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Transformed and Mediated Butoh Body: *Corpus Moriens* in “Hijikata’s Earthen Statue Project”¹⁾

Hayato Kosuge

This article explores the potentialities of Butoh in the “Hijikata’s Earthen Statue Project” via the hypothesis that it is not limited to the human-dancer genre but is rather transmittable and expansive. Taking Hijikata’s most important work, *Hosotan* (1972) with its dark images of poverty, disease and death in Tōhoku, we take as our task the question of how we are to represent, without the human-dancer, the original connotations of Hijikata’s work. Inspired by the tradition of self-mummifying Buddhist monks, it was produced to objectify Hijikata’s central concept of *suijakutai*, *corpus moriens*, by dripping water on a life-size earthen statue of Hijikata for four days, by which time the statue had almost completely deteriorated. The whole process of the project is transmitted for the purpose of maximizing audience in the ultra-long performance provided in remote locations. In this paper, details are introduced, along with an evaluation of the effort’s significance.

Expanding of Cultural Articulations of Butoh

In developing Butoh or Dance of Darkness, HIJIKATA Tatsumi (1928–1986) developed completely innovative styles of performance, differing not only from Western modern theatres but also from urbanely sophisticated

traditional Japanese theatres such as Noh and Kabuki. At first glance, the far-reaching popular impact of Butoh may appear to be in the peculiarity of its style and in its seeming amoral and therefore thought-provoking rejection of social mores. Initially, it appeared not to belong to any tradition, authority, or community. In fact, however, Hijikata moved to Tokyo from his impoverished rural birthplace in northeastern Japan, Tōhoku, bringing with him an admiration for Western culture and a desire to be a part of the urban art scene. It was only later, it is generally contended, that he broke away from Western and urban ideas of modernization to focus on the rural vision of pre-modern Japanese countryside that was birthplace. All along, he had been searching for his spiritual foundations, starting from urban Tokyo and subsequently returning to Tōhoku, both for essential concepts and for his performance style.²⁾

Since Hijikata's death in 1986, Butoh has ever been spreading throughout Japan and, indeed, all over the world, with changes in its ideas and fundamental forms and approaches. Butoh artists such as Ohno Yoshito, Kasai Akira, Murobushi Koh and many younger dancers are energetic in giving performances abroad, with some Butoh dancers having their base in the USA and in Europe, including Tamano Koichi, Endo Tadashi and Iwana Masaki. There are, as a result, more Butoh festivals there than in Japan. The Hijikata Tatsumi Archive was established in 1998 at Keio University in Tokyo, while the archive of Ohno Kazuo, equally admired as the one of the two greatest Butoh founders, was established in 2002 at the University of Bologna.

The nature of Butoh is thus ambivalent, on the one hand, thematizing Tōhoku as the *Urheimat* of Hijikata's "darkness" and, on the other, emphasizing ubiquity, detached from any cultural values. Referring to Butoh, *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* states: "The essence of the

movement is its attempt to recapture the shamanistic basis of the Japanese performing arts and rearticulate it as modern art.”³³⁾

In addition to the expansion of Butoh, the genre into which Butoh should be categorized also seems from the outset to be both ambiguous and flexible. Although Hijikata entered a dance school at the age of eighteen to learn the modern German form known as *Neue Tanz* and then most certainly belonged to several groups of modern dance, Butoh remained amorphous and capable of expanding in terms of its cultural articulation. Both his “Kinjiki” (*Forbidden Colors*, 1959), the first Butoh dance piece and his *Nikutai-no Hanran: Hijikata Tatsumi to Nihonjin* (*The Rebellion of the Body: Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese*, 1968), one of his most important works in the 1960s, could be regarded not as dance but rather as a “show” or “cultural performance,” focusing on their nature of artistic event rather than the movements and bodies on the rhythms.⁴⁾ The scenes of *The Rebellion of the Body* are as follows: “Foolish King,” “Bride,” “Penis,” “Red Dress,” “Spanish,” “One-piece,” “Sailor,” “Girl,” “Ascension” and “Finale.” In the performance, Hijikata entered the stage on a palanquin wearing a traditional Japanese woman’s robe, then, half-naked and dangling a fake penis, repeatedly rushed toward six large brass plates. In the next scene, he cruelly strangled a hen to death. After peculiar movements in the guise of a lady in a gaudy dress, a woman in casual one-piece dress, a sailor and a girl in Japanese kimono, he was finally hung up half-naked with a rope, wearing only a loincloth, looking like the crucified Christ.⁵⁾

Butoh-performances have also involved collaboration with photographers, media artists, movie directors, theatre-directors, poets and many other artists and writers.⁶⁾ Among the many examples of such work with artists in other genres is that of Hosoe Eikoh in both photography and cinema. Just after the performance of “*Forbidden Colors*” in May in 1959, Hosoe, a major

Japanese photographer in the postwar period, rushed excitedly backstage. Tightly hugging Hijikata, he repeatedly exclaimed: “I didn’t realize until today that you are such an amazing dancer!”⁷⁾ Their friendship and close collaboration continued thereafter until Hijikata’s death in 1986. In the meantime, they left two important collaborative achievements. Firstly, Hijikata appeared as the lead dancer in the 16-mm film Hosoe directed in 1960: “*Heso-to Genbaku*” (The Navel and the A-bomb). In this film, it may be argued, Hijikata and Hosoe are describing a free-floating popular anxiety, even amidst material prosperity, regarding the possibility of nuclear war. Secondly, in 1969, Hosoe featured Hijikata in scenes of Tōhoku in his photographic collection *Kamaitachi*. Hosoe composed a mystic world of death and insanity, taking advantage of the spiritual climate of Tōhoku and the primitive destructiveness of Hijikata’s Butoh.

These facts lead us to the question of what has changed and what has remained unchanged in Butoh from 1959 to the present. Does Butoh contain any universal concept? Or is the basic pattern of movements indigenous to Tōhoku? Is Butoh a variety of modern dance or is it a cultural performance? Finally, what is Butoh? And how is it to be defined? The purpose of this paper, in light of the original concept and the expanding articulations of Butoh, is to introduce the Hijikata Tatsumi’s Earthen Statue Project and to report on its significance and possibilities as a new form of Butoh with a new media presentation.

This installation performance was planned and produced by the research group “Portfolio Butoh” including Takashi Morishita, Yu Homma, Yoshihiro Kamemura and Hayato Kosuge as the project leader, and was carried out at the Tsuruoka Town Campus of Keio University from the end of 31 August to 3 September in 2008.⁸⁾ (Fig. 1) The project was launched in January 2008. Yoshie Shozo and his team molded the statue out of specially mixed wet



Fig. 1. Before the start; 9:07, 30 August, 2008, photograph by Hayato Kosuge.



Fig. 2. During the project; 14:35, 2 September, 2008, photograph by Hayato Kosuge.

clay provided by INAX museum.⁹⁾ It aimed at objectifying Hijikata's central concept of *suijakutai*, *corpus moriens*, by dripping water on a life-size earthen statue of Hijikata for four days, by which time the statue would have almost completely deteriorated. (Fig. 2) The main point of the project was to

explore the possibility of another Butoh expression that (1) would not be limited to the genre of human dancers, and (2) could be transmitted to a remote place with “live” theatrical quality so as to imbue Butoh with an expandable and transmittable quality.

Hijikata’s Main Concept of Butoh: *Corpus Moriens*

In the project, the pose of the statue is from scene no. 6 in *Hosotan* (A Tale of Smallpox, 1972) partly because it is the most famous posture of Hijikata’s Butoh and partly because it seems to embody his most basic concept (Fig. 3). *Corpus moriens* is the verbal expression of the Butoh movement that Hijikata coined, referring to the body expression of death by the living.¹⁰⁾ The concept of that *corpus moriens* seemed to have been gradually formed in the early 1970s with his spiritual return to his birthplace, Tōhoku.

Hijikata was born in 1928 in Akita prefecture, which is very far from Tokyo and is generally regarded as a poor and underdeveloped rural area with a rustic dialect. Hijikata moved to Tokyo when he was twenty-four years old and learned various western styles of dance. Young Hijikata, admiring Western culture and desiring to be a part of urban art scene, first visited Tokyo in 1947, when he was nineteen. At that time, his hero was Hollywood movie star James Dean.¹¹⁾ He must nevertheless have felt out of place in the ateliers devoted to authentic Western dance style: he was bow-legged and square-shouldered, and one of his legs was three centimeters shorter than the other.¹²⁾ The physical reality of his body forced him to confront his limitations as a ballet dancer and made him experience a feeling of estrangement. As a result, he was consoled by the discovery of anti-traditional and anti-orthodox notions such as those found in the writings of Jean Genet, whose autobiographical novels *The Thief’s Journal* (1949) and *Our Lady of Flowers* (1944) had just been translated into Japanese.¹³⁾



Fig. 3. Original scene by Hijikata Tatsumi in *Hosotan* (A Tale of Smallpox, 1972), photograph by Onozuka Makoto.

Around 1957, he named himself “Hijikata Genet” on the stage. Around the end of the 1960s, however, he broke away from the Western way of artistic resistance. *The Rebellion of the Body*, produced in 1968, was the pivotal piece for his new start: marked a break not only with the Japanese artistic community of 1960s avant-garde but also with Western aestheticism.¹⁴⁾

After a four-year hiatus following this piece, the most important work Hijikata produced around the basic concept “Tōhoku” was *A Tale of Smallpox* in 1972. From this piece, Hijikata began to clearly mark his works as a part of the *Tōhoku Kabuki Project*. Possibly inspired by a Hansen’s disease patient, Hijikata performed a character in which his paradoxical aesthetics were embodied. *A Tale of Smallpox* was staged in the theatre named *Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka* in the heart of Shinjuku, Tokyo, where avant-garde young people once hung out, thereby serving as a hub of Japanese anti-authoritarian popular culture since 1962.¹⁵⁾ The auditorium had a seating capacity of 400. *A Tale of Smallpox* was the first piece of the

dance series, *Shiki-no Tame-no Nijyu-nana-Ban* (Twenty Seven Nights for Four Seasons). The 90-minute production opened on the 29th October, 1972.¹⁶⁾ The title reads a tale of “smallpox”, but the character in the piece is clearly suffering from Hansen’s disease.

The performance begins with brief announcement in English following the sound of wind and the cawing of crows. The scene is apparently in the remote and impoverished northeast, where Hijikata was born. Scruffily bearded Hijikata, dressed in an unsophisticated padded kimono, like a person with no fixed job, enters upstage left. He moves stiffly and awkwardly like a Japanese kite blown by the wind, frequently stuffing his hands into his sleeves. In the meantime are heard notes composed by a Japanese percussionist, Yas-kaz, pathetic songs by *Goze*, who are poor blind women who travelled the country singing to the accompaniment of the three-stringed *samisen*, and the sound of water. All this is followed by a female dancer in the same costume as Hijikata; she crosses the stage with her face in profile. Following the second scene, in which appears a mob of poverty-stricken people, three and two female dancers enter in the same costume in *geta*, Japanese wooden clogs. The sound in this scene is that of the wind and *Gidayu*, the recitation of the dramatic narratives used in the traditional puppet theatre. The repertoire in this scene is *Terakoya*, one of the most famous titles, referring to the “temple schools” of the Edo period; in it, there is the lamentation of a father and mother for their son whom the father must kill for the sake of the feudalistic lord-vassal relationship. The sound of the wind and *Gidayu* continue in the next fourth scene, and then in the fifth scene, the duet of Ashikawa Yoko and Waguri Yukio perform a waltz. It may be seen as a rural version of classical ballet. The next sixth scene is the climax of this dance piece, lasting twenty minutes. The sound is of a highly lyrical European pastoral scene, that is, *Bailero* in *Chanson D’Auvergne* by

Canteloube. Possibly inspired by a victim of Hansen's disease, however, Hijikata performed the character in which his paradoxical aesthetics are embodied. In the scene, a half-naked man with chafed, unhealthy skin is portrayed; he never stands up and moves his legs slightly in a feeble and sickly way, with quivering limbs. Nonetheless, his face is never tormented but half asleep and very calm. He himself must be insensible to pain because his nervous system is apparently damaged. The inserted clatter of hoof beats clearly belongs to the outside world in contrast to the inner world of a diseased man. Meanwhile, in the seventh scene, eight tattooed male dancers have crossed the upstage behind Hijikata, as if they were goblins hunting prey. Then, following three scenes, in the final eleventh scene, Hijikata and male and female dancers enter with Bailero. Then comes the blackout.

His concept of Tōhoku presented in *A Tale of Smallpox* is arguably found in such paradoxical beauty, mainly embodied in the "dark images" of poverty, starvation, and disease. Apparently, Tōhoku is not merely a place name for him; it also represents his fundamental vision. In fact, Kayo Mikami has passed on remarks made by him that suggest "there is a Tōhoku even in England."¹⁷⁾ Moreover, Sandra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura note that in the *Tōhoku Kabuki Project*, Hijikata tried to rejuvenate the Kabuki tradition, which has been monopolized and institutionalized by large companies, and, as a consequence, has been remodeled into a form of sophisticated urban culture.¹⁸⁾ It can thus be said that Tōhoku may be an icon for Hijikata's pre-modern and primeval culture. As Mikami also claimed, Tōhoku was his spiritual point of origin and the primitive hometown of Hijikata's "darkness."¹⁹⁾ In fact, he began *The Rebellion of the Body* with the narration of searching his own memory for his hometown Akita: "My sister is living in my heart."

What kind of "dark" images did Tōhoku evoke for Hijikata in the

context of the Earthen Statue project? It should be noted here that “darkness” has a similar connotation to that of “death,” which was to become the basis of Hijikata’s viewpoint. Hijikata defined Butoh aphoristically with such remarks as “Butoh is a dead body standing straight at the risk of his life.”²⁰⁾ Referring to a condemned convict walking to the scaffold, and also a small, pre-toddler left in a portable straw cradle yet, his remark has been interpreted in various ways; however, it is safe to say that Hijikata tried to transcend the ordinary and “domesticated” body.²¹⁾ He examined the body outside of the context of the quotidian, seeing it as ideally linked to death. In rural Tōhoku, the idea that the dead and the living co-exist would not be so very peculiar, as is seen in various writings, notably the novels and essays of Mori Atsushi.²²⁾ Along this line, towards the very late years of his life, Hijikata began to use the term *suijakutai*, *corpus moriens*, searching for a dance style based on the concept of death. It is obvious that *A Tale of Smallpox* anticipated the term that has a close affinity with the idea of death and Tōhoku so that “Hijikata’s Earthen Statue Project” was an attempt to represent *corpus moriens*. The current project has the advantage of focusing on the representation of life-death co-existence by choosing specific areas that in overall ambience are close to Hijikata’s original piece and, at the same time, by showing with a clay statue the gradual process of deterioration as the body is weakened and moves towards death.

Place of *Corpus Moriens*

The project was carried out in the Tsuruoka satellite campus of Keio University in Yamagata prefecture, a region of Tōhoku. Tsuruoka has a close connection with Hijikata that goes beyond the fact that it is in the neighboring prefecture of Hijikata’s birthplace. For example, one of Hijikata’s disciples opened a dance studio called *Hoppō Butō-ha* (Northern

Butoh School) in 1974; moreover, Hijikata visited the opening party to support the dance performance held in Tsuruoka. This area, moreover, seems to have a deep affinity with Hijikata's concept of the co-existence of the living and the dead. This city is in the Shōnai area in the western part of Tōhoku, which is famous for *sokushin-butsu*, the dead bodies of self-mummifying Buddhist monks. This is related to an ascetic Buddhist tradition, centered in the deep mountains. The practice of self-mummification is to be found in some Buddhist temples, primarily during the Edo Period. Ardent monks rejected food and water and gradually starved to death as they prayed. Their mummified bodies are still worshiped as emblems of a strong faith and as protecting deities.²³⁾ The area is also famous as a holy place of the *yamabushi* or ascetic mountain priests, who practice austerities, simulating the experience of death deep in the mountains in order to attain holy or magic powers. Naitō Masatoshi, a Japanese photographer who once worked with Hijikata when both of them were involved in a documentary film on a small village in Tōhoku and who participated in the *yamabushi*, reports in an interview that Hijikata was greatly interested in a style of dance in which one's other self is watching his dying body. Hijikata also reportedly asked him about the mountain priests.²⁴⁾

In a small room in the university campus located in this atmospheric area, a life-size statue of Hijikata was made with a frame of skeletal wood and wet clay and placed on the pedestal. The posture was based on scene no. 6 in *A Tale of Smallpox* as mentioned in the previous section; propping his upper body while sitting himself down, gazing up at an angle with both arms raised, as though he were begging and drawing his knees in with his legs half-open, he looks like a baby desperately crying in the cradle placed on a ridge between rice fields while his parents are working in the rice paddies. The figure frequently appeared in Hijikata's work and may be regarded as

one of Butoh's basic choreographic forms.²⁵⁾ It also represents diseased, weakened, or handicapped dancer, struggling to stand up but never succeeding.²⁶⁾ On this earthen statue of Hijikata made of clay, drop after drop of water fell and splashed on the body all during the four-day period until it had all but completely deteriorated. The effect was phenomenally successful and Naitō Masatoshi openly admired.²⁷⁾

The question should nonetheless be raised whether Hijikata's "Tōhoku" genuinely corresponds to the actual place where he was born and whose dialect he spoke. That is, to what extent did Hijikata simply make use of images and concepts shared by urbanites. Tōhoku is commonly seen as a traditionally famine-prone area, to whose woes have recently been added the Fukushima nuclear disaster. And yet that stereotypical picture of devastation may not be accurate. Isabella Lucy Bird, a woman traveler born in Yorkshire, England, left significant records of the life and landscape of Tōhoku some 130 years ago, when she wrote of her impressions of Yonezawa in Yamagata prefecture in 1878:

The plain of Yonezawa, with the prosperous town of Yonezawa in the south, and the frequented watering-place of Akayu in the north, is a perfect garden of Eden, "tilled with a pencil instead of a plough," growing in rich profusion rice, cotton, maize, tobacco, hemp, indigo, beans, egg-plants, walnuts, melons, cucumbers, persimmons, apricots, pomegranates; a smiling and plenteous land, an Asiatic Arcadia, prosperous and independent, all its bounteous acres belonging to those who cultivate them, who live under their vines, figs, and pomegranates, free from oppression—a remarkable spectacle under an Asiatic despotism. (Letter XXIII, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, 1880).²⁸⁾

She also refers to the abundance and prosperity of Akita 50 years before Hijikata was born.²⁹⁾

According to Kasai Hidemichi, the images of Tōhoku as an uncivilized and poverty-stricken region are a fabrication imposed by the Meiji government primarily because the powerful feudal lords of Tōhoku fought fiercely in the waged fierce battles against them in Boshin Civil War of 1868. It was the state that fostered the stereotype of Tōhoku as existing on the outskirts of civilization and lagging far behind the capital. Originally, the name Tōhoku (lit. the Northeast) referred to a much wider area of eastern Japan but has since been narrowed to designate the present six prefectures, frequently denigrated as “barbaric,” whose inhabitants “do not know or submit to the Emperor.”³⁰⁾ Such conscious and deliberate discrimination served to encourage a sense of superiority among Japanese living in central Japan, esp. Tokyo, thereby promoting the development of centrally governed state juxtaposed to the feudalism of the Edo period. Kasai claims that this strategy was likewise applied to colonial administration, so that the uncivilized images of Tōhoku were made to overlap with those of Taiwan and Korea, then under Japanese rule.³¹⁾ The contrast was thus drawn between “normal Japanese” living in and around the capital and “the uncivilized others.”

At the same time, paradoxically enough, Tōhoku has been regarded as a nostalgic homeland to which those who have left to strive for success return in glory. Despite its peripheral status, moreover, emphasis was given to its place within the Japanese empire, for the region provided many soldiers, manual laborers, and female workers as part of a national policy to increase prosperity and military strength. The fourth verse of one of Japan’s most beloved songs, published in 1914, reads: “I’ve got this dream and it keeps me away / When it comes true I’m going back there someday/Crystal

waters, mighty mountains blue as emerald stone/I hear it calling me, my country home” (translated by Greg Irwin). Although the original composer was from Nagano prefecture and not from Tōhoku per se, this song has been very popular, as it evokes the nostalgic love for one’s mythic rural in countryside. Another example, “Hotaru-no Hikari” (‘The Glow of the Firefly’) was composed by a school teacher born in Fukushima and published in 1881 using the melody of Scottish folksong *Auld Lang Syne*. Although since the end of the war only the first and second verses are sung, the original third verse reads: “Though we should part and go our separate ways to Tsukushi [i.e. Kyushu to the southwest] or Michinoku [i.e. the eastern region], separated by the mountains and the sea, our hearts will remain as one and true, for the sake of our common country.” Such are the ambivalent, dualistic images of Tōhoku.³²⁾

Hijikata must have been quite aware of such contradictions; indeed it might be argued that he deliberately used the stereotype of Tōhoku to demonstrate the aesthetics of Butoh’s “dark” nature. His images of the remote countryside correspond closely to those shared by his compatriots, as also illustrated in the folktales Yanagita Kunio collected in Iwate prefecture and published in 1910 as *Tōno Monogatari* (Tales of Tōno): that is, “[I]t offers a vision of a typical village growing up in a world full of dangers from invisible forces and from malevolent creatures shuttling between the human and the animal kingdom.”³³⁾ For Hijikata, *A Tale of Smallpox* and the slogan of “return to Tōhoku” may very well represent the region of his artistic vision. Consequently, clearly at least for Hijikata, a *dévoté* of the Western avant-garde, Tōhoku is a key post-1968 icon for understanding basic human emotions and primeval pre-modern culture; that is, it is neither description nor reminiscence, but it should be place to be created and performed for his artistic purpose.³⁴⁾ His Tōhoku is not real place but is

rather created and depicted as a never-never land according to his concept of Butoh. And yet this very fictive/real image of a poverty-stricken place and diseased bodies makes the remote rural location, with its death-evoking self-mummifying Buddhists and mountain priests and non-human, water-dripping clay statue all the more suitable for recreating the expression of Hijikata's Butoh.

The Transmittability of Butoh Body Movements

The performance itself, with its non-human statue, held far from Japan's urban centers, leads us to a second point: the "transmittability" of Butoh body movements and its significance. The essential problem is how an audience can participate in the ultra-long performance held over 500 kilometers from Tokyo. In fact, fewer than a hundred people visited the performance site, and it was impossible, of course, for the same person to be present and awake all during the four days and three nights. Furthermore, no one knew when the pivotal moments, such as the collapse of large parts of the clay statue would occur. Thus, another effective type of participation was provided by means of technology, with televised images transmitted in three ways. Firstly, the images in high definition quality taken at the site were shown on a wide screen at the Tokyo (Mita) campus of Keio University in real time for the university students and local visitors. Secondly, converted images of HD to SD quality were uploaded onto the streaming server so that people could see the images on a website. Thirdly, local media in Tsuruoka broadcast the scene as streaming video using an interval recording system.³⁵⁾ The performance was thus no doubt available for more hours than for participants at the site, even if a sense of immediacy was somewhat lost in the process. The advantages of a 24-hour-a-day broadcast were clearly seen. The thirteen-hour time difference between Japan and Santiago is a case in



Fig. 4. The large corruption of the loins of the statue; 23:12, 1 September, 2008, photograph by Takayama Sayaka.

point. The large corruption of the loin of the statue, in fact, occurred at midnight at the site when it was the early afternoon in Santiago.³⁶⁾ (Fig. 4)

The number of such participants could not be measured, but some of the televiewers made contact with the staff on the site by telephone and e-mail, responding with such comments as, “how about speeding up the drip?” As mentioned above, the more the viewing areas vary, the closer the performance was observed, with more findings made and more interaction between participants. From the examples cited above, it is clear that the audience fell into two categories: those at the actual site in real time; those far removed though still in real time. The first, the smaller number, were able to experience the sound of the dropping, splashing water, dim lighting and chilly atmosphere, along with the aura of deteriorating material and the air of tension created by the fragile statue. The second and larger group was deprived of such directness but could nonetheless participate more easily and more frequently. In today’s world of I-phones and I-pads, such types of

performances and such styles of participation can be more effective. Thus, the potential exists for global-scale “live performance.”

A still unresolved question is whether the essence of the movements and postures of Butoh can be mediatized and transmitted, despite being a highly improvisation-based and live-body-conscious performance. There is, nevertheless, the noteworthy fact that Hijikata had a strong interest in the transmission of Butoh body movements in the form of notational systems. Hijikata maintained that the movements could be represented in another place in another time, at least on the choreographic level. As mentioned above, in the late 1960s, Hijikata broke away from Western aesthetics and the avant-garde movement in both concept and teaching methodology and began *Butoh-fu-no Butoh* (Butoh with Butoh notation) from the very early years of the 1970s, completing his work in 1985.³⁷⁾ There are two types of *Butoh-fu*. One consists of the scrapbooks made by Hijikata himself, which contain collected visual images from art magazines and his remarks; the other of notebooks kept by his disciples in the rehearsal room. These are in the main poetic words and phrases, with occasional pictorial illustrations indicating concrete postures. In most cases, neither indicates precise postures and movements in most cases; rather they appear to be a compound catalogue, with visual and verbal images or a series of poetic diction far removed from everyday language.

Probably one reason why Hijikata created such a method is that, as Kuniyoshi has pointed out, Hijikata’s Butoh in the late 1960s had become more and more popular and that many amateurish young people entered his dance conservatory.³⁸⁾ Although Hijikata’s dance pieces in 1960s were essentially improvised performances, with a strong element of “eventness,” he now needed to transmit the design of the postures and movements to his young disciples in order to arrange a dance ensemble; that is, he was obliged

to represent common images for movements as a choreographic tool. Another more important reason is that it was those images in *Butoh-fu* that inspired him to compose postures and movements; in other words, they are the sources of his imagination but not the representation of a completed design. They thus appear neither as ordinary visual signs nor as everyday language but rather as hybrid images of external forms and internal feelings, as they were archetypes or first models for his imagination. Hijikata was quite familiar with the works of surrealist artists in *Butoh-fu* such as Henri Michaux, Willem De Kooning, and Francis Bacon, and he was also involved in such avant-garde literary works as those by Jean Genet, Mishima Yukio. He also created small dance pieces inspired by the words of André Breton. These were altered, losing their original form when they arrived on Hijikata's stages, a clear example being his very early dance piece "Forbidden Colors." Thus the notations of *Butoh-fu* are the source of movements, but, interestingly enough, some of them have been repeated and compiled to become the titles of each movement, so that dancers with Butoh training from Hijikata are able to draw the same movements from *Butoh-fu*.³⁹⁾ This method in his dance conservatory leads us to conclude that Hijikata believed that Butoh dancers would be able to possess identical concepts and images inspired by the pictures and represent them repeatedly and consistently on stage. In other words, his priority is not the liveness in time and place but rather inspired images and the concepts inherent in the postures and movements. Thus, mediatized and transmitted movements and postures of Butoh pose no harm to the essence of Butoh performance.

Butoh as Philosophical Performance

We must now return to the points first proposed: the possibility of another Butoh expression by non-human dancers and the participation in remote

places with “live” theatrical quality made possible by the new media. Moreover, we have to pose real questions about the changes and difficulties of “expansion” throughout the world, for this concerns not only the positive development of Butoh. How indeed Butoh should be changing and spreading not just expanding? The installation and performance of “Hijikata’s Earthen Statue Project” is a provisional answer to these questions. Firstly, Butoh does not necessarily need human dancers and can include photography, installation, and other types of cultural and artistic performance. Secondly, Butoh should not be limited to the participants in a live performance in real time and in a real place but rather should be transmitted and expandable. Kasai Akira, who claims to be himself to have pioneered his dance with the name “Butoh,” notably stated in an interview that Butoh should not be categorized as dance but rather as the attitude or spirit of one’s own body. He says moreover that Butoh is the “art of the spirit” as well as the art of the body, so that classical ballet and traditional Japanese dance could become Butoh.⁴⁰⁾ One can no doubt go further and say that Butoh is not one of the genres in modern dance but rather a performance style based on philosophical and emotional connotations with an anti-establishment and anti-traditional aestheticism that was discovered by Hijikata Tatsumi. This hypothetical conclusion can lead us to further questions about what his works’ philosophical and emotional connotations were, in addition to *corpus moriens*, and about what the basic patterns and differentiated expressions of the performance should be. Although a clear definition of Butoh will be absolutely necessary for us in the present situation of expanding and exploring the articulation of Butoh at the global level, these problems will not be touched on here.

Notes

- 1) This is an expanded and revised version of the paper read at General Conference of International Federation of Theatre Research in Santiago, 24 July 2012. The idea and record of the project has been partly published in the Japanese version, “Theatre Research from a New Perspective: the Practice and Analysis of Hijikata’s ‘Earthen Statue Project’” by Hayato Kosuge, Morishita Takashi, Homma Yu and Kamemura Yoshihiro, in *Theatre Studies: Journal of Japanese Society for Theatre Research*, 50 (2010): 79–96, but the present version is extensively revised. My special thanks are due to Mr. Takashi Morishita and Ms. Yu Homma of the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive at Keio University for helpful discussions and their assistance in collecting visual materials.
- 2) For the biographical and chronological information, see *Hijikata Tatsumi-no Butoh: Nikukatai-no Syururearizumu, Shintai-no Ontorogi* [Tatsumi Hijikata’s Butoh: Surrealism of the Flesh, Ontology of the “Body”], ed. Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki, and Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration, Keio University (Tokyo: Keio UP, 2004). The biography of Hijikata Tatsumi by Takashi Morishita, titled “Fussesyutu-no Butoh-ka, Hijikata Tatsumi,” which appeared serially in Akita Sakigake Shimpō Newspaper from 8 January 2011, gives detailed and unpublished information especially concerning his early life.
- 3) James R Brandon ed., *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p. 173.
- 4) For “*Kinjiki*,” only photographs exist, and for *Nikutai-no Hanran*, photographs and video recording of the part of the performance are preserved in Hijikata Tatsumi Archive, Keio University.
- 5) See for the details of *Nikutai-no Hanran*, Takashi Morishita, *Hijikata Tatsumi’s Rebellion of the Body: Imagery and Documents of Butoh 1968* (Tokyo: Research Center for the Arts Administration, Keio University, 2009).
- 6) As examples, *Kamaitachi* is the photographic collaboration with Hose Eikoh, “Amma” (1963), “Rose Color Dance” (1965) under the category of “Cine Dance” by Imura Takahiko. In 1970, Hijikata Tatsumi appears on the “Astrorama” released in the Expo 70 in Osaka, with the close collaboration with Tanikawa Syuntaro.

- 7) Hosoe Eikoh, *Nandemo Yattemiyou: Watashi-no Shashin-Shi* [Try Everything: My Personal History as a Photographer], (Tokyo: Mado-sha, 2005), pp. 204–5.
- 8) The research group is now based in the Hijikata Tatsumi Archive in the Centre of Arts and Arts Administration at Keio University in Japan.
- 9) INAX is one of leading companies dealing ceramic and pottery products.
- 10) “*Corpus moriens*” is the equivalent word for *suijakutai* by Hayato Kosuge. For *suijakutai*, Kazuko Kuniyoshi, “*suijakutai*” in *Hijikata Tatsumi-no Butoh*, p. 64; Yu Homma, “Project Note: Earthen Statue of Hijikata—Project History and the Shape of *suijakutai*,” in *Annual Report (2011/2012) No. 19, Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration, Keio University*, 19 (2012), p. 79. For the remarks for *suijakutai* by Hijikata himself, is found in his unpublished drafts in *Hijikata Tatsumi Zensyu* [The Complete Works of Hijikata Tatsumi], II (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1998), pp. 304–7.
- 11) Nanako Kurihara, “Most Remote Thing in the Universe: Critical Analysis of Hijikata Tatsumi’s Butoh Dance” (Diss., New York U, 1996) (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996, ATT 9706275), p. 13.
- 12) Kayo Mikami, *Utsuwa toshite-no Shintai: Hijikata Tatsumi, Ankoku Butoh Giho-heno Apurochi* [Body as a Vessel: Hijikata Tatsumi—an Approach to the Technique of the Dance of Darkness] (Tokyo: ANZ-dou, 1993), p. 48.
- 13) Genet’s *The Thief’s Journal* was first translated into Japanese and published in 1953.
- 14) Kuniyoshi, *Hijikata Tatsumi-no Butoh*, p. 11.
- 15) See for *Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka*, Kuzui Kinshiro and Hirasawa Goh, *Yuigon: Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 2008).
- 16) See for the performance, *Shiki-no Tame-no Nijyu-nana-Ban* (Tokyo: Research Center for the Arts Administration, Keio University, 1998) and the video record of *Hosotan* is preserved in Hijikata Tatsumi Archive, Keio University.
- 17) Mikami, p. 41.
- 18) Sandra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 75.
- 19) Mikami, p. 41.
- 20) *Bibō-no Aozora* [Good Looking Blue Sky], in *Hijikata Tatsumi Zensyu* [The

- Complete Works of Hijikata Tatsumi], I (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1998), p. 234
- 21) The condemned convict appears in *Hijikata Tatsumi Zenshū*, I, pp. 200–201, the pre-toddler in *Izume*, *Hijikata Tatsumi Zenshū*, I, pp. 232–34. The “domesticated body” is mentioned in the interview, *Hijikata Tatsumi Zenshū*, II, pp. 16–17.
 - 22) Mori Atsushi describes the scenes in Tōhoku, where people live together in harmony with the dead, in his novels such as *Gassan* [Mount Gassan], *Chōkaizan* [Mount Chōkai], and *Ware Yukumono-no-gotoku* [Me as a Dying Man].
 - 23) Hijikata refers to “Dance of the Mummy” in the essay for the pamphlet at the performance of Murobushi Koh: “Dance of the Mummy,” in *The Complete Works of Hijikata Tatsumi*, II, pp. 349–52.
 - 24) Naitō Masatoshi, personal interview with Hayato Kosuge and Takashi Morishita, 1 September 2008 at Tsuruoka Town campus, Keio University. See also, Naitō Masatoshi, “Hijikata Butoh to Nihon-Shinwa-no Kōzo” [Hijikata’s Butoh and the Structure of Japanese Mythology], in *Gendai-shi Tecyo* [Notebook for Modern Poetry] November 1987: p. 134.
 - 25) Haniya Yutaka called this posture “Tainai-meiso” [meditation in womb] and regards it as the original pose of Butoh, *The Complete Works of Hijikata Tatsumi*, II, p. 17.
 - 26) For the remarks of Hijikata regarding “Fugusha” [disabled body] as the ideal of Butoh, see, *The Complete Works of Hijikata Tatsumi*, I, p. 171.
 - 27) Naito Masatoshi, personal interview with Hayato Kosuge and Takashi Morishita, 1 September 2008 at Tsuruoka Town campus, Keio University.
 - 28) Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, I (London: 1880; Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2010), pp. 259–60.
 - 29) “Kubota is a very attractive and purely Japanese town of 36,000 people, the capital of Akita-ken ... Though it is a castle town, it is free from the usual ‘deadly-lively’ look, and has an air of prosperity and comfort. Though it has few streets of shops, it covers a great extent of ground with streets and lanes of pretty, isolated dwelling-houses, surrounded by trees, gardens, and well-trimmed hedges, each garden entered by a substantial gateway. The existence of something like a middle class with home privacy and home life is suggested by these miles of comfortable ‘suburban residences.’” (Letter XXVI), *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, I, pp. 300–301.

- 30) Tanaka Hidekazu, in Hidemichi Kasai, *Tōhoku: Tukurareta Ikyō* [Tōhoku: Invented Foreign Lands], (Tokyo: Chūōkōron), p. 10; for the invented images of Tōhoku, see also pp. 4–17.
- 31) Kasai, pp. 25–27 and p. 141.
- 32) For the interpretation of Tōhoku as a homeland, see, Akasaka Norio, *Hōhōtoshite-no Tōhoku* [Tōhoku as a Methodology], (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobo, 2007), chap. 3.
- 33) “Tōno Monogatari,” *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993), p. 1605.
- 34) Mikami also states that Hijikata’s Tōhoku should not be interpreted with sentimental feelings referring to real places. Mikami, p. 42.
- 35) For the details of the technological method, see Homma (2012), and Hayato Kosuge, Takashi Morishita, Yu Homma and Yoshihiro Kamemura (2010).
- 36) In fact, a program of real time transmission from Tsuruoka to the Japan Society in New York (a fourteen-hour time difference) was drawn up, though the plan was not realized because of schedule adjustments.
- 37) For the view that the start is around 1971, see Kazuko Kuniyoshi, ‘Hijikata Tatsumi to Bijutu: Butoh Nōto ni-okeru Inyō-Zuhan to Butō-no Kotoba-wo Sankō ni-shite’ [Hijikata Tatsumi and the Fine Arts: with Reference to Pictorial Citation and Words in Butoh Notation], *Tama Art University Bulletin* 22 (2007): p. 107; for the Butoh notation, see for example, Takashi Morishita, *Hijikata Tatsumi’s Notational Butoh: Sign and Method for Creation* (Tokyo: Research Center for the Arts Administration, Keio University, 2010).
- 38) Kuniyoshi (2007), p. 107.
- 39) In fact, Yamamoto gives witness that Hijikata occasionally first had his dancers write down his words and images in their notebooks and then went on to produce his dance piece on those images. (Personal interview with Yamamoto Moe, 22 August 2006 in Keio University)
- 40) Kasai Akira, *Hijikata Tatsumi-no Butoh*, p. 60 and p. 62.