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Butoh Translations and the Suffering of Nature

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Is butoh past its prime? Perhaps it is still in process and changing. In that case, we may say that butoh is historical, having its roots in mid-twentieth-century Japan, and that it continues to migrate across cultures through translations that are individually crafted and understood. Butoh has never been a progressive art, sinking as it does toward mud and disappearance. It is not based on steps, but rather on images and atmospheric change, eliciting affects of bodily being. Most significantly for this essay, butoh brought marks of suffering into dance, sublimating the body while extending its liminal, intermediate states. Butoh seldom lands anywhere: it keeps morphing.

The experience of *ma* (the space between in Japanese, or *limina* in psychology) is more important than the visible in butoh. The suffering it exposes is not personal or even interpersonal. It is not shown through narrative dancing; it appears to disappear. Butoh explores experiential shades of suffering, often relative to concerns for nature. As often in butoh, the aesthetic of morphology allows affects and images to change, disappear or intensify, just as the flow of nature itself undergoes constant change.

I call my teaching loosely based on butoh, 'metamorphic dance', since I believe metamorphosis to be the aesthetic core of the new genre that emerged through Hijikata Tatsumi, and secondarily through Ohno Kazuo and his son Ohno Yoshito. Ohno Kazuo-sensei, my mentor, said that his butoh was 'the dance of everyday life'. He used music from different genres, and from the West as well as the East. One of his favourites was Elvis Presley. His music, like his dances and costumes, change registers in history, gender and culture. In the cauldron of butoh one morphs and transforms. Butoh has several meanings in Japanese; *ancient dance* is the oldest meaning that Hijikata first evoked (Fraleigh 2010: 12).

The dance he inspired then and now is not heroic: its direction is descent, its colour is symbolically dark and it tends toward dissolution. Endings sometimes regenerate and faces glow, but they can fade and fall apart in an instant.[1] Maureen Fleming's performance art, indebted to Hijikata's and Ohno's teaching, is also informed by African aesthetics. She performs her sensuous, metaphysical and syncretic dances internationally. Min Tanaka, who was closely identified with butoh early in its history, specifically states that he no longer calls his work butoh. Eiko, of Eiko and Koma performing duo, no longer associates her teaching with butoh. Eiko and Koma studied with butoh teachers and performed in butoh festivals, but at her 2014 workshop in Philadelphia, Eiko said to the group: 'This is not butoh; this called *delicious movement*.' On the other hand, there are butohists like Itto Morita and Mika Takeuchi of GooSay Ten Dance Company in Japan who make preservation of the originating aesthetics of butoh their express purpose.[2]

In this article, I speak about translation in butoh, how an art form changes through time or even breaks away from original versions when in contact with specific cultures and new aesthetics. My purpose is twofold: to explain butoh as a process art that continues to translate its founding aesthetics and to focus on the suffering of nature as a butoh aesthetic now intensifying ecologically.

[1] In brief, butoh is a dance of transformation. This is a thematic of my book, *BUTOH: Metamorphic dance and global alchemy* (2010), which takes a closer look at metamorphosis as a butoh signature and introduces a philosophy of the butoh body.

Those inclined toward butoh in the present century don't necessarily stage their work through this prototype. Rather they see butoh as a contributing strand that informs them.

[2] The butoh way of translating pain and suffering is part of its aesthetic ethos, as I have written about before (Fraleigh 2010: 49–50). In brief, butoh does not push away pain, but allows it to be, to move and morph. 'Every step is pain', Ohno Yoshito sometimes says in his workshops, as dancers work though this movement image in their own way. I have learned how to relieve back pain through admitting it in dance improvisations, especially in butoh, developing migratory pathways in bodily responsivity instead of getting stuck in the pain. This matter of attuning to affect and experience is a way of paying attention in dance.

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Nature has been a foundational presence in a great deal of butoh, and thus I enquire into nature as an anchor of butoh continuity. In defining nature, I explore how butoh and its offshoots attend to nature and why such attention is important to the future. In order to speak of translation, we need to know what is basic to butoh, since translation implies continuity along with change. Thus, I speak about where butoh came from, its originating impulses and cross-cultural backgrounds. Butoh is from its beginnings a dance form that migrates easily, because it is founded on cross-cultural access and cultural critique, and because, to a certain extent, it is performed through ordinary movement – like crouching, climbing, inching, shaking, flailing, falling and shivering, however stylized.

NATURE'S PRESENCE

Butoh dancers embody environmental atmospheres – literally and in moods (from snow to ash), become material bio-nature (becoming bone marrow or bee pollen), develop consciousness of environmental nature (in its suffering, quaking, flooding and holding) and attempt to strip away culture (including cultured ways of dancing). In order to question why nature is important in butoh, and how butoh announces an eco-friendly presence, I look at nature from several standpoints, first turning toward ontological definitions through Heidegger's phenomenology and later drawing upon his teacher Husserl's insights. Heidegger thought it a problem to see nature as a resource, and wrote of dangers inherent in technological worldviews of domination and mastery (Oliver 2015: 111).

Nature can mean several things: earth and world as living entities, or earthly and worldly entities, like you and me, for instance. Nature has being and aliveness as we do. As organisms, we are capable of growing and moving, and we also participate in larger ecological structures. We are, however, more than the organic systems that ecology studies. We are complex beings, ontologically, but not the only ones. Heidegger speaks of the world itself as a being, and he also speaks of our being present in the world. He sees environing nature as 'the very soil of history' (1962 [1927]: 433). *Being*, the core topic of his work, *Being and Time*, is not an abstraction: 'Being is always the being of an entity' (29). The world as a being has 'worldhood' in his ontology (91), and we belong to the world as beings in the world. This may seem a strange way of speaking, or may at least create hesitation, lest we assume that the world is mute substance and believe that we are separate from it. The world is a being that worlds in its worlding actions; it has a character not unlike our own when it comes to issues of life. Yet, beings also have individual characteristics. What Heidegger calls *seinlassen* (letting-be) enables a path of difference, even gratitude for otherness, letting beings be what they are (Llewelyn 2003: 62).

But *seinlassen* isn't enough for Heidegger. Letting beings be may just be a lazy way of being present. He takes us further: 'In never dwelling anywhere, Being-there is everywhere and nowhere. The moment of *vision*, however, brings existence into the Situation and discloses the authentic "there"' (1962 [1927]: 398). In this attitude, may morphic methods of performance present situations for potential moments of authentic vision – this through close attention, attuning and *dwelling with* as morphing into nature?

Through intentions of becoming other than human, butoh gives rise to gratitude for the physical world that surrounds and suffuses our human and more-than-human natures. 'More' is the being of non-human species: animals, insects, microbes and so forth. We humans are not the only earthly beings, and we are not above the presence of nature. This is a decidedly anti-anthropocentric position. Heidegger, for all of his detours, sees a problem in separating humans from other beings in nature, so that humankind becomes homeless, 'not a member of the natural community' (Zimmerman 2003: 80).

Most significantly butoh finds its home in nature, and not romantically, but through

imagery and in becoming nature and more-than-human nature. For butoh, nature includes the landscapes we move through and inhabit, even elements of harsh environments, like forests on fire, melting icebergs, desert canyons of shifting sand and volcanic rock, tornados and, over time, the detritus of landfill. Nature contains the alien as well as the native, and it is also home to the existence of incredible beauty – as Ohno and many other butohists have explored. I hold with butoh and the large life-world view of phenomenology that we are involved with the world as natural and cultural beings, and we inhere in nature as part of the world. I consider this further here – rejecting sharp nature/culture divides, as I did in two earlier works (Fraleigh 1987, 2004).

Butoh has danced into the natural world from the time of its founding in Hijikata's identification with mud: 'I come from the mud' (*Tsuchi kara Umareta)* he said in his speech *Kaze Daruma* (1985).[3] Likewise, nature is prized in Ohno's identification with flowers, his favourite form of life. Participatory dance in natural environments is a current translation of the butoh lineage in the work of many, including Ephia Gburek in France, SU-EN in Sweden and my Shin Somatics community dances in the desert canyons of Southwest Utah (Fraleigh 2015). In particular, Takenouchi Atsushi and others engage consciousness of environments in peril and dance in response to climate change, as we will explore.

I like to think in aesthetic terms of 'nature as container', to imagine being held by nature. At the foundation of phenomenology, Husserl taught that the world and nature are not objects that pre-exist us. As an ontological matter, we constitute the world in consciousness: 'human subjects are only in the world by the fact that, as bearers of world-consciousness, they produce the sense, world, for themselves at every moment' (1995 [1941]: 166). But this doesn't mean that nature is a fiction, just that it discloses itself to humans in relation to perception and direction of intention. We walk on the earth; we can lie down in the sand and grass to feel their textures and support. Where I live in Utah, our spectacular canyons have particular manners of holding: wide basins that carry many kinds of bodies, as also our own, and sandstone ledges that enfold those who dance there.

Writing of 'place worlds', phenomenologist Edward Casey speaks of nature in the plural (2003: 194). The place worlds of our experience are many. Forests and rivers are familiar places, worlding their own windings and dances. Place worlds are environments that produce atmospheres and moods, specific in temper and colour. When I dance on the seashore in Greece or in the Tuscan landscape, I meld with their audible tempos, the ebb and flow of tides and vivid colours of the poppies, as boundaries disappear. Site-specific dances (place-dances) allow me this freedom, whether butoh, or not.

Nature evolves, as dance also does. It adapts and has many faces. In his book *The New Wild: Why invasive species will be nature's salvation* (2015) Fred Pearce, noted environmental scientist, shows that wilderness environments have often been considered 'perfected' places in habitats that should not be disturbed. His research indicates that 'alien' forces and species over time assist in repopulating and sustaining wilderness. The alien and the native are not necessarily competing. May this be true of human migrations as well? If so, nations could

■ Takenouchi Atsushi in *Ridden by Nature* a film by Kiah Keya, 2015. *Photo Hiroko Komiya*

[3] *Kaze Daruma* (Wind Daruma) is a speech that Hijikata gave the night before the 1985 Butoh Festival in Tokyo. A daruma is a doll weighted at the base, so it can't be knocked over.

■ Yumiko Yoshioka in *EN ON*, Choreographed by Rena Konstantaki, indigo fera art productions, 2015. The choreographer says, 'EN ON in Greek means "one being". This being is connected to the life cycle of the whole, where everything is connected and becomes ONE'. *Photo Chronis Giannopoulos*

think in more eco-friendly, less fearful ways concerning immigrants. The popular notion of survival of the fittest is a misinterpretation of Charles Darwin's work, as cited by many scientists. The updated view of Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan in *Microcosmos: Four billion years of microbial evolution* conceives of evolution in amicable terms. The view of evolution as violent competition among species and individuals dissolves in new views of cooperation, interaction and mutual interdependence. 'Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking' (1986: 14–15). *If nature were a game, it would network!* The work of Robert Augros and George Stanciu, *The New Biology: Discovering the wisdom in nature*, allows us to see harmony in nature: 'Life works with the environment, not against it.… Every living thing is beautifully attuned to its environment' (1988: 138–9). Then why do humans not attune? In trying to master the game of nature, do we pre-empt discovery?

Ohno puts his perspective on human mastery this way: 'you are not the be all and end all of life.' And of perfection he says: 'don't push away the messiness of life' (Ohno workshop 1991). Mastery and perfection are not valued in butoh; somatic adaptability is. Neither are perfect bodies valued in butoh. Butohists have shown that human bodies are *just human*, and that physical and mental challenges exist on a changing spectrum. Performers with challenges – whom some would call 'disabled' – are incorporated in the nomadic international work of Takenouchi Atsushi, for instance, and in the work of Endo Tadashi in Göttingen, Germany, where jazz and butoh co-exist with a variety of abilities in dance. Ohno, Takenouchi and Endo take seriously what Zen teacher Suzuki Daisetz says about Japanese artists – that they like to show imperfection, even uncouth gestures, in unusual and beautiful ways (1959: 24).

Our human bodies already exist on a spectrum. In terms of balance and centre alone, no one is perfectly balanced at zero. We have varying biological and genetic natures and inheritances, and we are physical, morphing creatures, constantly adapting just as nature does. Through phenomenology, neuroscience and somatic studies, we learn that the human body is not just physical; it is conscious energetically and autobiographically (Fraleigh 2015). Our bodies hold stories in consciousness and memory, just as nature records a wider history in geological strata, in patterns of crystals, climate change and more. The earth's collective story is embodied, locally and globally. To be embodied is to be body, and this is something we share with all embodied beings, including other animal beings and the earth as a body of life. We are earthlings together, and we suffer together, as we can also flourish. It all depends. We have choices to make in this regard. Our stories entwine, as Pearce warns: 'Alien species may be scary sometimes. But they are nature at its best, and in the twenty-first century they may be its opportunity for revival after the damage done to it by humans' (2015: 152).

If we come by our bodies through nature, the way we live and where we live also have an impact. The body is cultivated, some would say culturally constructed, which doesn't mean that there are no intrinsic, natural qualities in being human. Our skins are natural containers, for instance, and we can relate our skin to the surface skin of the earth when we dance.

In this, we are nature touching nature, and there are many other ways to think of dancing in continuity with the natural world, whether wild, cultivated or in need of repair. To dance is to evolve. To dance is to change and attune to changes in others, oneself and the environment. Through attunement and adaptation, we can listen and learn.

THE PRESENCE OF NATURE IN BUTOH

Butoh dancers pay attention to nature, and not through inspection or objectively – as in science, but more aesthetically as in Zen. Ashikawa Yoko expressed emptiness when she danced, the kind that Zen epitomizes. Zen and butoh are not the same, of course, but they often share characteristics. Ashikawa's dance company was photographed in nature, resting on breezes and beds of leaves, seemingingly asleep standing up. Her student from Sweden, SU-EN (Susanna Akerlund), dances on stage and also choreographs in the environment: 'The forest surrounding our studio provides the drama for daily life inspirations,' SU-EN says (2010: 134). Her 2015 Summer Camp features 'Projects in Nature' (SU-EN 2015). Nature also foregrounds the forest atmosphere of *Mourning* (2007), a dance based on planetary extinction performed by Eiko and Koma at the New York Butoh Festival in 2007. The stage for this dance is strewn with leaves, branches and twigs. As backdrop, a giant tree trunk rises ruggedly from the stage floor, dwarfing the dancers. They can't find the strength to stand, or the will to connect as they flail and crawl in the soil and rotting leaves.[4]

While butoh has resisted exploitive uses of technology, sometimes technology stages nature in butoh. A prominent female butohist, Yumiko Yoshioka, dances her work, *EN ON* (2011), 'the birth and metamorphosis of a creature', at PK Theater in Athens Greece on a stage designed with Plexiglas® glass mirrors. Her image multiplies through light and glossy mirrors to create eerie organic conversions – bodily compressions and dilations that seem more insect than human (Yoshioka 2011).

Directly encountering nature, many butoh-influenced dancers move outdoors in ponds, rivers, deserts and dunes. Their purpose is to pay attention to *places in nature* through bodily lived identifications in dance. As grounded in anguished landscapes, Takenouchi has also visited places where people have died in vast numbers, dancing in far corners of the earth on what he calls 'the killing fields' of war (in Cambodia, Poland and Japan, for example), and for ecologically imperiled lands (in the American Southwest, South America and elsewhere), as also for the Kobe earthquake tragedy in Japan that claimed up to 6,400 lives (17 January 1995). The Japanese know from first-hand experience and their island existence about the desolations and destructions of war, nuclear poison, earthquakes and tsunamis. Ohno Kazuo, a World War II veteran, initiated dances for healing specific places in the world when he danced at Auschwitz, not as a public performance for an audience. He said he couldn't dance, until he saw the pain in the stones. The stones spoke to him.

FOUNDING BUTOH AESTHETICS

Based on morphing states of being in images of ash, smoke, incense, comets, stars, animals, insects, fish, chickens, peacocks and much more, butoh is the dance form that has paid attention to nature and change most of all. Butoh, like nature, transforms endlessly, and nothing is beyond its imagistic scope. Nakamura and I expand commentary on butoh imagery in our book (2006: 52). One of Hijikata's surrealist essays is 'From being jealous of a dog's vein' (2000c [1969]): he saw the blood pulsing in a dog's vein, envying the vital life he saw there, and dropped into a state of jealousy. One may laugh at the thought, or become jealous with him. He shows that affective images can come from overlooked details, and appreciation of animate life comes through paying close attention.

From the beginning, Hijikata's *ankoku butoh* (darkness dance) sought to destroy the complacency of modernism – by staging

[4] In their four-decade career, Eiko and Koma have performed many environmental works on themes of water, land, trees and wind.

hidden discomforts of disability, disease, death, darkness, weakness, emaciation and suffering. Not least of these was his war on highly visible wastes of production and conspicuous consumption. He directed the gaze of the audience toward rejected parts of nature and our own human natures in decline, by dancing into repressed aspects of society and exhuming the pre-socialized body, what he often called 'the body that has not been robbed' (Nakajima 1988). He visualized the body in butoh in seemingly regressive ways for a dancer. He didn't ascribe importance to physical strength, but rather to 'the emaciated body'. In a most telling political rejection of modern progress and America's entry into Japan after World War II, he declared: 'I don't want to be cheated by a bad check called democracy' (Hijikata 2000b [1961]: 43).

Hijikata created a new genre of dance in his butoh, which developed roughly between the 1950s and 1970s in post-war Japan.[5] Bruce Baird, through his residency at the Hijikata Tatsumi archives at Keio University in Tokyo, gives a dedicated account of Hijikata, interpreting his dances and motives from several resources, some not yet available in English. Baird sees Hijikata as less of an original than most writers on butoh, 'a product of his times', and not the only modern dancer trying to do something new in post-war Japan (2012: 16).

I don't place Hijikata in modernist streams, however, even if he began there in his first dance studies. Later when protesting the Western colonization of Japan after World War II, Hijikata used the creativity he had learned from German *Neue Tanz* and European surrealism to invent his 'body in crisis', but not in any recognizable style of modern dance. He spoke of the butoh body somatically in terms of weakness, also relating it to nature through mud, wind, grits, and soggy rice crackers. The crisis he embodied in his butoh grew from the turmoil of post-war Japan teetering on the brink of a technological age. Anthropologist Christal Whelan speaks tellingly of butoh aesthetics, the pre-socialized body, privation and the country life Hijikata and Ohno would have shared through personal experience:

> What became one of butoh's most typical postures – a bow-legged crouch – was the familiar stance both men had often seen – farmers consumed by hunger and permanently stooped from cropping rice in the fields. Along with this posture were others: slumped, bow-legged, and pigeon-toed. These wraithlike figures soon filled the butoh stage. But they went beyond being emblems of the rigors and sheer physicality of pre-modem life in Japan. They were attempts to return to a pre-socialized body emptied of habitual movement and therefore open to new creative forms of expression. (2006)

Hijikata conjured dance identifications with wet rice fields of Japan's countryside, old people and his childhood terrors of living with an alcoholic father. He was stunned, he said, by seeing Ohno dance in Tokyo, calling his poetic work 'poison dance' and a dance of 'deadly power'.[6] Thus, Ohno peaked Hijikata's development of butoh (Hijikata 2000a [1960]: 36). The uncanny dancing of Ashikawa Yoko was another inspiration for Hijikata through her ability to transform, especially morphing through infant imagery and loss of ego, summoning translucent erasures of flesh and desire.

Those who maintain the spirit of Hijikata and Ohno are often called 'butohists'. As elite and committed performers, they may be compared to samurai, but they are rather more 'ragtag', and at the other end of the political spectrum. The Samurai elite, who dominated the military aristocracy from the eleventh century, gave way to modern armies in Japan's nineteenth-century drift toward the West, after America began to establish forceful diplomacy there in its desire to trade with Japan and to spread Christianity to 'the yellow heathens' (Fraleigh 2004: 174–80). This is the very shift that Hijikata would eventually battle with his 'terror dance'. He defined himself as a 'soldier', making war on the rising societies of capitalist production with his dances that he called 'weapons' (2000b [1961]: 47).

Ohno was a real warrior in World War II and earlier, where for nine years he experienced deprivation and bloodshed. His last two years as a soldier were as a prisoner of war. The very sensitive and spiritual Ohno was conscripted

[5] Since then, his art has proliferated widely and internationally, as I write about in a fuller treatise (2010) that explores the history and metamorphic essence of butoh.

[6] German modern dance of that time was called 'poision dance' in Japan.

when his son and eventual dance partner, Yoshito, was only three months old. He went to war as a young gym teacher with a modern dance background, and returned in middle age to begin his dance career. He doesn't talk of war in his workshops, but rather of death and how we owe an enormous debt to those who die for us. 'I carry all the dead with me,' Ohno says (Workshop notes 1986). And he doesn't mean just the Japanese who died in the war, he means, 'all the dead'.

Unlike symbolic modern dance, Hijikata and Ohno are not representational, and they are not in the groove of the pedestrian and neutral postmodern, either. As butohists, they move past modernisms. Rather in butoh, witnesses enter somatically into morphing states of awareness. *Butoh depends on change and a morphic spirit of becoming.* It has Japanese origins in cultural appreciation of the ongoing nature of life, never-ending in solid form, whereas in Buddhism, everything is coming from and returning to nothingness. Hijikata's last workshop was on dancing *nothingness – the inexhaustible world of abundance* (Mikami cited in Fraleigh 2010:46). In a similar vein, Ohno Yoshito's work of 2007 is *Kuu* (Emptiness).

Hijikata, Kazuo and his son Yoshito Ohno are the first to extend *experience itself* as a way of relating to dance, for both dancer and witness. *Experience*, as a core aesthetic, is explicit in their dance. Hijikata's comes in surrealist forms, and often through affects of suffering and disease – in his dances on smallpox and leprosy, for instance. Ohno Kazuo's more tender dances offer a spiritual view of nature. 'Be a Stone' is one of his well-known workshop instructions that those of us who appreciate his simplicity still invoke in teaching. He also danced at lakes, in mountains, in Zen temples and for the sea. He created *Ishikari River's Hooked-nose Salmon (Ishikari no hanamagari*) as a site-specific dance, performing it on 15 September 1991, at the mouth of the river with his son Yoshito. Nakamura Yoshihiro translated Ohno's original poetry for this dance into English (cited in Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006:63–5).

The experiential aesthetics of butoh is not filtered through centuries of movement styles – as are Kabuki and Noh in Japan and the manners of ballet in the West. In being anti-modern, butoh does not trust technological ascendency. It also protests war – as we clearly see in Hijikata's *Summer Storm*, his empathic work of 1973. Arai Misao caught the original ensemble performance of this dance in Kyoto on film, including Hijikata's solo *Leprosy*. (His footage sat in a can, he told us in a London seminar in 2005, until he decided to turn it into a film and make it available in DVD format in 2003.) Hijikata chose to use both season and climate in his title 'summer storm', just as Zen haiku in their brevity should indicate the time of year and suggest the environment.

Hijikata and Ohno undermined the mechanistic progressivism and narratives of modernism, and bypassed the neutrality of postmodern dance, while making use of the creative spirit represented in modern and postmodern arts. Japan remained alive for them in place and poetics, especially in its engagement of nature, everywhere cultivated in bonsai and ikebana, in raked stones at Zen temples, and also appreciated in the wild, especially through Shinto, the ancient religion of Japan. Hijikata never left Japan. Ohno travelled and performed widely introducing butoh to thousands.[7]

[7] Many students also came to Japan to study with Ohno, including this writer. One fellow student from Sweden told me that he came 'to bask in Ohno's aura'.

■ Yumiko Yoshioka in *EN ON*, Choreographed by Rena Konstantaki, indigo fera art productions, 2015. *Photo Chronis Giannopoulos*

CROSS-CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AND EARLY TRANSLATIONS

By the 1950s, Japan had imported many Western forms of dance – ballet, ballroom, modern dance and tango to name a few. Modern dance had been developing in Japan roughly over the same period as in the West.[{note}]7 Creatively open and experimental forms of early modern dance developed in the West in the 1920s and 1930s, remarkably with Mary Wigman in Germany and Ruth St Denis in America.

Beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century, St Denis combined dramatic mise en scène and unique dance steps, successfully merging theatrical and concert dance. She also included influences from her exotic understanding of Japan, India, Egypt and China. Thus, there was from the beginning a cross-cultural aesthetic ferment in modern dance.[8]

For modern dancers, individuality was more important than tradition; the rejection of ballet and classicism was part of this. To a large extent, Hijikata discarded his modern dance background and forward-looking modernism altogether, especially its lyrical, heroic and narrative tendencies. His dance was (and is) sometimes called postmodern, but that doesn't quite suffice either, except for its eclecticism. Violent and clashing extremes were apparent in Hijikata, but his dance could also morph to soft registers. Hijikata's protests involved both East and West, and were politically rebellious like much underground theatre in the Tokyo of his day.

Hijikata's violence is akin to that of dramatist Antonin Artaud whom he emulated. Artaud says that performers should be like 'victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames' (1958: 13). Hijikata's way into this thicket is through qualia of darkness and suffering, his butoh signatures. Another key element of Hijikata's method is rebellion, but this would not be unusual in the birth of a new form.[9] Hijikata rebelled against socializations through bizarre disjunctions and wild exaggerations. As Baird writes, 'Hijikata's dance *Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People: Rebellion of the Body* (1968) is directed toward the conventions of any part of Japanese or Western culture that binds the body' (2012: 124).

Hijikata was an original, and his aesthetics unmistakably surreal, like those of his hero, the French author Jean Genet. Prompted by European surrealist juxtapositions, he protested socialized strictures, whether Japanese or Western. He also critiqued Western progressiveness and production. In his surrealist writings, Hijikata sometimes referred to his dancers as 'terrorists', and his dances as 'purposeless non-products' (2000b [1961]: 44–5). He distanced from modern art in general, conjuring bodily possibilities in transition.

Butoh morphology has its source in Hijikata. I know of no other choreographer who focuses constantly on changing states of being through embodiment of otherness – junk, trees, bugs, fish, disease – anything seems fair game – as also morphing from male to female. Gender transformations go both ways now, but in Japan the transition of male to female was most prized in early butoh, as also historically through Kabuki and Noh. 'When a man can show you the feminine on stage, that's art', as I heard often in discussions of Kabuki in Japan. Hijikata made his body and his work permeable to the outside world, whether humanmade, natural or dangerous. His permeable embodiment of otherness allowed the genre he originated to move across cultural boundaries in his butoh notebooks, called *butoh-fu*, international chronicles of visual and diagrammatic images, from architectural to poetic fragments. Images from a variety of cultures and histories inspired his choreography.

In his ethnically coded movements, was Hijikata rescuing his ethnicity after the war, or rebelling still further against it? In any case, he was a surrealist master, fashioning atmospheres and experiences rather than meanings. Largely, his work prompted the exercise of imagination. Hijikata thumbed his nose at Japanese manners and modes, while at the same time presenting Japanese elements in collage: martial arts stances, kimono and geta, aspects

[8] In their travels abroad, Japanese proponents of early modern dance studied German Expressionism and American modern dance. Eguchi Takaya studied with Mary Wigman, and became a very influential teacher in Japan. Wigman herself involved Asian influences. Ohno Kazuo, Hijikata's closest dance associate, studied with Eguchi in 1936. Hijikata studied Western style modern dance as a young man in the school of Masumura Katsuko, also a student of Eguchi.

[9] Consider Isadora Duncan's rebellion against ballet and Victorian manners, and we know that Duncan also rebelled against the corset as binding the female body.

of Kabuki, samurai headdresses, ritual bowing and childhood memories of Tohoku's bucolic landscapes are just some of these. In the end, he was an inclusive artist, presenting Western and Japanese elements in collage, and envisioning wider implications of his identification with the land of his birth. Butohist Yoshioka Yumiko told me that Hijikata spoke of his northern homeland, Tohoku, in a universal metaphor: 'There is a Tohoku in England,' he said, and 'northeast is everywhere' (Interview in San Francisco 1999). Now there are fragments of Hijikata's dance in translation around the globe. The most vital ones are not imitations of Hijikata or his techniques. Rather, they have morphed.

BUTOH LINEAGE: BEYOND STEPS AND INTO THE ATMOSPHERE

Diego Piñón is one of the current performers who dance in the lineage of butoh, translating its human conundrums through his own sense of place in Mexico. Piñón developed Butoh Mexicano on a several-acre plot of land about three miles outside the mountain town of Tlapujahua where many international students have studied with him. Recently I spoke with Robert Bingham about his study in Mexico with Piñón in December of 2009. I asked Bingham what stood out for him about Diego's work in natural landscapes and he wrote back to me:

> We spent an entire afternoon blindfolded roaming the slopes of a nearby mountain. For the first hour or so, we followed the sound of a bell Diego was ringing. Thoughts vanished into a timeless world of cows, pasture, and clean mountain air. After, inside a cave, he gently brought us to a structure containing fire. I remember holding my hands towards it, the flame's hiss and breath wrapping my bones. I broke down and wept, releasing hot tears.

And of belonging, Bingham remembers:

> For me, the work outside with Diego was about sensitizing, through the open intelligence of my tissues, to the intelligence of the broader milieu that extends through human and nonhuman alike. This was a reprieve from taking for granted the givens of nature, the natural attitude in a world that regards nature as little more than a composite of resources for human consumption.

As butoh translates across the globe, it is not in dilutions of its origins but in new versions and cultural translations. Rather than being anti-social, as Hijikata's butoh was, new manifestations often take activist political forms – sometimes responding directly to problems of nature and climate change. Current dance in the lineage of butoh moves two ways: it continues as theatre both indoors and out and, in addition, it focuses on improvisations in site-specific *place-dances* for personal and communal healing. The latter do not assume an audience presence, and they often take place in evocative landscapes.[10] Varieties of butoh-influenced dance are not discontinuous with each other, however. They retain inspirations from early butoh innovations, especially 'the body that becomes'. In this performative approach, the dancer is not imitating nature; rather she becomes nature.

Takenouchi Atsushi explores nature from several standpoints also. His recent work with filmmaker and dancer Kathi von Koerber presents a wide-angle example of site-specific dance in nature that assumes an audience presence. Landscapes and Jinen Butoh serve as stunning stages for dancers von Koerber and Takenouchi in their film *Ridden by Nature: A nature spirit dance film* (2014). Jinen Butoh is the creation of Takenouchi, who told me 'everything dances together through a cosmic wave or rhythm that is *Jinen*' (Interview in Broellin Germany, August 2003). In the film, the dancers surrender to elemental forces and allow nature to rid them of self or ego. Von Koerber and Takenouchi perform duets with icebergs, lava geysers, bodies of water and huge desert stones. The whole is a lyric poem for mending what the dancers perceive as the broken relationship between humans and earth. *Ridden by Nature* is conceived as 'a homage to water'. They put it this way:

> As glaciers melt, sea levels rise, and natural disasters intensify, water can be seen as the blood of the earth. It honors and calls attention to the current crisis of water, an element so under appreciated yet so critical to humanity's survival. (Takenouchi and von Koerber 2015)

[10] Ephia Gburek, whose workshops have been hosted at various locations in Europe and the United States, leads butoh-influenced dances in Valcivières, France. In preparation for moving in nature, her blindfold exercises permit dancers to be guided through 'listening'. Walking meditations also invite play with internal transformation, as does experiment with dream symbols and poetic vision, so that: 'A finger placed on the pulse of the earth touches the connection of the sub-conscious and the landscape, of memory and place' (Gburek 2015).

Ridden by Nature dances with the four elements of air, water, fire and earth, as well as with the transformative powers of space. For the dancers, space represents the human body, as a location where all the elements are synthesized. Their film draws on Chinese calligraphy and Zen philosophy, with each dance composition arranged as delicately as strokes of calligraphy. The film reaches out to environmentalists, artists and anyone concerned with awakening humanity's potential to heal at this critical juncture in history (Takenouchi and von Koerber 2015; also the film *Ridden by Nature*, von Koeber 2014).

Attuning to nature in dance holds potentials for *experiences of* belonging – inviting transformational morphologies through letting go of self. When they aren't running, dancers often glide in their walking, feeling where the feet may go incrementally, rather than stepping. They are not afraid to hesitate, to wait, to ooze or melt, and to change. One of the prominent features of dancing in the butoh lineage is how one is drawn into *movement climates* – the moods and conditions of place, created through imagery.

What if the image in dancing is actually present to the senses and not simply imagined? What if the canyon is actually present to me – and in me as nature is present? Then boundaries can dissolve; I can express nature through belonging to it, and I can attune to my envelopment in nature through dance. Morphic butoh provides an atmospheric way into dance experiences. Experience wells up moment by moment in morphic dancing, which is not about solidity.

ENWORLDING AS BELONGING

At the root of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl explains the human through 'the life world' and shared intersubjective life. He teaches that the way we direct our intentions toward the natural world produces, or 'enworlds' it, in consciousness. For phenomenology, the world has an identity, and nature has ontic being. 'Subjectivity in its grip upon it of course changes nature, but alters nothing of the unity of nature as core in its own ontological form' (Husserl 1995 [1941]: 189). Husserl points phenomenology away from ephemeral ego and toward spirit, as this includes the relativity of self, world and other. Japanese phenomenology, through the work of Ichikawa Hiroshi and Yuasa Yasuo, uses Husserl's foundational work while projecting spirit still further. Ichikawa's prominent book of 1975, *Seishin toshite no Shintai* (The Body as Spirit), counters the material body we are so attached to in the West. He gives voice to the immaterial energy body – ki or chi – connecting all beings.[11]

The permeable and nonconformist ki of butoh allows it several ways to render belonging to nature, as we have seen. Kasai Akira believes that the present work of butoh is 'to give back to the earth what we have taken from it', as he told me in an interview (San Francisco workshop 1998). Place-dances through attunement to place and participation in community are critical. Tamah Nakamura, my coauthor in our book, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo*, studied with one small group of butoh dancers in Fukuoka, Japan, and found that they overcame their obedience to Japanese social stratification, mainly by asserting their individuality and worth in community with their fellow butoh dancers (2006: 37–9, 143). I danced with this group one magical evening in Fukuoka. The performance was informal, and the dancers mixed with the audience, as seeing and being seen blended together.[12]

THE SUFFERING OF NATURE

Every art eventually falls into history. Likewise butoh is historical, a genre that moves dance beyond steps and into the atmosphere, morphing toward new expressions and experiences. It retains an emphasis on human belonging to nature and community. It also morphs toward participatory art, encouraging healing arts. Other aspects also propel butoh continuity, especially the suffering of nature, which assumes that nature is an entity with multifarious features, and that nature can feel in its own way. In this perspective, dance appears as a mode of attuning to nature.

[11] Shigenori Nagatomo's work introduces Ichikawa and Yuasa to English speakers (1992).

[12] Nobuo Harada, the leader of this butoh group, was not a student of Hijikata, but rather of Kasai Akira.

In dance of many kinds we learn how to pay attention, how to fall, how to get up and how to stroll and stride. Butoh continues to teach me how to attune to very small details of movement and life – how to be idle, and how to dissolve. Now in advanced age, I take what I've learned into the fields and tall grasses, kneeling down, lying down and breathing. Through this dance, I feel more about what happens in and around me. I listen to a mother cuss her child as they pass by our quiet dance in the canyon. Forgetting why they came in the first place, they completely miss the incredible landscape given them by nature. Meanwhile, the canyon suffers their neglect, while I morph and try my best to attune to the beauty that holds me. I become present to the canyon, to others and myself, and I think about change and age. Doesn't the mountain die at last, the lake, and the canyons also morph? Tell me what to do to make this moment last. I know this canyon was dusted with nuclear fallout from the Nevada Test Site (NTS) at Frenchman Flat about sixty-five years ago. And yet, I lie here in the suffering, consenting to have nothing but love in my life.

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