya* (Others and the Deceased), cit., p. 50.

Claude Lévi-Strauss said similarly: «In order to reach reality, the real experience should be excluded». But this elementary point of epistemology is the metaphysical principle of an absolute system. It is cold, impersonal thought, detached from any sort subject – regardless of individual or group. It eventually completely denies the possibility of the subjective existence with the ability to express oneself and act independently<sup>49</sup>.

Another point is the similarity between Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh and classical performing arts. In previous paper, I evaluated Hijikata's Butoh from viewpoints of classical performing arts by quoting Gunji Masakatsu's comments.

Here I will also cite Tanemura Suehiro, living at the same time as Hijikata, predicted the essence of Hijikata's Butoh: «It is expectation that the human body could be a privileged container to accept again as an operator the sacred thing that has been lost, by making body thoroughly a purposeless tool, a toy»<sup>50</sup>.

Noting also that *Kabuki* imitated *Ningyō Jōrūrī* puppet theater to find the pure plastic art of style and excluded the concept of consciousness as a modern poison, Tanemura said: «In the brilliance of the body in a feral state, completely excluding spiritualism, there is certainly existence of support for the transcendent – a pure storehouse of spiritualism – and a operator above, outside or under it»<sup>51</sup>.

Nevertheless, when he was fully immersed in existential thought in the early stages of Butoh, Hijikata said: «A person not walking but made to walk; a person not living but made to live; a person not dead but made to be dead must, in spite of such total passivity, paradoxically expose the radical vitality of human nature»<sup>52</sup>.

There is no person other than a condemned prisoner who is deprived of subjectivity. Hijikata said he found the «original form of Butoh» in the walk of the prisoner.

[...]

<sup>49</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, *Appearance of Structuralism, Structuralism*, translated by Ito Morio et al., Tokyo, Heibonsha, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> Tanemura Suehiro, *Kigu tositeno nikutai* (The Body as an Instrument), «Umi», April 1970, p. 169.

<sup>51</sup> Idem, p. 168.

<sup>52</sup> Hijikata Tatsumi, *Keimusyo e* (To Prison), «Mita Bungaku», January 1961, p. 48.

Stephen Barber

THE PERFORMANCE ARCHIVE AS SITE OF  
ABERRANT DISFIGURATION:  
HIJIKATA'S ARCHIVE OF BUTOH IN THE  
WORK OF RICHARD HAWKINS

Performance archives are never static or closed entities, even when they appear to be abandoned, forgotten, or even revered. Among their many potential resuscitations, they can notably generate raw material for new forms of art works that may be original particularly in the sense that they overturn the visible facets of familiar artefacts via a process of oscillation, often through the interconnections of performance with other media. For such an upheaval to be perceived, the originating art work must also somehow still be present or remembered, in one form or another. In recent years, archives of contemporary performance cultures have increasingly been amalgamated with elements from moving-image, photographic, digital-media and visual-arts cultures, often with profound consequences for perceptions of the temporal, spatial and memorial dimensions of performance, along with its traces and residues. In many cases, original artefacts and materials from performance histories will be transformed by that process, in ways that reveal unforeseen dimensions and insights, but such source materials may also be comprehensively and intentionally reconfigured, and distanced from their initial form, to the point of aberration and disfiguration.

Can the disfigurement or reconfiguration of an archive of performance be conceived of as a process that actively creates a vital new form of performance, or a work of art? And is such a process always necessarily one that must operate spatially, directed towards an audience of spectators that actively witnesses that process of disfigurement? To explore those questions, I'd like to examine one particular aspect of archival upheaval in its widest sense, specifically the contemporary

reworking of archival performance materials and documents – as spectacles within art-museum spaces.

I will focus especially on an art project, *Hijikata Twist*, by the prominent Los Angeles-based contemporary artist, Richard Hawkins, which was exhibited in 2014 at the Tate Gallery art-museum, in Liverpool in the UK, and previously, in an earlier form, in 2012 at the Whitney art-museum, in New York<sup>1</sup>. This project focuses on the work of the Japanese choreographer and performance-theorist Tatsumi Hijikata, who instigated the celebrated performance-art form known as «ankoku butoh» – the «dance of utter darkness» – in Tokyo at the end of the 1950s, and developed his work across the 1960s and 1970s, before dying in 1986. As with many other choreographers, Hijikata's work left relatively sparse tangible traces, other than film documents and collaborations with experimental film-makers. But, from the second half of the 1960s, Hijikata also began working in the medium of the scrapbook – that is, accumulating ideas and plans for ongoing choreographic works by assembling and collaging a range of “source materials” into his large-format scrapbooks' pages, and then annotating them with texts, diagrams and drawings which he conceived of as counterparts to the specific movements and gestures that he wanted to see realized corporeally in performance, in such works as his 1968 solo performance work *Revolt of the Flesh*. But those scrapbook texts were not direct counterparts to the gestures or movements of dance – Hijikata's texts are often dense, poetic, tangential, and fragmentary ones – and are also over-layered upon one another, in the characteristic way that a process of collaging operates, by successive accumulations, across time and space.

Many of the images in the original Hijikata scrapbooks are illustrations which he had cut-out from Japanese arts magazines, of paintings by mid-twentieth-century French and German artists such as Hans Bellmer, Jean Dubuffet and Henri Michaux, as well as works by Pablo Picasso and, especially, Francis Bacon. Hijikata predominantly used European visual materials in his scrapbooks. Thirteen of Hijikata's scrapbooks are

<sup>1</sup> This essay draws from a number of conversations with Richard Hawkins, in Berlin in 2013, during his research in developing his Hijikata project. Hawkins' exhibition was presented at the Tate Museum in Liverpool from 28 February to 11 May 2014.

conserved in the archive of his work at the Keio University Art Center in Tokyo. More scrapbooks may well have been made before being lost or discarded, but those archived scrapbooks are those which have survived. As with other scrapbooks assembled by artists or performers – for example, those of the photographic and moving-image innovator, Eadweard Muybridge – Hijikata’s scrapbooks form seminal archival artefacts which reached their definitive form at the instant when their creator affixed the last image, or inscribed the final text. They were not intended for public display.

Through the art project of Richard Hawkins, *Hijikata Twist*, a new set of scrapbooks were made, which work to emulate or to recreate Hijikata’s own scrapbooks, by a process that intersects manual techniques of collaging with digital techniques of simulation. Hawkins spent several months in the Hijikata archive in Tokyo, studying the original scrapbooks; he commissioned translations into English of the hand-inscribed textual content of the scrapbooks. But crucially, the contents of those original scrapbooks are amended and “restaged” – Hawkins often chose his own contents of illustrations to incorporate, and also inserted his own texts, which characteristically evoke his experiences in the gay subcultures of Los Angeles. The insertion of new text requires that Hijikata’s own texts are supplanted and deleted. And the new scrapbooks are conceived specifically to be exhibited in space, and so to have a public, performative existence in the eyes of art-museum spectators. Notably, in art-gallery exhibition contexts such as the ones I mentioned (the Tate Museum or the Whitney Museum), the new scrapbooks are exhibited directly alongside several examples of the original Hijikata scrapbooks – those documents being thereby extracted from their habitually “closed” archival existence in Tokyo – and also alongside the original art works that had inspired Hijikata in the 1960s, in the form of paintings and sculptures by artists such as Bacon and Bellmer. A complex tension is generated, between the contemporary act of simulation, appropriation and fabrication – and the original aura and presence of the archival documents of performance. A further tension – or contradiction – emerges between the dimension in Hawkins’ work of a reverential, research-based process in recreating the original Hijikata works, and the desire simultaneously to amend, to subvert or to pervert them – in Hawkins’ own term in his exhibition’s title, to “twist” them.

Why would such performance documents need to be recreated or subverted in the first place, notably in the context of an art project to be exhibited for spectators in the spatial environment of an art-museum, and through a process that might be seen as combining performance and visual art? For Hawkins, the original artefacts of Hijikata's scrapbooks become, in a way, reactivated and vivified – by their perversion or “twisting” – precisely because they themselves originated from such a process. In a conversation on his project, Hawkins commented: «What Hijikata's scrapbooks were meant to do, as I eventually found out, was something quite amazing. Take Picasso's [painting] *Guernica* for example: Hijikata eviscerates the piece [in his scrapbook], ignoring the painter's original intentions, cutting out the parts he likes, tossing [away] the parts he doesn't, and making a story... of a prostitute squatting in a vestibule and a dead baby that flies through the air».

This kind of tension that underpins Hawkins' project on Hijikata's scrapbooks – pitched between veneration and subversive appropriation – is arguably also an essential, pervasive aspect of all art-museum exhibitions which display the residues of performance cultures that have elapsed, and thereby become “historical”. Especially from the final decade of the twentieth century, art museums began to stage large-scale exhibitions of what could be seen as the detrita of performance cultures; the formative model for such exhibitions was the one entitled «Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object», curated by Paul Schimmel and exhibited at art museums in Los Angeles, Tokyo and other cities in 1998, which assembled the traces of many works of performance art, choreography and intermedial theatre, staged worldwide between 1945 and 1979 in such forms as performance scores, plans, costumes, films, and other remnants. In many cases, the works documented in the exhibition had been conceived as being autonomous, and thereby resistant to being amalgamated with other performances. The act of meshing and combining those works' traces, by setting them intimately alongside one another in the art-museum exhibition-space, both contravened or “twisted” the original intentions of such works, but simultaneously opened-out those intentions, and revealed interconnections between performance works from ostensibly disparate cultures and ways of working. In spatial terms, such amalgamations of performance residues may also constitute experiments in the status of the archive. In that sense, all art-aligned projects which reconfigure the

memories and materials of past performance are simultaneously activations and disfigurations.

In the case of the particular performance materials at stake in Richard Hawkins' restaging of Hijikata's archive, that ambivalence between disfiguration and resuscitation is especially acute, because the scrapbook format itself is one which is always exceptionally in-flux, and exposed to transformation or amendment. Usually, a scrapbook can only ever be said to be "finished" at the moment of its maker's death – until then, it can always be re-opened, for another layer of imagery, another stratum of text, to be inserted. This is surely why scrapbooks form a preferential medium for launching ideas into performances, into films and art-works, and why they have often been posthumously preserved and also digitised, as with Hijikata's scrapbooks, or those of Muybridge, or of the British experimental film-maker Derek Jarman, among many others. Scrapbooks form a malleable and volatile material for the transmission of ideas into spaces, whether spaces of performance or of projection. Although a scrapbook is usually an intimate, tactile object which a performer holds close to the body, in relative secrecy, it can also be transformed, via digitisation, into an object which may then be viewed pervasively, in the form of a digital archive, immediately, by anyone who accesses it online. In that sense, it oscillates between intimate secrecy and wide-open exposure, including an openness towards its own appropriation, subversion, and deletion. One particular transformation which an archival scrapbook endures – in its deployment within the particular art-museum context which is my focus here – is that it may become a prestigious art-work, exhibited at a prominent art museum such as the Tate, subject to economic valuation (as well as spectatorial engagement) – that is, in opposition to its previous status as the detrital residue of performance, often fortunate to have even been preserved at all, as in the case of Hijikata's scrapbooks.

In *Hijikata Twist*, the primary curatorial focus is upon Hawkins' work, rather than that of Hijikata: the emphasis is on the project of the contemporary artist who has, in the term of Bolter and Grusin, «remediated» a previous body of work, through a combination of manual collaging techniques and digital interventions. The original work still remains present in the exhibition space, in the form of several examples of Hijikata's archived scrapbooks, but the pre-eminent spectacle is that of the intermedial process of transformation itself. A dissolution

or upending of hierarchies is at stake, between the original scrapbook and its simulation.

In many ways, this process resonates with the ways in which the medium of film may serve to document a performance before it elapses, but can also propel that performance into another arena of time and space, and thereby generate an entirely distinct spectatorial experience. For example, the notorious mid-1960s performances of the Vienna Action Group artists were almost always staged only once, and intentionally left only negligible documentation, other than in the medium of the films shot of them, notably by the experimental film-maker Kren Kren. At the same time, Kren imposed his own particular set of intentions and working-methods onto those filmic documents of performance, especially by editing them in such a rapid-fire and disordered way, with an excess of cuts, that the Action Group performers then perceived their original work as having been disfigured or twisted in a negative sense, through a perversion of the habitual process of performance's documentation – with the result that, at film-projection events, violent disagreements broke-out between performer and film-maker.

An element of this contentious process of active disfiguration is also present in Hawkins' project with the scrapbooks of Hijikata. Again, this relates to the ability accorded to contemporary art to operate by means of simulation, appropriation, and aberration. Notably, in a number of Hawkins' exhibited works, he creates scrapbooks which he conceives as those which Hijikata would *ideally* have wanted to create in the 1960s, if he had only had access to a more comprehensive reservoir of illustrations within the Japanese art-magazines that formed his main source for the visual materials he incorporated into his scrapbook pages. In conversation, Hawkins commented on this process: «I wanted to flesh out Hijikata's ideas, and looked at it as a way of being haunted by the voice of Hijikata». In that formulation, the origin for Hawkins' process of disfiguration is assigned to Hijikata himself, who inhabits and haunts the contemporary artist Hawkins, both corporeally and vocally – as though Hijikata were still engaged in devising and enunciating ideas for performances, even beyond his own death. In that way, the contemporary artist is a self-nominated “medium” in a spectral sense, transmitting while also perverting an original corporeal presence and body of work, *as well as* someone working with the contemporary nature and status of the dual mediums of performance

and visual art, together with their infiltrations into one another – especially in the light of their current exposure to unprecedented instability, emerging from new forms of digital media. One manifestation of the proliferating excess which digital media instil into Hawkins' project is that digital technologies enabled him to create 150 scrapbooks for his exhibition, that is, ten times or more the total number of the original archival documents of Hijikata's scrapbooks.

As well as working with ideas of the boundaries of collage and of the overhauling of performance traces, Hawkins' engagement with the scrapbooks of Hijikata is also closely bound-up with the work of the French writer and dramatist Jean Genet – and especially with Genet's self-conception, notably in his alliance with the occupants of Palestinian refugee camps, as a «loving captive» («*un captif amoureux*») – a captive who still always possesses the capacity for betrayal, especially the betrayal of whatever he is most passionately attached to, or whatever most captivates him<sup>2</sup>. In the textual element of several of Hawkins' scrapbooks, not only Hijikata's texts disappear, but also Hawkins' own texts vanish, to be replaced by those of Genet, whose work was also one of the primary inspirations for Hijikata's instigation of the «*ankoku butoh*» performance-art form in the 1960s. In that sense, the final “twist” of Hawkins' project of apparent subversion is that it actually creates a genealogical lineage which sustains concerns – with corporeality and performance – across the work of Genet and Hijikata, and into the contemporary moment.

As a restaging of Hijikata's scrapbooks and their preoccupations, within art-museum spaces, Hawkins' project *Hijikata Twist* forms an expansion of the archival materials of performance cultures, but also interrogates the potential for such materials to be redeployed, in their inhabitation of contemporary spectatorial space: a space which is increasingly in-flux, and subject to variations, simulations and appropriations that are also integral to histories both of performance art and of visual arts media, notably that of collage. The contemporary process of recreating and restaging performance archives may itself come to form a spatially located *act* of performance, that durationally occupies

<sup>2</sup> Genet's book dealing with his time in the Palestinian camps is titled in French *Un Captif Amoureux*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986..

a specific site, and seeks there to instigate particular spectatorial experiences. *Hijikata Twist* demonstrates the profoundly transformational, conflictual dynamics at stake within performance archives<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Bibliography: Richard Hawkins and Stephen Barber, *Hijikata: Disfiguration*, London, Vauxhall & Company, 2017 (forthcoming); Richard Hawkins, *Third Mind*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, 2010; Tatsumi Hijikata, *Costume en Face: A Primer of Darkness for Young Boys and Girls*, New York, Ugly Duckling Presse, 2015; Takashi Morishita, *Hijikata Tatsumi's Notational Butoh*, Tokyo, Keio University, 2015.

Katja Centonze

CRITICAL/SEISMIC BODIES IN HIJIKATA  
TATSUMI'S WRITING PRACTICE AND  
DANCING PRACTICE

This study concerns the contiguous spaces between the writing practice and the dancing practice of Hijikata Tatsumi<sup>1</sup>. The complex operation of dance aesthetics undertaken by Hijikata is considered here in light of his radical exploration and diversification of corporeality. In conjunction with his performative achievements his writings raise awareness of the unreadable nature of the carnal body (*nikutai*) and manifest a singular criticism about the coupling between knowledge and corporeality.

*Theory and Practice, Bodies and Words*

In 2009 the 15<sup>th</sup> Performance Studies International Conference (Zagreb, June 24-28) faced the complex problem of «MISperformance: Misfiring, Misfitting, Misreading». What came to the fore, were emerging agendas that radically discussed the error within theory in relation to a «mis-performativity of transmission of knowledge and of its lecture machine, of the very academic format of the conference<sup>2</sup>». One among these agendas was the urgency for a new vocabulary, while the existing one was challenged by a «provocative terminology coinage» that attempted to re-position the status of rhetoric and the notion

<sup>1</sup> This article is an adapted version of my paper *Fluid Corporealities: Hijikata Tatsumi's Bodies Trembling between States of Crisis* delivered at PSi#21 Fluid States Tohoku 2015, Aomori, August 28-September 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lada Čale Feldman, *Intro1: PSi Mis-Performing Papers*, «Performance Research», vol. 15, n. 2, 2010, p. 2.

of subjectivity<sup>3</sup>. The nature of illegibility which affects the body was inevitably put under examination. This challenge denounces a shared uneasiness about approaches to performance studies nowadays, and shows the strong necessity for exploring new tools that might reduce the distance between theory and practice, the body and discourse<sup>4</sup>.

Performance studies and dance studies are young research fields, and the most recent is the latter. Dance research, as defined by Janet Lansdale, «is very much a newcomer as a discipline»<sup>5</sup> and it has given rise to continuously new challenges in analytic approaches to movement and choreography from the 1980s and, more pronouncedly since the 1990s. Many debates are still open and it is a difficult task to solve theoretical and methodological problems that arise from the encounter between scholarship and choreutic arts, the area which visibly manifests a very high degree of complexity in its survey.

The specific cluster of problems we encounter, when dealing with Hijikata's art, is of translating dance, translating corporeality, translating Japanese, translating Hijikata's hermetic texts<sup>6</sup>. The explosion of issues relating to corporeality, and the questions they embrace, have been envisioned by Hijikata's diagnosis. As a consequence, it is my contention that a parallel examination of Hijikata's praxis and writings may open up new perspectives on the encounter between dance and discourse, the body and words. As I elsewhere suggested<sup>7</sup>, the fibre and fabric of movement in *butoh* praxis, if viewed from a certain perspective, pertains to a different order from that of contemporary dance and other types of experimental performance. That is to say, *butoh* may belong to a register that necessarily requires not only a new language

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Problems concerning the discourse on the body are felt strongly by a large group of theorists working in completely different areas.

<sup>5</sup> Janet Lansdale, *A tapestry of intertexts: dance analysis for the twenty-first century*, in *The Routledge Dancer Studies Reader*, edited by Alexandra Carter and Janet O'Shea, London/NewYork, Routledge, 2010, p. 158.

<sup>6</sup> My politics of translation is trying to avoid as much as possible a contamination of the original source, even if this means sacrificing the final textual aesthetics.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Katja Centonze, *I colori proibiti di Kinjiki 1959-2009: Ōno Yoshito, Hijikata Tatsumi e il corpo eretico nel butō*, in *Japan Pop: parole, immagini, suoni dal Giappone contemporaneo*, edited by Gianluca Coci, Roma, Aracne Editrice, 2013, pp. 653-684.

of criticism, but a specific thermometer of corporeal sensitivity. In particular, due to its paradoxical character, *butoh* itself calls into play a new formulation of its survey.

*Hijikata's Dance of Terrorism: Naked Words, Naked Bodies*

Especially during the 1960s Hijikata's *butoh* unfolds as a "ter-odansu" (dance of terrorism<sup>8</sup>). The corporeal matter, he works on, appears as a minefield and site of critique against the socio-political system and the pervasive commodification of existence. In his revolutionary project we see condensed the crisis of the post-war body and a critical corporeality, which enacts a resistance to the politics established by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (1951). He dissects the body into nuances which are multi-layered and manifest subtle and changeable spectra in a polysemous interplay. Within this extended landscape emerges the *nikutai*, which is the starting point of the adventure of *butoh*'s history. The *nikutai*, transient and anarchic, is the living and raw corporeality most exposed to deterioration and most attached to life. Its highest expression and potential is shown in processes like metamorphosis, modification and mutation. Besides the *nikutai* Hijikata fleshes out the *suijakutai* (the weakened body, the altered body, or, as I define it here, the contaminated body<sup>9</sup>), the *shitai* (the dead body), *jintai* (the human body), *mi* (body), *karada* (body), *shintai* (body), etc<sup>10</sup>. Hijikata writes:

<sup>8</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Naka no sozai/sozai* (Inner material/material), in *Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai. Hijikata Tatsumishi ni okuru Hosoe Eikō shashinshū*, program notes, *Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai*, Daichi Seimei Hall, Tokyo, July 23-24, 1960.

<sup>9</sup> For the *suijakutai* in contrast to Körperkultur see Katja Centonze, *Butō, la danza non danzata: culture coreutiche e corporalità che si intersecano tra Giappone e Germania*, in *Butō. Prospettive europee e sguardi dal Giappone*, edited by Matteo Casari and Elena Cervellati, Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti e ALMADL, 2015, <<http://amsacta.unibo.it/4352/>>, pp. 104-108.

<sup>10</sup> For Hijikata's construction of disparate corporealities see Katja Centonze, *Bodies Shifting from Hijikata's Nikutai to Contemporary Shintai: New Generation Facing Corporeality*, in *Avant-Gardes in Japan. Anniversary of Futurism and Butō: Performing Arts and Cultural Practices between Contemporariness and Tradition*, edited by Katja Centonze, Venezia, Cafoscarina, 2010, pp.111-141.

The *nikutai*'s voice, inside which are buried an infinite number of chasms [*sakeme*], is something as if you would wrap in a handkerchief anew the scream from the material. This happens often in the civilisation inside the body [*karada*]. Who is the creator of the overconfidence in transforming into flesh and blood? The pure spirit and the dim soul gazed at by the *nikutai*, which is divinity of flesh [*niku no kami*] and raw dream, cry with a faltering voice, hand in hand under the collapse while still pending up in the air as ever...<sup>11</sup>

Hijikata's radicalism and deep concern for the body manifested in his performative practice penetrates into verbal landscape enforcing the revolutionary act of his art, where bodies are taken in extreme situations, and threat and risk are displayed on the choreographic level by, for example, unbalance, instability and entropic forces.

His obscure literature goes beyond rhetoric. We see confirmed in it, the way the bodies, as conceived by the dancer, congeal into states of emergency turning into weapons of criticism. The body itself is radically questioned. At the same time the body questions the establishment. While dealing with bodies/corporealities in his texts, he applies distinguished terminologies in differing contexts, connoting case by case the specific materiality and matter of the body. Hijikata treats words as bodies and opens up the same word to continually new meaning. His «bodily writing<sup>12</sup>» confers corporeality to words and creates synaesthetic texts which are multidimensional and involve all senses.

The critical body or body of crisis is revealed in Mishima Yukio's text «Kiki to buyō» (Crisis and dance), written in 1960, when the definition *butoh* was not yet in use. Mishima's literature on the avant-garde dance is, without any doubt, among the most intuitive texts written about Hijikata's dance preannouncing the main traits of its development<sup>13</sup>. Mishima reflects on Hijikata's words: «He said that, an exam-

<sup>11</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku*, «Gendaishi techō», vol. 12, n. 10, 1969, p. 35, my translation.

<sup>12</sup> For the concept of «bodily writing» see Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing history*, in *The Routledge Dancer Studies Reader*, cit., pp. 291-302.

<sup>13</sup> For Mishima's writings on Hijikata's avant-garde dance see Katja Centonze, *Encounters between Media and Body Technologies. Mishima Yukio, Hijikata Tatsumi, and Hosoe Eikō*, in *Enacting Culture-Japanese Theater in Historical and Modern Contexts*, edited by Barbara Geilhorn, Eike Grossman, Hiroko Miura, and Peter

ple that seizes this posture of crisis – and it is a very singular example – is “a man who urinates outdoors in a standing position seen from behind<sup>14</sup>”».

We may say that the novelist was confronted with an artistic reality characterised by the potential to display concretely what its intentions and desires are, and by the actual and carnal manifestation of a discourse that goes beyond words. In fact, he often puts emphasis on the actuality (*akuchuarite*)<sup>15</sup> of the performative act in Hijikata’s creations<sup>16</sup>.

The de-figured body seen from behind becomes a *topos* in Hijikata’s anti-dance, where the territory is predominately occupied by the rear. The rear replaces face, head and hands, which are/were the usual vehicles of expression. This implies that together with the erasure of the face and hands, expression is also erased<sup>17</sup>. As he declares in his program notes for *Kinjiki nibusaku* (Forbidden Colours II, 1959):

The execution of the action will be done all at once without bending the domesticated articulations. The expression of this body writhing in agony under the strict restriction of the bar [*bōjō*], will be reoriented from the face to the back. The promotion of the prioritised back to carry out a very important role, in consequence of this drama in which all the evil comes from the rear, the chest, which circles, the chest which moves slowly, and the chest which flies high around and must land, are equivalently used<sup>18</sup>.

Eckersall, München, Iudicium, 2012, pp. 218-237; *Letteratura invaghita del corpo: La danza di Hijikata Tatsumi riflessa nelle parole di Mishima Yukio*, in *Riflessioni sul Giappone II*, edited by Maria Chiara Migliore, Antonio Manieri and Stefano Romagnoli, Roma, Aracne, 2016 (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Mishima translated in Centonze, *Encounters between Media and Body Technologies. Mishima Yukio, Hijikata Tatsumi, and Hosoe Eikō*, cit. p. 224.

<sup>15</sup> Mishima employs the term *akuchuarite*, which is the transliteration of the French word *actualité*.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Katja Centonze, *Encounters between Media and Body Technologies. Mishima Yukio, Hijikata Tatsumi, and Hosoe Eikō*, cit.

<sup>17</sup> Katja Centonze, *Letteratura invaghita del corpo: La danza di Hijikata Tatsumi riflessa nelle parole di Mishima Yukio*, cit.

<sup>18</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Kinjiki*, «Kugatsu itsuka rokuji no kai. 6nin no abangyarudo», program notes, 650 EXPERIENCE no kai, Daiichi Seimei Hall, Tokyo, September 5, 1959, my translation.

Hijikata divests not only the body in his art, but he undresses also words (naked words, naked body) often through a mix of cruelty, apparent sarcasm and dry realism. His counter-discourse and disintegration of cultural categories goes further: he eradicates and opposes his own physicality which is conditioned, shaped, formed, informed, domesticated by the system or by dance formulas.

### *Nonhuman Theatre*

A further important aspect in Hijikata's revolution, enucleated by Mishima ante litteram, is the relation between the body and the object, which is exemplified by the dancer as a patient affected by poliomyelitis, who tries to catch an object. Mishima envisages in this relation a process of estrangement and detects the thing (*mono*) as a dreadful thing-in-itself (*monojitai*)<sup>19</sup>.

I think that, what is described by Mishima, can be connected and extended to that specific corporeality of the *hagurete iru nikutai*, often mentioned by Hijikata. *Hagurete iru nikutai* is the carnal body which has become lost, errant/wandering/roaming, disoriented, the body of which we lose control, which has lost control, alienated from itself, detached from the bonds which govern society and the individual, divorced from subjectivity and from the person herself/himself. Such a body cannot be subjected either to choreutic methodology, or to "readable" kinetic configurations. It belongs to the non-oriented and non-directed gesture and to the de-figuration of the systemic organisation of choreography<sup>20</sup>. Therefore it is strictly linked to what Hijikata defines as the *mumokutekina nikutai*, the *nikutai* without an aim, or, as I call it, the atelic<sup>21</sup> *nikutai*, which operates against the society of productivity. This corporeality disobeys dynamics oriented towards a goal with an aprioristic and distinguishable point of departure and arrival. The *mumokutekina nikutai* is at the centre of his dance, as he declared

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Katja Centonze, *Letteratura invaghita del corpo: La danza di Hijikata Tatsumi riflessa nelle parole di Mishima Yukio*, cit.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> I employ here the term "atelic" (purposeless, without an ultimate end) as the antonym of "telic", (directed or moving towards a goal, an outcome or a definite end).

in *Keimusho e* (To prison<sup>22</sup>), and may be associated also to immobility<sup>23</sup>. Hijikata's renovation consists in conceiving dance by suffocating dance, which means, by preventing and sabotaging its commonly perceived dynamic essence. His dance launched an attack to the roots of terpsichorean art denying its harmonic and fluent dynamics, and promoting the non-dancing, non-moving body<sup>24</sup>.

Mishima isolates a crucial characteristic, i.e. the non-dialectic between the body and the object and the manipulation of the *nikutai* in respect to the object. Hijikata obliterates the hierarchy among human being, animal and object, dismissing an anthropocentric vision of dance in terms of human expression. In his challenge to theatre and dance, he pushes to the extreme the nonhuman dimension in performance and investigates, intellectually and choreutically, processes for which the dancer or experiencer starts to animate the inanimate and render inanimate the animated. His terroristic act enfolds not only on a socio-political plane but invests the conception in itself of artistic creation as human domain.

Also Ichikawa Miyabi focuses on the *nikutai*/object relation and discerns in Hijikata's dance an operation, which he defines as the *nikutaika sareta mono*, the *nikutaised thing*<sup>25</sup>.

### *The Body Observes the Study on the Body*

In his essay *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku* (The study on the *nikutai* scrutinised by the *nikutai*, 1969) Hijikata reserves a peculiar attention also to natural crisis underlining the difference between his region, Tōhoku, and the metropolis of Tokyo. Although not explicitly

<sup>22</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Keimusho e*, cit. p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Katja Centonze, *Letteratura invaghita del corpo: La danza di Hijikata Tatsumi riflessa nelle parole di Mishima Yukio*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> For a dance theory, which breaks with the isomorphism between dance and movement see André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement*, London/New York, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> For further details see Katja Centonze, *Mutamenti del linguaggio estetico e segnico della danza: Ankoku Butō*, in *Mutamenti dei linguaggi della scena teatrale e di danza del Giappone contemporaneo*, edited by Bonaventura Ruperti, Venezia, Cafoscarina, 2014, pp. 99-100.

expressed in his discourse, by addressing natural calamity, *tensai*, also natural catastrophe, plague, cataclysm, and therefore, earthquakes as well, are implied. There might be a connection between the instable bodies in *butoh* and the physical experience of earthquakes. Bodies continue to shiver also after an earthquake. The shaking corporeality displaying *keiren*, convulsive trembling, is a distinctive characteristic in Hijikata's dance, which may be affiliated to this seismic body.

In his essay he associates natural disasters with specific corporealities, in particular with the bodies of children. As far as I have observed, the infant body is denoted by Hijikata throughout his texts with the term *karada* or *shintai* and never with the term *nikutai*. Hijikata focuses on the situation of natural crisis and the infant body without rhetorical gloss. His impassive and cold-blooded words manifest an absence of desperation and lie outside the sphere to which moral judgments apply:

Natural disasters and children are connected. There are many children considered to be the appendix to natural disasters. It is a natural disaster when they are swept away by illness, as well when a *mochi*<sup>26</sup> gets stuck in their throat. Children are standing next to natural calamity. They scream, not because they have found their hat or one of their shoes has fallen, but rather because they cannot find their body [*karada*].

I have made the experience, one after the other, of being nearly thrown into the iron pot, but I was not able to have such a natural disaster in the city. Speaking about natural disasters reminds me of the flood. Together with the flood come the corpses of drowned children [*kodomo no suishitai*], and when the children's white swollen belly comes drifting, it gives a cool sensation<sup>27</sup>.

With this essay Hijikata enacts a concrete movement from text towards the carnal body.

As the title highlights, Hijikata operates an inversion of the rapport between the *nikutai* and the discourse on the *nikutai*. Here it is not the study of the body that observes the body, but the body observes the cognitive practice and research. Present dance studies, as shown in discussions offered by Philipa Rothfield or Susan Leigh Foster, punctuate this very aspect, and address the body of the observer/scholar,

<sup>26</sup> Rice cake.

<sup>27</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku*, cit. p. 33, my translation.

which is epistemologically included in the analysis<sup>28</sup>. We may say that Hijikata accomplished what dance studies and performance studies recently claim: to bring back corporeality to its corporeal sense.

*Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku* embraces stratified observations, perceptions and cognizance concerning bodies. It is an important key to access Hijikata's conception of diverse corporealities, as well as their intriguing rapport with language, with the verbal and rational universe. It may be considered an investigation ante litteram of several issues posed by recent dance theory. This text came out in the October special number *Nikutai to gengo* (Nikutai and language) of *Gendaishi techō* (Contemporary art handbook, 1969), after the September number (1969), which included Kasai Akira's critique and other essays on language and the carnal body. In my opinion, both issues epitomise the intricate debate on the *nikutai* in the 1960s and Hijikata's analysis is an outstanding example.

I dare to say that Hijikata's texts are bodily texts, which melt orality and writing, performance and literacy, bodies and words, and this is clearly displayed in this essay.

A fundamental aspect of Hijikata's dance politics and artistic strategy introduced explicitly in this essay, is the shattered visual rapport, the debunking of "optocentrism". He blows up the monopoly of sight in perceiving and producing performance, and as a criterion in philosophical phenomenology. This aspect is crystalised in the reign of *ankoku* (utter darkness), in the subtraction of light, in confusing the audience's visual perception and empowering the other senses. The performing body is deferred from the production of visual forms and the spectator's and the performer's gaze is disoriented. As articulated in Sally Banes and André Lepecki's collection of essays, recently dance and performance studies have concentrated on reorienting the optomonopolism and turned to the analysis of performances involving our organs beyond our eyes<sup>29</sup>.

In respect to the gaze in Hijikata's dance Gunji Masakatsu highlights:

<sup>28</sup> Philipa Rothfield, *Differentiating phenomenology and dance*, in *The Routledge Dancer Studies Reader*, cit. pp. 303-318; Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing history*, cit.

<sup>29</sup> *The Senses in Performance*, edited by Sally Banes and André Lepecki, London/New York, Routledge, 2007.

[...] Hijikata Tatsumi peeps constantly into the *nikutai*'s inside/inner part as if he would go beyond the inside of a cavern, and as if he would look at something which is his own *nikutai*, but is not his own *nikutai*. There the relation of showing and seeing seemed not to have been established. While the spectator sees Hijikata's dancing *nikutai*, and also Hijikata is seeing that *nikutai*, it seems as he would render this *nikutai* and its condition different from the usual scenic arts in the world<sup>30</sup>.

The extraordinary condition created in Hijikata's performances, according to Gunji, can be paralleled only by the folk tradition based on the sympathetic magic, *jujutsu*. This situation happens, for example, during the Hanamatsuri and Yukimatsuri, performed in Winter in the area between the mountains of the upper course of Tenryūgawa. In these rituals the relation between seeing and show/ing, between who dances and who is watching is erased. As Gunji explains, spectators (*kenbutsu*) are excluded, because a fundamental condition of partaking in the event is of blood relations<sup>31</sup>.

In *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku* Hijikata discusses also *nikutaigaku* (study on the carnal body) and *nikutaishi* (history of the carnal body). Both are not common designations. In my opinion, these neologisms are emphasised in respect to the *shintai* (body), the corporeality prevalingly considered in a philosophical survey. As a consequence, *nikutaigaku* and *nikutaishi* can be viewed in contrast to the common designation of *shintairon*, the theory on the body<sup>32</sup>. In respect to *nikutai*, *shintai* is further a sort of normativised body inserted into a social context.

Hijikata envisages *nikutaishi* and *nikutaigaku* as mythology, shared by a large number of people, living on the surface of the car-

<sup>30</sup> Gunji Masakatsu, *Shi to iu kotenbutō*, «Bijutsu techō», n. 2, 1973, p. 121, my translation.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*. See also Katja Centonze, *Finis terrae: butō e tarantismo salentino. Due culture coreutiche a confronto nell'era intermediale*, in *Atti del XXX Convegno di Studi sul Giappone*, edited by Maria Chiara Migliore, Galatina (Lecce), Congedo Editore, 2008, pp. 121-137.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Katja Centonze, *Bodies Shifting from Hijikata's Nikutai to Contemporary Shintai: New Generation Facing Corporeality*, cit.; Katja Centonze, *Topoi of Performativity: Italian Bodies in Japanese Spaces/Japanese Bodies in Italian Spaces*, in *Japanese Theatre in a Transcultural Context. German and Italian Intertwinings*, edited by Stanca Scholz-Cionca and Andreas Regelsberger, München, Iudicium, 2011, pp. 211-230.

nal body, and compares them to bacteria. He ironically observes, that these discourses are meant for maintaining the «hygiene of the body [karada]»<sup>33</sup>.

According to the dancer, this condition of the discursified *nikutai* is transitional, then, he adds, «real extinction» makes its entrance. The dead body, *shitai*, does not take part in the «real extinction», and therefore also the corpse is affected by the mythological bacteria.

Our *nikutai* is shattered, disintegrated even in the very moment of birth; it is not intact or integral. This is reflected also in Hijikata's choreographies since the beginning, and will be fixed as a method in his dance practice defined as that of *butoh-fu* (*butoh* notation). The *nikutai* concerns a condition of corporeal fragmentation, a split corporeality, a straying and alienating/alienated (*hagurete iru*) corporeality, characterised by chasms, tears, cracks, rips (*sakeme*), and not graspable in a unity. Therefore, «the hand chases the hand»<sup>34</sup>. They are seen as independent entities, alienated from the subject. Subjective identity is obliterated and the *nikutai* melts, congeals, coagulates like a sugar candy (*bekkoame*) in a physiochemical process reproduced in dance. The body's structure is radically disturbed in its normal and normative organisation, its parts and senses are dissociated from their original physiological position and function, dismembered, mixed up and then dislocated, as for example in the case of a seeing foot or a seeing rear<sup>35</sup>. The dancer's hand does not belong to the dancer. The *nikutai* is an object independent from the dancer, and is aligned with the external objects. This deferred and distantiated body, the distance between the dancer and him or herself, is the peculiar *Verfremdung* achieved in *butoh* dance, where the attention is shifted from the centre to the periphery, and the focus is distributed everywhere. The decentring process points at the anti-modern aspect of Hijikata's dance strategy. But, as I often have discussed elsewhere, the condition of *Verfremdung* is not a

<sup>33</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku*, cit. p. 31. Hijikata expresses here his critique against the sanitised and prosperous post-war society.

<sup>34</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, *Nikutai ni nagamerareta nikutaigaku*, cit. p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> This was put into practice, for example, during Kobayashi Saga's workshop (POHRC event, Tokyo, May 13, 2014), where the topics were: eyes under the feet, eyes on the rear; corporeal situations linked to Francis Bacon's art, and to articulations with spherical junctions in Hans Bellmer's art.

prerogative of *butoh*, although it has been accentuated and made explicit, and recurs historically and technically in Japanese performing arts dating back to premodern theatricality<sup>36</sup>.

Hijikata's words reveal that the *nikutai* is bound to loneliness and is approachable cognitively only through physiology – and not through *nikutaigaku* or *nikutaishi*.

We may say, that the discursive disciplines embracing *nikutai* are fallible and misfiring, because the *nikutai* is not circumscribable, confinable, containable.

Hijikata's words convey that we can dominate history as a cultural construction, but we cannot dominate the *nikutai*. I suppose that herein lies the anarchic nature of the *nikutai*.

Nevertheless there are also contrasting and paradoxical aspects of the *nikutai* or different nuances or states of the *nikutai*. Therefore, it is a fluid entity. It is fluid, because these corporealities maintain paradoxes and contradictions inside (such as «the dead body standing straight at the risk of its own life»).

In Hijikata's texts we are not confronted with the idea of the body, but the body in itself. Through this perspective, the word does not entrap (corpo)reality in a fixed category, but flows together with it.

<sup>36</sup> I discussed the «diachronic polymorphism of *wazaogi*», for example, in Katja Centonze, *Finis terrae: butō e tarantismo salentino. Due culture coreutiche a confronto nell'era intermediale*, cit. pp. 130-133.

Maria Pia D'Orazi

BUILDING THE DANCING BODY.  
AKIRA KASAI, FROM BUTOH TO EURHYTHMY

At its very beginning in the early Sixties, Japanese butoh dance originated from a series of perceptive experiments that start by throwing out all techniques to ask an afore-question: «What is a dancing body<sup>1</sup>»?

It is the period of *Dance experience* series, when the butoh founder Tatsumi Hijikata was collaborating with the modern dancer Kazuo Ohno and his young pupil Akira Kasai; at the same time gathering around his research a whole generation of artists coming from different kind of artistic expression<sup>2</sup>.

The first result of that experimental work is the identification of a bodily level of perception that no longer pertains to the individual with a specific social identity, as much as to the *human body* as matter, a living entity just like any other element in the universe. The precondition concept of this work is the idea that body has a deeply mysterious essence that movement cannot avoid to be related with. Hijikata found a clue in violence and eroticism to glance this area. He discovered thus a dance that is already present within the body and that emerges as the dancer forget all techniques and dissolve Ego: «Rather than a weak body, happy to be subdued by reason and emotion, Hijikata asks of his own body that reason be made visible, and emotion a consequence of a physical act»<sup>3</sup>. Dance becomes the exposure of the body as matter,

<sup>1</sup> Actually the official beginning of butoh is considered the 5 minutes piece named *Kinjiki* (Forbidden colors) that Tatsumi Hijikata have based on the same novel by Yukio Mishima, and presented on May 24th 1959 at the New talents program of the All Japan Modern Dance Association.

<sup>2</sup> Among them: the writer Yukio Mishima, the painter Natsuyuki Nakanishi, the French literature scholar Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, the photographer Eikoh Hosoe and the graphic artist Tadanori Yokoo just to quote a few.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il corpo eretico*, Padova, CasadeiLibri, 2008, p. 58.

emptied of any expressive urge of its own and presenting itself both as a storage space for the physical memory of its own acts, and a memory of the whole universe, perceived in its infinite spectrum of different energy vibrations.

Following this idea to the bitter end, Hijikata come back to his origin and reached an invisible space where lived-out gestures and observed behaviours deposit in the depths of the body, pushing out towards the light again, through the dance.

Trying to get to know the substance that made up his body, born from the experience of a young boy growing up experimenting the world in the harsh, powerful and uncontrollable wilderness, Hijikata ended up transforming Tōhoku – his native region – in an imaginary place, beyond time and space. Tōhoku in everywhere since «the utter darkness exist throughout the world»<sup>4</sup> he stated. The desire and the need to face the mystery of the body then could be the birthplace of butoh everywhere.

The *Tōhoku kabuki series* that Hijikata realized in the Seventies is a turning point of his artistic production and the formalization of his personal style. A similar changing occurred even in the artistic way of Kazuo Ohno and Akira Kasai. Ohno stopped dancing around 1967 and when he come back again on stage with *Admiring La Argentina* (1977), he has accomplished his own original butoh style. As Kasai he started a solo career in 1966, stops dancing in his turn in 1979 to go to Germany for studying Rudolf Steiner eurhythmy, and start again dancing in 1994 introducing a personal butoh style that has metabolized eurhythmy in his construction as well as the two models of his early training, that is the same Ohno and Hijikata.

If it is true that butoh can be built anywhere it is also true that «building butoh is a task that is simple and complicated at once: butoh is a dance that is born when you understand the body», Kasai observes, «but the understanding of the human body implies the understanding of the universe in its entirety»<sup>5</sup>. It is a simple question that needs to find an answer: «Can we read our body as though it were a book»<sup>6</sup>?

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Nanako Kurihara, *Hijikata Tatsumi. The Words of Butoh*, «The Drama Review», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on 2004, also mentioned in

Hijikata compared the body to «a wall built with little bricks of time and space», as its present form «is the result of a desperate attempt to keep together parts of us that are dying one after the other<sup>7</sup>». The first concern of a dancer should be the awareness of the material that his or her body is made of, the total body sculpted by life in the course of existence. This is how he brought the revolution to the idea of dance, freeing it from the identification with movement and changing its reference points. The relationship with time and space changes: time is no longer a succession of moments to be filled by a rhythmic sequence of gestures, it is now the whole of the experiences lived since the beginning of time; the space isn't a place we can walk about or around, it is the surface occupied by the individual joined to the environment that he or she creates by changing the quality of his or her presence. Above all, «dance cannot be made of time and space alone»<sup>8</sup>. To reach the memory of matter it is necessary to develop an internal perception of the body, and directing awareness to the interior of the body means to recognize the identity of matter as energy. So that energy – as a category of time and space ruled by consciousness – becomes one part of the training. Feeling movement from within is an act that has to do with the relation between consciousness and matter set by imagination.

At the beginning of the Seventies, when Hijikata is working exclusively as a choreographer, his work with dancers becomes a method

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Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il demone di Mezzogiorno. A proposito di Trasform'azioni e del Butō*, in Samantha Marenzi (edited by), *Trasform'azioni, rassegna internazionale di danza butō. Fotografia di un'esperienza*, Roma, Editoria&Spettacolo, 2010, pp. 38-39; and in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il Butō in Italia e l'esperienza di Akira Kasai*, in *Butō. Prospettive europee e sguardi dal Giappone*, edited by Matteo Casari and Elena Cervellati, Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti, 2015, pp. 138-139, <<http://amsacta.unibo.it/4352/>>. The image of the body as a book is quite common in the language of Kasai. It appears even in Toshiro Kuwabara, *Dance closely related to matter. Kasai Akira Interview*, «Nikutaemo», n° 2, Summer, 1996, p. 34. And it is the leading motif of the book: Akira Kasai, *Karada to iu shomotsu* (A book named body), Tokyo, Shoshi Yamada, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Yukio Waguri, *Butō Kaden* (Butō Flower) CD-ROM, Tokushima, Just System, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Quotation from Akira Kasai workshop in Rome on 2007, mentioned in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Akira Kasai, il fantasma di Eliogabalo. Tre studi su Artaud*, «Biblioteca Teatrale», vol. 99-100, p. 86.

to build the dance through the spoken word. Hijikata ignites the dance using words with the aim of transforming the physical condition of the dancers. Yukio Waguri described it as a way to «physicalize images through words»<sup>9</sup>. As Nanako Kurihara tells it, «Hijikata had attempted to capture all kinds of emotions, landscapes, ideas, and so on, by using *words that were physically real to him*», with the aim to «make the dancers aware of their physiological perceptions», and «teaching them to transform their bodies into objects»<sup>10</sup>. The result of the constant repetition of these exercises is that «a butoh dancer can transform into anything at all»<sup>11</sup>.

Hijikata's verbal stimuli aim at making dancers aware of their body as a bundle of sensations. His suggestions are literally absurd: being trapped in pollen and disappear, become transparent, evaporate; flying like a stuffed bird that remembers having been alive; moving like a leopard with a spine made of light; feeling dead leaves falling inside the skull, a snail creeping on your neck, or a beard appearing in the atmosphere. Hijikata imagined his perfect dancer as a skeleton burning until it turns to coal. Indeed, burning until all muscles are consumed means eliminating all expressive urges. Only then is it possible to try becoming a reflection of the essence of the world. Letting the other come in and through our body: «The dancer becomes an object and the object calls a spirit, the dancer's spirit, which means that a human being turns into something that is no longer human»<sup>12</sup>. The body trains to overcome his limits and nullify the Ego:

An individual turned coal, absorbing and then radiating light, lets the particular shape of his skeleton appear. Reduced to coal, he can absorb light – that is he can incorporate all possible forms of life, everything that exists in nature, he can experiment different mechanisms of the senses and different qualities of energy – then he can radiate that light on stage, and make those forms visible by taking on their qualities along the boundaries of a particular body, that becomes itself visible as an outline, without any urge at all to show itself. Like a phosphorescent object that lights up in darkness, showing its shape as it goes from one

<sup>9</sup> Yukio Waguri, *Butō Kaden*, cit.

<sup>10</sup> Nanako Kurihara, *Hijikata Tatsumi. The Words of Butoh*, cit., pp. 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, *Hijikata Tatsumi. Plucking off the Darkness of the Flesh*, «The Drama Review», vol. 44, n. 1, Spring 2000, p. 53.

metamorphosis to the next, following the essential structure of the body that is made of bones<sup>13</sup>.

The individuality is nothing but «the overflow to outside<sup>14</sup>». This is how Hijikata created *his own* universe through *his own* language. He built *his own* imaginary world through his dancers' bodies. But this practice hide a danger and Hijikata himself seems to have been aware of it. He confessed that his dance has no teachers, apart from his father and himself as a boy, experimenting the world in the wilderness. Then, to Tatsuhiko Shibusawa who asks him how to teach butoh to young dancers who have lived different experiences, Hijikata answers that «everyone of course has a slightly different objective». Nonetheless, «everyone has a body»: «I hope to share the common elements with them<sup>15</sup>». The teaching system is nothing but an hope. In front of this small crack Kasai pose himself the theme of the “objectivity”.

On the one hand, «Hijikata constructed his dance piece so that memories in the body were provoked, but his stance was that only the audience could recall the memories. He didn't have his dancers recall memories in their body»<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, «Ohno is one who wouldn't move a single step until he had formed a base of imagination. He is one who started with imagination and distilled it down to a few drops of essence, and then he could dance<sup>17</sup>». But his images are «extremely personal»<sup>18</sup>.

According to Kasai, the real revolution brought by Hijikata in the dance history consists in having identified dance with «the manifestation of the awareness existing in the body in the here and now»<sup>19</sup>. This means that building the dancing body you needn't train physical

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il corpo eretico*, cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, *Hijikata Tatsumi...*, cit., p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Toshiro Kuwabara, *Dance closely related to matter. Kasai Akira Interview*, cit., p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Tatsuro Ishii, *Artist Interview. A look into the choreographic art of Akira Kasai, fifty years after entering the world of Butoh*, «PAJ Performing Arts Network Japan», 26 February 2013, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Akira and Hisako Kasai, *Ima mata odori hajimemashō*, «Gendaishi Techo», n° 9, September, pp. 76-85.

strength through the building up of your muscles, as much as «modifying the body through the training of your awareness»<sup>20</sup>. And awareness is trained through the imagination.

Dance begins when body meets consciousness, and how that connection is established depends on the dancer's history and personality. That is why each dancer is different and teaches different things. Each teaches the path that leads to the personal identification of one's own dance.

If it is the imagination that transforms the body, then there's a risk that dancers, using their own personal images as they teach, will condition the form of the dance. To overcome this limit, Kasai tried to develop an "objective" system of imagination. And the meeting with Steiner's eurhythmy – that connects body and consciousness through the use of words – was a way to deepen the original research of butoh in the direction of a "metre" of imagination. That is a kind of "universal" imagination that anyone could refer to, and that would have the same function that rhythm has in poetry.

When he talks about dance, Kasai speaks of two different degrees of composition: «The work brought onstage, the visible dance, the choreography recorded in history, and something deeper such as the building of the body, the dancer's body in itself, the body as a work of art»<sup>21</sup>. These are two different ways of dancing, linked to one another, that can appear together or flow separately, one parallel to the other. As classic ballet, for example, «the piece comes out thorough the building of the body, since in this field you need to master the ballet techniques to dancing». On the contrary, «contemporary dance often starts from the idea of the piece itself, and create the performance through improvisational dance sessions»<sup>22</sup>. Well, if we consider butoh as a way of showing what human body is in its essence, we have to admit that its field is the building of the body as an artwork. But according to Kasai this is not the only purpose of butoh. Its fundamental feature is «dissolving the Ego» and, from this point of view, «showing the body *as it*

<sup>20</sup> Tatsuro Ishii, *Artist Interview...*, cit., p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on October 2010, also mentioned in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il demone di mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 43; and in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il Butō in Italia e l'esperienza di Akira Kasai*, cit.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

is cannot be enough as a dance piece, even if into the whole butoh concept the body is already considered in its presence a dance piece, and there is no need to create a well done choreography»<sup>23</sup>. Then the point of butoh is not «what the dancer can create by means of the body» as much as «how the dancer relates to the body»<sup>24</sup>.

That is dance arise in the very moment in which imagination became tied to the body and let transform it. The relation between body and imagination lie at the core of butoh and it is one of the eurhythmy working principles. Kasai beliefs that body awareness becomes an external image by means of the senses changing. Or even when senses and consciousness work together then the physical body changes, as well as the same matter changes<sup>25</sup>.

Butoh tries to connect movement to the energy of the senses, and to the energy of words. According to Kasai this is a kind of esoteric construction of the body that already belongs to modern dance and begins with «feeling the movement from inside»: Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman and Isadora Duncan were all working in that direction. In those same years Rudolf Steiner developed a method to understand what the body is from inside, and he called this method eurhythmy, but Kasai maintains that it hasn't been used by dancers yet, because it grew in esoteric circles, bordering on occultism and therefore little known.

It is through the eurhythmy experience that Kasai became aware of «the power of words»: for example with the word sea, «the most fundamental power» of that word is not the meaning, but the fact that «word can create a sea [in one's mind]. That is the entire “external world” exists within the human body, and it is words that bring it to life [within us]»<sup>26</sup>.

Eurhythmy is a technique to build the body through the energy of words. It is a method to organize our body's energy through imagination moving from the spoken word, just like Hijikata's *butoh-fu* that Waguri listed and classified. In Steiner's case, though, the classify-

<sup>23</sup> Akira Kasai unpublished interview with Maria Pia D'Orazi on February 2010, mentioned in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il demone di mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 43; and in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il Butō in Italia e l'esperienza di Akira Kasai*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Interview with Akira Kasai*, cit., p. 233.

<sup>26</sup> Tatsuro Ishii, *Artist Interview...*, cit., p. 9.

ing of images hiding behind vowels and consonants follows a precise pattern of correspondence between man and universe that has to do with parts of the body, internal organs, blood, nerves, stars, planets, elements, metals, colors. An idea belonging to the origin of mankind, when sacred dances in the temples re-established the connection between man and the universe.

Butoh was born of the strong connection with the «national body», affirming the value of Japanese identity in times when the concept of Nation was stronger than today, before globalization fragmented it. It is thanks to the perception of this body that Kasai was drawn to eurhythmy, because «the national body is strongly influenced by the consonants and vowels of our native language» and «each nation has a different body and becomes aware of it in a different way». To be exact, «the body is built by means of sound»<sup>27</sup>.

This also means that each country has its own eurhythmy. And if, in his beginnings, Kasai studied German eurhythmy, he has been shifting his work in the last twenty years to adapt Steiner's work to Japanese language and imagination. He no longer refers to his work as eurhythmy, and now calls it Ephesus' technique.

Kasai's personalization of eurhythmy has been filtered by Japanese mythology and the *kotodama* theory. In particular, Kasai referred to the reading of *Kojiki* from a *kotodama* point of view rendered by Masumi Oishigori (1832-1913), a Japanese classical literature scholar who lived in Steiner's time.

*Kotodama* is a Shintoist meditation technique that means *the soul of words*; it is the *theory of sacred sounds* that states that sounds and words have their own power and their own spirit; *kotodama* is also a vibration in itself, the resonance preceding thought, leading to the shaping of letters and sounds, and therefore deeply connected to the creation of Japanese language. According to Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of the Aikido discipline – that he himself described as «the expression of *kotodama*» – *kotodama* is the Japanese equivalent of the biblical concept of Logos, the original force of Creation determining each and every manifestation in the universe. It is the energy creating forms.

*Kojiki* is the book telling the creational myth of Japan, and the

<sup>27</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on July 2014.

birth of myriads of gods. At first glance, it is a narration of events. According to some scholars though, Masumi Oishigori among them, there is a secret and a hidden rule behind the sound of each sentence. Trying to bring to light the secret history of *Kojiki*, Masumi Oishigori re-wrote the text looking at the combination of vowels and consonants. The meaning of the story is lost, but the energy of language is retrieved.

Originally, *Kojiki* belonged to oral tradition. Each name corresponded to a god and each divinity had responsibility over a specific sound. From the moment it was written (around the 8th Century) it began losing the energy of sound while the tale of events was brought to prominence. Masumi Oishigori wanted to bring the text back to the time when it only spoke of gods, and sounds still held the power of creation. Trying to show the creative force of Japanese language, he found a concrete image for every form of sound. Our body is part of the elements and contains the elements within itself. Movement corresponds to vowels and consonants, and refers to the energy of the images associated with each sound. The imagery behind each letter changes the quality of the movement's energy.

Each vowel, each consonant, creates a different kind of space. Each one represents a different kind of energy. Vowels are connected to the energy of language; consonants to the energy of conscience, and they always originated from the combination of two different directions: sky and earth, conscience in space and conscience in the body<sup>28</sup>.

As in Steiner's theory, we still have here the grid of correspondence between micro- and macrocosm, but the classification of vowels and consonants changes in relation to the experience of the Japanese language. From the point of view of the research on the relation between body and language Kasai's work can be considered as a deeper approach to the fundamental question of butoh over the meaning of the body and its evolution.

But I believe that the significance of Kasai's work lies far beyond, deepening our understanding of butoh as a contemporary form of art, in line with present-day considerations.

Butoh's strength has often been identified with the metamorphic

<sup>28</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on July 2014.

possibilities of the body, or with refined and pleasing aesthetics, whether it represents beauty, or deformity, or the grotesque. The result is that *butoh* today has become just another category of dance, losing the revolutionary potential it had in its beginnings in the Sixties.

The English director Peter Brook, when reflecting on the artistic legacy of Jerzy Grotowski, wrote that «if theatre is a living thing, imitation narrows the flow of life and brings to a paralysis. It is the paradox of form, unavoidable on one hand and so often corpse of the living impulse on the other». Then the point is «how can we receive the past as a living flow, without drying it all out»<sup>29</sup> and a possibly answer is that «the deep significance of the original idea must always be present, alongside our research for the technique»<sup>30</sup>.

The lesson of the past represents a degree of quality that we should always be aiming for. Understanding why Hijikata, in his own time, worked in a certain way, «opens a door, once and for all». It is a seed that can grow new visions rather than a definite shape, that would soon empty itself if the relation to the present, that was potent when *butoh* was born, were to be lost.

Through the “objectification of the world” Hijikata completed his “interior landscape”, and entered a dialogue with his present day. But, dancing *butoh* means not only reaching for a degree of metamorphic ability.

To speak of *butoh*, according to Kasai, three conditions need to occur, given which even a ballet dancer can be part of *butoh*: «A dancer should have the instruments to perceive his own body, because *butoh* is the awareness of the material existence of our body. He must live his present day, because *butoh* moves on with the world, it isn't a new tradition, it is always evolving. And his dance should be criminal, for *butoh* is always fighting power»<sup>31</sup>.

If you ask Kasai what can be the significance of *butoh* in our time, Kasai reminds that «at its birth, *butoh* conflicted with the powers-that-be by affirming Japanese identity. But today, in a globalized context,

<sup>29</sup> Peter Brook, *Insieme a Grotowski*, Palermo, Edizioni rueBallu, 2011, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from a lecture at Japanese Cultural Institute in Rome on June 2008, also mentioned in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il demone di mezzogiorno*, cit., p. 44; and in Maria Pia D'Orazi, *Il Butō in Italia e l'esperienza di Akira Kasai*, cit.

butoh acts within the system». That is the “enemy” is no longer the State, it is the super-national power of computers and information technology. So that one of our tasks for the future is «to find a way to preserve the essential energy of dance, alive in a globalized world. It is completely different from the context that butoh has confronted in the past<sup>32</sup>».

According to Kasai the idea that globalization and computers have made worldwide communication easier is common place today, but, in truth, it is only «a superficial kind of communication, that has lost all intimacy, and has deeply conditioned our politics»: «Politics in a global era is appearance with no content, a sheer lie with no ethics<sup>33</sup>». Kasai believes that the only real war we face is the one between politics and culture, because «art can still create true relationships based on feelings, and sooner or later culture will begin to protest against the heartlessness of politics»<sup>34</sup>.

In this era of falsehood, dance is no longer for dancers only, it is for «every body». It addresses the need for a regeneration of a body that has been completely degraded: «My work is to create a new body, through the power of the word»<sup>35</sup>. This is how Kasai speaks today. That is, dancers should no longer train to «build a dancing body that is functional to the performance». Rather, they should train to «go back to the *origin of the body taking form*»<sup>36</sup>. The precise point where, in mythical times, word and movement are one. His aim is to regenerate the body through a renewed link between body and words.

The word born of the voice is warmth, and telling stories isn't just a way to «communicate meanings» but also a way to let out «a flow of forces directed at who's listening»<sup>37</sup>. This flow of forces is the energy keeping humanity alive, and at the same time a source that writing – tying words to meanings and turning them into signs – has dried out.

<sup>32</sup> Akira Kasai unpublished interview with Maria Pia D'Orazi in Tokyo on August 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Akira Kasai unpublished interview with Maria Pia D'Orazi in Tuscania on July 2011.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> Akira Kasai quotation from workshop in Rome on May 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Akira Kasai, *Karada to iu shomotsu*, cit.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

Going back to the origin of the body then means that we can re-establish a link with the cosmic energy, feeling at one with the universe and going back to the primeval creating force. Kasai sees two possible methods to retrieve that origin: the first is vocalization – «the verbal action preceding the written word»<sup>38</sup> – and the second is the awareness of our perception through our senses. The result is a system of education and corporal development that overstep the boundaries of dance. Since it is through focusing one's perception on the physical sensations that a human body can be made aware of his deeper identity: it is then, when the intellect is silently directing conscience towards the senses, that we can perceive an *interior body* as energy flowing through the organism, experimenting contact with his essential identity through form. At the end of the path, the work that each dancer is doing on him or herself is like a journey toward the acknowledgement of the deepest Self. And it isn't only for dancers.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem.*