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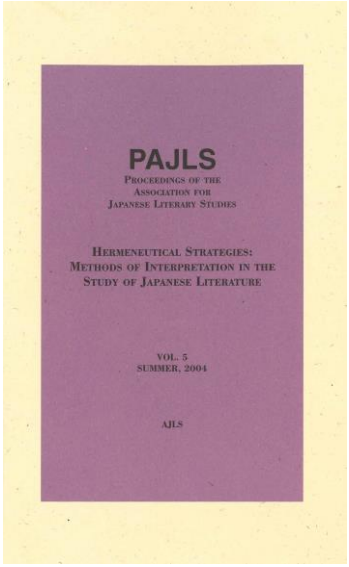

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METAPHORICAL MISCEGENATION IN MEMOIRS THE LITERARY ACTIVITIES OF HIJIKATA TATSUMI

Bruce Baird

The performance art form butō—best known for its grotesque twisted bodies and contorted faces covered with the white paint—encompasses within itself a bizarre and productive dichotomy. In general, if you ask performers what their dances mean, they will answer that in fact the dances have no meaning. Yet, it is not uncommon to hear those same performers contend that butō seeks to express something that language cannot say. Perhaps it is proper to maintain academic diffidence in front of a product of expression that supposedly has no meaning—and thus might be said (as with many other arts) to resist or even reject interpretation. Nevertheless, the vigorous denial of meaning has not stopped commentators from supposing that there is indeed some significance to butō, and should not stop us from considering the attempt to say something that language cannot say.

Up until now, with few exceptions, scholars have seen Western literature, such as the writings of Genet (and to a lesser degree Bataille, de Sade, and Nietzsche), and Tōhoku bodily movements as the two principle sources for the creative ferment of the founder of butō, Hijikata Tatsumi. For example, scholars have read Hijikata as initially celebrating homosexuality and anti-social behavior, and then trumpeted (or excoriated) his supposed return to Japan as he focused on movements from his Tōhoku childhood.

Both these readings have some validity. Quotations taken from Western literature dot the early essays, and the early dance titles refer explicitly to Lautremont's Maldoror and Genet's character Divine. Later, references to Hijikata's childhood abound in his writings. Moreover, the two interpretations were extremely important in their time. The focus on homosexuality in the West–how it was treated in society, what kinds of discourses were mobilized against it, how it was seen in medical, penal, and psychiatric communities—provided an important counter to a repressive and heterosexist morality. In Japan, Hijikata's focus brought to the level of public representation in dance a topic that had been largely squelched in the newly re-Westernized country. In addition, given the political climate in which Tōhoku was (and is) often denigrated by a Tokyo-centric Japan, a focus on a Tōhoku—on the poverty of the region, and the way it was seen as backwards—offset a self-congratulatory notion

of progress within Japan by focusing on the elements of society that were left behind.

However, we have become somewhat skeptical of the potential for simple representation on stage—representation for representation's sake—to accomplish lasting social change, and partly this awareness has come about, because we have come to understand that a focus on the periphery of Japan can be mobilized by conservative elements to underwrite exclusionary claims of Japanese uniqueness. Thus, I seek to present not so much a displacement of those two readings, as a supplement to them. Hijikata's literary works are strewn with elements that allow us to inscribe these two issues within an additional framework. For this reason, despite the fact that Hijikata's dances have wrought a revolution in aesthetics around the globe, it is quite possible that Hijikata's literary endeavors may someday be taken as *tours de force* equal to that of the dances. I would argue that, at the least, his writings need to be seen on their own terms as a parallel artistic activity, and that by doing so we can see that the despite the attempt to express something that cannot be expressed in language, there may have been some things Hijikata could say only or more clearly with language that in turn can color how we look at Hijikata's other artistic choices.

Here are the opening sentences from *Ailing Terpsichore*—a book commonly taken to be Hijikata's memoirs:

> 'Hey look at that! Bugs don't breathe but they are still alive. Look at that! There is a smoke-bug with hollowed out hips walking this way. It's probably the midpoint in the reincarnation of something.' I was raised in a manner of clouding the kind of body that will be parceled out through observations of the kind that I was told.[1]

> 「そうらみろや、息がなくても虫は生きているよ。あれをみろ、そげた腰のけむり虫がこっちに歩いてくる。あれはきっと何かの生まれ変わりの途中の虫であろうな。」言いきかされたような観察にお裾分けされてゆくようなからだのくもらし方で、私は育てられてきた。

[1] Hijikata Tatsumi, *Hijikata Tatsumi Zenshū*, eds. Tanemura Suehiro et al (Kawade Shobō, 1998), 1:11. (Hereafter cited as *HTZ*.) Translations mine, unless otherwise indicated. I have erred on the side of literalness to retain as much of the flavor of the prose as possible.

The opening sentence is marked as a quotation. The speaker is unidentified, yet this seems like the kind of observation that a child might hear from an adult—possibly an elderly adult, considering the ensuing reference to old people. It has an air of authority—the voice takes it for granted that it is in a position to command its audience (Look at the sky! Look at that!), and it feels that it has the right to make commentary on the nature of things (Bugs don't breathe but they are still alive), but in fact the quotation is not as authoritative as it seems. In the version of *Ailing Terpsichore* serialized in *New Drama* [*Shingeki*] from April 1977 to March 1978, Hijikata began the narrative with the following quotation: "'Look at that. That bug that is flying around the warm steam of the bathroom is probably the midpoint in the reincarnation of something.'"[2] Many of the elements are the same. The serialized sentence already had the tone of an adult addressing a child, the authority to command, and the knowing air that allows the voice to tell what is what. However, two authoritative quotations that share enough material—the "look at that," the "that bug," and the "probably the midpoint in the reincarnation of something"—cause us to question their own authority. If there was an ur-utterance, we are justified in wondering which of the present quotations more closely approximates it. More probably, there was no original utterance at all. One need not maintain strict fidelity to a fictional quotation of one's own creation. In that case, one alters the quotation to suit the requirements of one's fictional endeavor. That in turn may suggests that just as the quotation is a fiction, the Tōhoku presented in these memoirs is also a fiction.

To turn now to Hijikata's earlier writings may seem like putting the horse behind the cart, but with this later technique in mind we can go back to Hijikata's early writings and identify an element which may have provided the initial attempt that would have to wait for fruition until much later in his career. Consider the opening passage from Hijikata's first published essay, "Inner Material/Material" (originally printed in the program for the *Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE Gathering* in July 1960):

> You have to pull your stomach up high in order to turn your solar plexus into a terrorist. That is a line from a letter I sent to Ms. Elian Margaret, a woman with psychic powers who wrote a commentary last summer about my anal art. Because this woman was such a good collaborator, the horrors of my daily life—in which she was the person under whose knife my annual tonsure was performed—were intense, and I was in a state of secretly hiring someone in civilian clothes and

[2] Hijikata Tatsumi, "Yameru Maihime," *Shingeki* 24, no. 288 (April 1977): 97.

> continuing to choreograph. It is she who recommended that I write an essay on impotence and told me, too, in a letter written in invisible ink, that the anuses of Greek youth were utterly ruined.[3]

Here also, Hijikata begins with what is identified as a quotation (although it is not punctuated as such) marked as coming from a letter to a collaborator.

> You have to pull your stomach up high in order to turn your solar plexus into a terrorist. That is a line from a letter I sent to Ms. Elian Margaret, a woman with psychic powers.
>
> (鳩尾をテロリストに仕上げるには胃を高々と引揚げねばならぬ.)

Yet, as with the beginning of *Ailing Terpsichore*, this is a quotation that he had already used in a slightly different form in April of that year in the program for the Second Female Avant-gardists Dance Recital. Then the quotation read as a command,

> Hook your stomach up in order to turn your solar plexus into a terrorist!—Letter to the psychic Aileen Garett (from the dancer Hijikata Tatsumi).
>
> (鳩尾、をテロリストに仕上げるには胃を高々と釣揚げて一一(ダンサー・土方巽より)霊能婦人エイリーンガレットさんへ.)[4]

Granted, the alterations are slight, just Aileen Garett being transformed into Elian Margaret, and rather than drawing up the stomach, Ms. Garett is instructed to 'hook' it up. Yet, here also, the alterations undermine the status of the quotation as a reflection of an original utterance.

It is not at all unreasonable that if Hijikata were to write a letter it would take this form.[5] Moreover, in his essays, Hijikata often used

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[3] Originally untitled piece published in the program for the July 1960 *Hijikata DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai*. Translation modified from Hijikata Tatsumi, "Inner Material / Material," trans. Nanako Kurihara, *TDR* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 36. *HTZ*, 1: 187.

[4] *Hijikata Tatsumi "Butō" shiryōshū: Dai Ippo*, (Hijikata Tatsumi "Butoh" Materials: First Step) (Tokyo: Keiō University Arts Center, 2000), p. 56.

pseudonyms for his friends, so 'Elian Margaret' or 'Aileen Garett' need not be the actual names of a person. Motofuji says that Hijikata used the name 'Elian Margaret' to indicate a woman with whom he collaborated—Onrai Sahina.[6] However, it will come as no surprise to find out that this Onrai Sahina was a high school dance teacher and not a beautician. In any case, it is doubtful that Hijikata's coiffeuse would not have recognized him had he sent a body double in for either his annual haircut or his collaboration sessions. If Hijikata was not actually hiring a doppelganger so he could choreograph without interruption, then the exchange of letters in invisible ink and the commentary about Hijikata's 'anal art' are probably also artistic fictions. My point is this: a full seventeen years before he employed the technique in *Ailing Terpsichore*, Hijikata had already used the technique to give his audience a clue that his autobiographical works were fictions.

I do not intend to forestall continual work on Hijikata's biography (labor which will undoubtedly continue to yield eureka moments), but it seems obvious that even at this early juncture Hijikata was already constructing his personal history in ways that suited him and that were not necessarily aligned with what happened to him. Furthermore, I do not mean to make the banal observation that one cannot necessarily assume that everything that happens to a character must have happened to an author, nor the similarly trite comment that one cannot trust everything in an autobiographical sketch. Rather I aim to highlight the way that Hijikata

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[5] Consider the excerpt from a letter from Hijikata to Motofuji included in Motofuji Akiko, *Hijikata Tatsumi to tomo ni* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1990), p. 48:

> When the night during which I couldn't sleep was turning into dawn, I lay my head (as if to throw it) on the windowsill and, hit by morning mist, open my eyes and clear my senses. What had my face been soiled by?– the face which was connected to the head which had been thrown from the windowsill came to rest on the garden flowers that were reflected upside-down. The early morning ocher-white nature was reflected in my eyes... . The morning grass reflected to that face the flowers, the air, the garden with flowers redolent of earth. What I cannot forget is the absentmindedness that asked– just who am I, having been abandoned by those flowers and weeds? My dance was sitting in that three mat vinyl room facing the garden. When I came to my senses, I hurriedly left out the front door.

As one can see, even in Hijikata's private correspondence, he practiced a surrealistic manner of writing. So it is not out of the question that he could have written in a letter to a collaborator a line like the above.

[6] Motofuji, p. 72. Motofuji does not mention the name 'Aileen Garett.'

marks his writings as personal history and then goes out of his way to undermine their claim to veracity. Just as the Tōhoku childhood of *Ailing Terpsichore* was to some extent a construct, so also was the Tokyo life depicted in "Inner Material/Material."

In *Ailing Terpsichore*, a related technique throws up a gap between the narrator and the "I" of the story. Take the following passage:

> That kind of an I comes to mind—who, after having a feeling of yearning, hooked the woman's long hair, which had fallen on the tatami mat, onto a nail and is pulling. Having come this far, the I that wanted to be doing something was also no longer lonely.
>
> (懐かしさついでに畳の上に落ちている女の長い髪の毛を釘に掛けて、引っ張っている、そんな私を思い出してくる。もう、ここまでくれば、なにかしたがっている私も寂しい人ではなくなっているのだった.) (*HTZ*, 1: 54)

The first sentence has a strange split through which Hijikata specifically distances the self that pulls the hair—'that kind of pulling I' (*hippatte iru sonna watashi*)—from the (unmentioned) narrator who experiences the flood of memory. It is almost as if the narrator is telling us "that was a different self"—with the nuance that his current self has been so transformed by subsequent events that the two can no longer be spoken of as the same entity. Grammatically, the Japanese language allows the direct modification of nouns by verbs producing a noun-who/which-verbs or verbing-noun form. Thus, Hijikata could have written, "*hippatte iru watashi*"—the pulling I. In order to avoid an overly mannered text, standard translation strategies would then perhaps render this as, "I remember when I pulled... ," yet Hijikata insists on distance opened up by the "that kind of an I."

In the next sentence, the narrator achieves a similar effect by the use of the Japanese *tagatte iru*. *Tagaru* and *garu* are respectively verb and adjective endings that expressly mark the desires, wants, wishes, and experiences of someone else. In the rare occasions when they are used for one's own desires, they indicate that the speaker adopts the viewpoint of the listener. An example might be the reproachful sentence that demands a negative answer: "Do you really think I am the kind of person who would want to do such a thing?" [7] In Hijikata's hands, while the narrator

[7] The example is modified from Samuel Martin, *A Reference Grammar of Japanese* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1987), p. 358.

sometimes speaks directly about itself, it also often refuses to speak directly about its desires—substituting for "I wanted something," which would be consistent with the past perspective of a memoir, the *garu*-modified "I (or the self) who wanted (to do) something."

Contrast this kind of narrative tactic with that of the so-called I-novel, the *watakushi-shōsetsu* or *shishōsetsu,* as proposed by Edward Fowler in *Rhetoric of Confession*. Fowler's argument hinges on the problem of referring to the desires of the other, and he concludes that there was a predisposition to writing novels about one's own experiences precisely because the Japanese language comes equipped with tools for differentiating between the inner experiences of the self, and the outer experiences of the other, and thus, that one cannot speak with complete certainty about the wants, needs, and inner feelings of the other. Hence, Fowler sees the desire not to fill the narrative with too many *-garu*s as the impetus behind novels that are centered on one's own experiences. [8] Hijikata's choice is almost the opposite. He uses *-garu* and the third-person-I to indicate that this is not about him or his experiences at all.

To return to the opening paragraph, the sentence I passed over reads:

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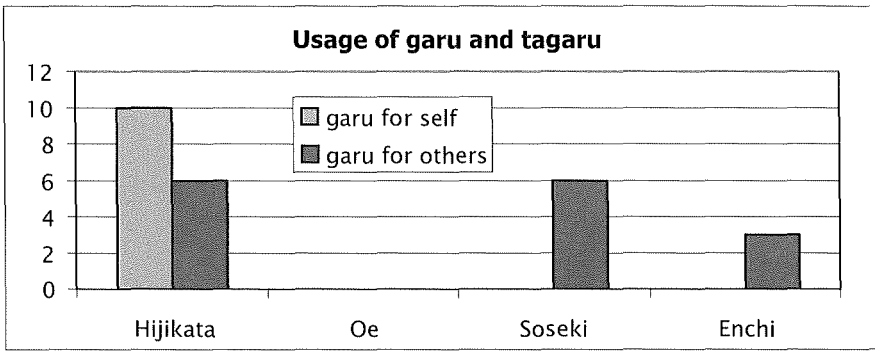
[8] Edward Fowler, *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 31. Of course, Fowler was attuned to the ways in which even *shishōsetsu* that claimed to be the most transparently presentational in terms of actual life experience of the author were full artistry, fictionalization, and distortion.

Controlling for the number of words per page, I counted the number of *garu*s and *tagaru*s in a random thirty-page sample from Hijikata and compared his usage with samples from Ōe Kenzaburō, Enchi Fumiko, and Natsume Sōseki. As one can see, while Hijikata uses *garu* for the I or the self on a third of the pages, the others never use it in this way.



> I was raised in a manner of clouding the kind of body that will be parceled out through observations of the kind like I was told.
> (言いきかされたような観察にお裾分けされてゆくようなからだのくもらし方で、私は育てられてきた.) (*HTZ*, 1:11)

I want to make two points about this sentence. Right from the start of Hijikata's career, the corollary to the idea that Hijikata was preoccupied with anti-social themes was that those shocking themes could be used to break through social striations.[9] Yet, here at the beginning of these strange pseudo-memoirs, he refers to a body that is clouded by observations that were told to him—that is it is clouded by discursive effects—and Tōhoku is the place where the young I's body was clouded by such observations. Of course, one can still speak of Hijikata's dances as jolting the social structure (by challenging a myth of seamless progress in Japan), but it should be obvious (from the cumulative effect of the sourceless quotations, the 'that kind of I,' the *garu*, and the clouded body) that Hijikata does not propose Tōhoku as an uncontaminated replacement for the current socially regulated regime. Rather Tōhoku serves precisely as another example of a socialized sphere.

I shall return to the issue of social structures, but for the moment, allow me to proceed to my second point about the sentence, which is that two times Hijikata uses the phrase *yō na*, which can be translated as 'like,' or "kind.' The core of the sentence is the narrator saying he was raised in a body-clouding manner. In the first of the similes, Hijikata then uses the *yō na* to qualify the body (or the manner of clouding) as being *like* a body (or a manner of clouding) that will be parceled out or apportioned. In turn, the observations through which the body will be distributed are modified again by *yō na* as being *like* the ones that were told to him.

Skip a sentence and Hijikata writes,

"My young persona would also suddenly come to seem like a fool without any inducement whatsoever; he preserved a strange brightness as if just living.

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[9] Miryam Sas explores Mishima's 1960 and 1961 essays on butō in which he argues that avant-garde dance scrapes off concepts and customs in order to allow 'actuality' to emerge. See her *Fault Lines: Cultural Memory and Japanese Surrealism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 169-172.

(私の少年も、何の気もなくて急に馬鹿みたいになり、ただ生きているだけみたいな異様な明るさを保っていた.)
(*HTZ*, 1:11)

Before he used *yō* twice in one sentence, and now he uses *mitai* (looks like, seems like, as if) twice. Hijikata's writings are full of simile and metaphor. Indeed, this text is built around the proposition that straightforward nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are never sufficient by themselves but need to be supplemented with more words to say what one is trying to say. [10]

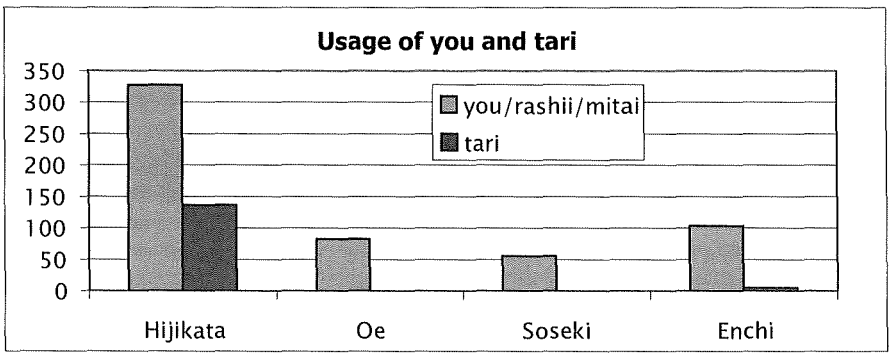
A contrasting technique follows at the beginning of the next paragraph:

I did things such as poke my fingers in fish eyes and talk to young girls who were holding doves made of rubber.

(私は魚の目玉に指を通したり、ゴムの鳩を抱いた少女に言い寄ったりして....)

I highlight the use of the *tari* ending the two clauses. *Tari*, called the 'representational' or 'alternative' in Japanese linguistics, is a verbal suffix. It indicates that the action is a representative example of various actions taken, or that the listed action is merely one among several alternatives that all could have been chosen. A suitable, if awkward, translation might be "and did in addition other un-enumerated things." Hence, the fact that

[10] The statistics for usage of *yō/rashii/mitai/gotoku* and *tari* in Hijikata (with a comparison with Oe, Enchi, and Sōseki) are as follows. Hijikata has three times as many *yō*-type constructs as the second place author and twenty times the number of *tari*s.



Hijikata lists two things that the I did—poke fish eyeballs, and engage young girls in conversation—should not be taken as an indication that these are the only things he did, but merely as an indication that these are two representative examples of things he did. Hijikata's text is full of these reminders that what we have is not at all a complete account, and that there are many other alternative versions that would be acceptable.

Another technique is collocation of elements. The following sentence is relatively standard in Hijikata's oeuvre, but along with the obvious glossed word (that I have captured with the superscript letters above the word), there is much that does not meet the eye in translation:

> The lisping youth with the harelip, who comes up to that I, running like a coin purse, is furnished with such things as a pear c o v e n o r e.
>
> (そんな私のそばに、蟇口のように走り寄って
> くる兎口のふがふが少年には、梨の恕(かなど)をあてが
> ったりしているのだった.) (*HTZ*, 1:85)

This sentence follows a few paragraphs after a discussion of toads (*gama*), and the word Hijikata uses for 'coin purse/wallet' is *gamaguchi*, which could be literally translated as 'toad mouth' (the etymology of which is taken to stem from the similarity between a toad's open mouth and the aperture of coin purse). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the use of 'toad mouth' for 'wallet—when there are other available words, the more normal one being *saifu* which could be directly translated as 'money [storing] cloth'—is determined by a process of association or stream of consciousness following close on the heels of the talk of toads. Then in the same sentence as 'coin purse' (toad mouth), Hijikata makes reference to a boy with a cleft palate. Yet 'harelip' is literally "hare-mouth.' Thus, 'toad mouth (coin purse)' proleptically points forward towards 'hare-mouth,' back towards the 'toad' of the previous paragraph, or simultaneously in both directions.

'Pear c o v e n o r e' belongs in a different register of language games.[11] Chinese characters are used in Japanese writing with various denotations and connotations already in place. When an author feels like the existing set of connotations and denotations for a particular word are insufficient

[11] In the serialized version in *New Drama*, Hijikata had written 'kernel' (*shushi*), and appended the gloss *kamado*. Hijikata Tatsumi, "Yameru Maihime," *Shingeki* 24, no. 294 (Oct 1977): 97.

(or wants to make clear which of the various meanings is intended), it is standard practice in Japanese to append an interlinear reading onto the word. By now, this process has been stretched to the point that Japanese writers routinely avail themselves of the opportunity to supplement significance by affixing Japanese readings onto foreign words, or foreign readings onto Japanese words or Chinese characters. Hijikata takes this practice into new territory. The Chinese character he uses 芯 (*shin*) indicates 'wick, stem, core, foundation.' To this he adds the gloss to read it as *kamado*—the Japanese word for 'oven'—yielding 芯(かまど), (my c o v e n r e). There are idiomatic uses of *kamado* that refer to an entire group as all belonging to one oven, or to a person's gaining her independence by setting up her own *kamado*. Thus by extension *kamado* may mean group or independence.[12] Thus we might surmise that the oven may be thought of as occupying a core place in the house that enables one to attain independence. However, usually, one appends a reading in order to add an extra nuance to a word. Hijikata though, appends a reading that if not diametrically opposed, provokes the two words to a struggle.

This was also not the first time that Hijikata had done something like this. Sometime in between 1965 and 1968, Hijikata met with the neo-dada artist Nakanishi Natsuyuki to discuss an up-coming performance. Nakanishi reports that Hijikata gave him a list of words to use as a kind of brain-storming aid in coming up with the stage art for the up-coming dance. The list was as follows:

> thistle—hunting dog—translator of the wind—first flower—dog's teeth—dog's teeth burning—mirror—that which covers the back of a horse: a saddle—cooperative meal—seventeen years old—frog—tooth mark—artichoke—sulfur—round worm—laughter—bubbling—ball of love—tomato—large Japanese bladder cherry—jimson weed—imaginary liquid—comb—green house—armored insect—ladybug
>
> 薊・猟犬・風の翻訳者・最初の花・犬の歯・犬の歯は燃えている・鏡・馬の背に蓋をするもの一鞍・共同の食事・十七才・蛙・歯型・朝鮮薊・硫黄・回虫・笑い声・沸騰・恋の球体・トマト・大ホーズキ・朝鮮朝顔・空想的な飲み物・櫛・温室・甲冑の虫・天道虫[13]

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[12] *Kōjien*. 4th ed., s.v. "kamado."

[13] Nakanishi Natsuyuki, "Treatment and Review: the Undersoles of Dance," *Bijutsu teichō* 38, no. 561 (May 1986): 71. See also "Notes by Natsuyuki

In commenting about the list, Kuniyoshi Kazuko notes how Hijikata plays with language.[14] In the same way that 'coin purse' (literally toad-mouth) pointed back to the previous discussion of toads, and forward to the cleft palate (literally hare-mouth), the words in this list are connected to each other. It is less obvious in English, but if one reads the Japanese, then one can begin to understand what Kuniyoshi has in mind. There may not seem to be much in common with 'roundworm,' 'armored insect,' and 'ladybug,' but in the Japanese, all are compound words the latter part of which is '-bug/-insect.' So if I had translated these as 'round bug,' 'armored bug,' and 'heavenly path bug,' then the kind of connections that Kuniyoshi had in mind would be more obvious. Additionally, Chinese characters often have a distinct left and right side. Thus, the character for 'frog' (蛙) actually has two constitutive parts. The left hand side is a pictograph for 'bug' (虫) and the right hand side has two pictographs for 'soil' (土) piled one on top of the other (hence 圭 which means 'jewel'). So, in a way, we can add 'frog' or 'jewel (double soil) bug' to the list of bugs. [15] Similarly, the progressive tie between 'thistle,' 'artichoke,' and 'jimson weed' would be more obvious if I had translated these three as 'thistle,' 'Korean thistle,' and 'Korean morning glory.' Then if 'Korea' were rendered following the original meaning of the Chinese characters as 'morning brightness,' then one might see a tie between 'Korea'—as in 'morning brightness' and both 'morning glory' and 'first flower.' Kuniyoshi remarks on Hijikata's use of "fresh combinations" to "create novel images," and in addition, speaks of the words in Nakanishi's list as "struggling with each other to bind strange images together," and says that

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Nakanishi" in Jean Viala and Nourit Masson-Sekine eds, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), p. 190.

[14] Kuniyoshi Kazuko, "Butōfuron: Hijikata tatsumi no shiryō kara" (An Essay on the Butoh-fu: From the Scrap Books of Tatsumi Hijikata), *InterCommunication* 29 (Summer 1999): 86-87.

[15] Incidentally, those unfamiliar with Chinese characters should be apprised that the etymology of 'frog' is not quite as simple as presented. Often, one side of the character is broadly taken to supply the meaning, while the other side is borrowed either purely for its independent phonetic value, in this case *kei*, or for additional significance, in this case 'jewel.' Thus, the left hand side, the insect side, of the character would have indicated that this was a small animal that would have fit into the same taxonomy (at least in so far as Chinese characters were concerned) as prawns, snakes, hedgehogs, newts, beetles, spiders, and cicadas. The *kei* of the right could also be taken as an onomatopoeic approximation of what this particular 'insect' sounded like. Thus, rather than 'jewel bug,' I could have rendered this as 'bug that says *kei kei kei.*'

this struggle produces "shocks in the sense of sight and touch" (Kuniyoshi 87).

In her book on Japanese surrealism, *Fault Lines*, Miryam Sas points out that Hijikata's mentor Takiguchi Shūzō and his collaborators had translated European texts concerning automatic writing during the 1920's and 1930's (110-111). Undoubtedly, as part of the post-war generation that revisited surrealism, Hijikata's associative processes can be referenced back to those initial efforts to expand what language could say. It would seem that Hijikata straddles two sides of surrealism. The associative processes recall Breton's experiments in automatic writing. In Breton's case, he describes a moment in the early days when he and Phillippe Soupault would cover sheets of paper with writing on the assumption that unconscious psychic mechanisms would produce something that rationality and existing aesthetic and moral categories could not. If their conscious minds took over, they would immediately break off the sentence wherever they were and begin again with a randomly chosen letter.[16] Yet there is also something altogether more active and calculating in Hijikata's work—a conscious attempt draw disparate elements together to see what will result from the juxtaposition. This forced miscegenation does two things. It participates in the expression-widening activities of an entire generation of artists. Moreover, as Kuniyoshi points out, the agon between character and reading or between two radically different things creates the conditions for a physical experience inside the head of the reader. In conjunction with a dance form that provides for its audience physical experiences by shocking them or instilling in them discomfort, Hijikata's writings can be seen as striving in the same direction.[17] Kuniyoshi goes on to assert that despite the fact that Hijikata is usually taken to have

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[16] Andre Breton, *What is Surrealism: Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), pp. 162, 165-6.

[17] Just as here Hijikata asked Nakanishi to create stage art while considering these images, later in his career, Hijikata would require his dancers to subject movements to various mental constraints in order to modify the movements: perhaps something like moving while imagining being eaten by a bug. The dancers were required to spread their concentration out to as many as seventeen mental instructions for executing a movement. They also had to combine disparate movements into wholes, or combine disparate mental conditions into one movement. They might have to imagine eyes on their fingertips while imagining being eaten by the bug. Subjecting a movement to two different constraints such as imagining eyes on the fingertips while also imagining being eaten by a bug is similar to Nakanishi's task of trying to create stage art while keeping this entire list in mind. See my "Structureless in Structure: The Choreographic Tectonics of Hijikata Tatsumi's Butō," in *Modern Japanese Theater Revisited* (forthcoming).

perfected butō during the '70's, already during the '60's he was doing something with words that is somewhat similar to his later experimentation with dance.

In trying to widen out language, one can see that Hijikata approached from both the side of simile, and that of metaphor. The *yō na* allowed Hijikata to indicate the inadequacies of language—not the absolute inability of language or artistic works to say or to represent, but the inadequacy of language as it stands currently. That is, particular words were not big enough for what Hijikata wanted to express. With the *tari* he acknowledged that he still only managed, despite his attempts, to say a small percentage of what could be said. The two surrealistic hypotheses allowed Hijikata to approach the same problem from other sides: on one side, the process of association allowed Hijikata to say new things through unconscious processes, and on the other side—in which he butted two words or characters right up next to each other to cause the mind to struggle with the result—he caused the mind to grasp for new connections. Thus, he used both metaphor and simile to try to get around insufficiencies in the current level of expressibility. This is only apropos considering the initial problem I highlighted of performers who want to say something that language cannot say. Hijikata, it appears, not only wanted to use his body to say something that language cannot say, but also wanted to employ language to the say something it had not hitherto been able to say.

Skipping along a few lines to the third paragraph of *Ailing Terpsichore*, we find:

> I was constantly boiling bugs in my stomach, and the bugs always squirmed slowly in my anus. Sometimes they would come out my ass. It was probably on account of eating too many greens from the field out back.

(しょっちゅう腹に虫をわかし、虫も尻の管の辺りをゆっくり蠢いていた。ときには、尻の穴から出てくることもあった。裏の畑の青物を食べ過ぎたせいであったろうか。) (*HTZ*, 1:11)

Here Hijikata introduces a major theme of the work—questions of causality. He begins with a simple statement about boiling bugs. As the word 'bug' (*mushi*) can also be used for microscopic organisms, the idea of 'boiling bugs' could perhaps be interpreted as a metaphorical way to designate the way one's stomach feels when it is upset by a cold, flu, or parasites. Then the narrator goes on to say that sometimes the bugs come out of his anus. For current purposes, exactly what it means to boil bugs or have them come crawling out the anus (this could even be factual if he was

referring to parasites) is less important than what follows—an attempt at an explanation for why this should have happened. The 'on account of' here is *sei* (also translatable as 'outcome,' 'consequence,' 'result,' 'guilt,' 'fault,' or 'blame'). In this case, the problem seems to have been that he ate too many vegetables. Over and over, the narrator will provisionally attempt to assign fault or responsibility for some state of affairs.

Conversely, the narrator will interrupt the narrative in order to observe one or more things that were not at fault in a particular incident:

> It was probably not the outcome of the photographic plate of the chart outlining my inner world being cracked, nor was it the consequence of being quickly separated from the kind of thought that was exposed as if it lacked sufficient viewing power. It was not that kind of overly simple lack, but my brain was sucked up by the desolate spy-like thought that there was no one who resembled me but me.
>
> (私の内側の構図の乾板が割れていたせいでもなく、視力不足のような感光した思考から素早く離れたせいでもなかった。そのようなあまりに単純な不足ではなく、私に似ているのは私しかないのだというスパイめいた寂しい思いに、脳味噌が啜られているのだった.) (*HTZ*, 1: 25)

I have only quoted the end of the passage—the *sei* clauses—rather than try to parse out the particulars of the problem. (From the preceding passage, it appears that the antecedent could be a child that was killed suddenly, human voices that suddenly became coquettish, or a multicolored albino that walked near sour gestures). Hijikata proposes two things that are not the cause of the state of affairs before finally settling (perhaps?) on the real cause. The first is that the phenomenon was not caused by a crack in the photographic plate in his mind. The second is that it was not caused by quickly being separated from certain thoughts. Hijikata does not return to the *sei* (the fault) after piling it on for two clauses in a row. He just states straight out that his brain was sucked up, and we are left to infer from the first half of the sentence—"It was not that kind of overly simple lack"—that the cause of the original problem was his preoccupation with the thought that he is the only person who looks like him.

The attention to causes and effect connects Hijikata's various engagements, and brings us back to the issue of socialization or discursive effects. On the one hand, the *sei* explored the causes of various known results—with the suggestion that there are so many possible causes that perhaps the exact *sei* will never be known. The miscegenation offered

through the use of simile (*yō*), metaphor, and collocation amounts to experiments to say more than has been possible up until now, or attempts to explore different discursive configurations. In his exploration of social effects or discursive structures, Hijikata first brought together the various "on account of's" (and the underlying question "on account of what (social forces), are X and Y together?"), then plumbed alternative combinations (with the underlying question "what will happen (to the social fabric) if I put X and Y together?"). Then the *tari* assured the reader that Hijikata tried only a fraction of the possible combinations.

We are now in a position to draw some provisional conclusions about Hijikata and his butō on the basis of his writings. I opened this essay by recounting the disdain with which many butō performers treat the idea that their dances mean anything. It turns out that even in the case of Hijikata it is difficult to identify definitively what any one element of his dances or writings means. However, attention to the structure of his writings has revealed that it is somewhat easier to ask meta-questions about butō and attempt to assign meta-meaning. It is not at all clear how we should interpret the c o v e n or what it means for Hijikata to say that the "photographic plate of the chart outlining my inner world being cracked" was not the cause of some phenomenon. Yet, by focusing on the effort the mind makes when it encounters c o v e n, and on the extensive use of the *sei*, the similes, and the forced collocations, we can begin to articulate some larger concerns.

One of those is the afore-mentioned attention to social affects, which can help us see his use of Genet and other Western writers in a new light. As I have stressed, usually scholars have seen Hijikata as most interested in the portrayal of homosexuality, and that was undoubtedly an important thing to do at the time. Yet, a quick return to Genet yields the observation that he was always as interested in exploring the ways that society treats its convicts and outcasts and the effect that treatment has on them as he was in homosexuality or anti-social behavior per se. We should see Hijikata as having drawn from Genet (or his own experiences moving from back and forth between Akita and Tokyo) a razor-sharp sense of how social structures affect bodies (and the minds bound up with those bodies).

Despite the fact that Hijikata does appropriate Western writers in various ways, his writing style owes much of its characteristic quality to the surrealism of Takiguchi Shūzō and Mizutani Isao, and in turn Andre Breton and Tristan Tzara. Yet, if I seem to have merely replaced one set of European influences with another, Myram Sas notes that Tzara took Buddhism and Daoism as precursors to his work (121-122). One can begin to see both the labyrinth that constitutes influence, and the political implications behind the choice of Western avant-garde artists looking to

non-western traditions to revive moribund arts. For this means quite literally that Japanese artists were faced with their past no matter where they turned. An international perspective may turn out to throw Japanese artists back to a past about which they feel reservations as Hijikata certainly did.

In that light, Hijikata's turn to Tōhoku for movements looks like an attempt to combat the circuitous entrance of the past into Japanese arts by looking outside of the predominant Japan-West artistic exchanges. However, he did not for that reason suppose that Tōhoku represented some set of pure unadulterated movements as opposed to the discursively contaminated movements of Tokyo and the West. Rather he stayed attentive to the socialization of bodies, or the effects of epistemic structures. Although several commentators have noted the attempt to use pre-modern Japanese elements in order to overcome the modern, Hijikata did not naively present Tōhoku (or the pre-modern) as an uncontaminated locus of modernity-conquering bodies or ideas.[18] It could serve as one item in a forced collocation—that is, as half of a constructed metaphor such as T$^{\text{Genet}}$ōh$^{\text{o}}$ku, which would transform both of the items in the collocation as we struggle with the combination. If we used a similar technique to revisit my initial reluctance to dismiss previous interpretations of butō because of their original usefulness, then we might propose a hermeneutical strategy of collocating previous interpretive efforts with current ones—rather than attempting to erase previous efforts by current ones) so that we could interpret butō in terms of a neologism such as $^{\text{socialization}}$homosexuality or homosexuality$^{\text{discursivity}}$. In that sense, Tōhoku and homosexuality were alternatives that could challenge certain self-satisfied narratives of Tokyo and the West by the very ways in which bodies were clouded by discursive structures. However, just as Hijikata seems to hold out no hope of getting back to an original source for his quotations, he also seems to have no hope of returning to a body that is unclouded by epistemic or social constraints. Butō merely queries the effects of successive iterations of the always already clouded body, and presents surreal and novel (social) arrangements. Like the surrealism to which it is partially indebted, there is something utopian about this project. It holds out the promise of consciously or unconsciously different (and perhaps less repressive) iterations of the body and society.

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[18] See David Goodman, "*Concerned Theatre Japan* Thirty Years Later: A Personal Account" in Stance Scholz-Ciona and Samuel Leiter eds., *Japanese Theatre and the International Stage* (Boston: Brill, 2001), pp. 348-349; and Jacob Raz, "Foreword: The Turbulent Years," in Viala and Masson-Sekine eds., *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, pp. 14-15.