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Bodies at the Threshold of the Visible

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BODIES AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE VISIBLE

Photographic butoh

Jonathan W. Marshall

Introduction: doubtful presence and photographic mobility

In her landmark study *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (2005 [1993]), Peggy Phelan argued that performance art exists only in and of its initial enactment. Recordings lack the immediacy, presence and full power of the original. Although critiqued by Philip Auslander (1999), Joel Anderson (2015), and others, *Unmarked* is worth returning to. Phelan states that bodily “presence is theatre’s promise as well as its doubt, and in this theatre imitates love and its illusions” (121). Whilst Phelan’s suggestion of an opposition between theater and its mediated reproductions is not so commonly articulated today, there has been less consideration of photographic mediation as it applies to dance. As an art form predicated on bodily movement, dance would seem particularly resistant to documentation via still photography (Ewing 1987; Marshall 2008). Yet while Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo were insistent that their practice was a modern form of *buyō* (dance), much of their early work was closer to performance art and happenings than concert dance. One might posit then that, as in the actions described by Phelan, there is a similar doubtful, erotic “promise” of “presence” which is both evoked and problematized within butoh and its images. As Anderson says of theater, photography functioned within butoh “not as a surrogate” but “as a partner” in which what moves between different stages, frames and images is a doubtful, at times ghost-like presence which is “neither live nor dead” but which oscillates between these poles of life and death (2008, 31–34). Such a fugitive presence is by definition difficult to capture or visualize, in photography or dance. It establishes forms – or their *formlessness* – in a manner which resists instantiation.

I argue that the affinities and exchanges between butoh dance and photomedia rest on a series of mobile, contradictory affiliations which are evoked through images of bodies subjected to fragmentation and change. Audiences access the body via its shifting fragments, pieces and ruptures, and in the transit between forms. There is a dispersal of bodily form across – and into – media: the body as a fluid, changeable structure which morphs through unstable iterations of flesh and emulsion. Rebecca Schneider has characterized such exchanges as an “inter(in)animation” across various materializations of actions, and their location in time (Marshall 2017, 72–90; Schneider 2011). In Phelan’s terms, butoh and its images gesture towards an understanding of subjectivity which exceeds “the ideology of the visible” (2005, 1). In butoh, the subject is located in the space between that which is seen, and that which cannot be visualized. Post-war Japanese photography was itself devoted to articulating a grammar of the invisible, and it was these shared concerns of

visibility/invisibility, an interest in the subconscious (a major source for such invisible subjective and sensual forces), and in corporeal part-objects, which drew the projects of butoh and post-war Japanese photography together. In this exchange, the body itself became a kind of media, a site for the reproduction and generation of near dead, or deathly, images on the border of visibility. The relationship between butoh and photography was a reciprocal one, with key figures in photographic practice closely associated with butoh from its inception.

Butoh's pre-eminent photographer: Hosoe Eikoh

Leading Japanese photographer Hosoe Eikoh knew Hijikata's wife and dance partner Motofuji Akiko, and was present at what was later identified as the first *butoh* performance, namely *Kinjiki* (*Forbidden Colors*, 1959), titled after Mishima Yukio's novel. Hosoe's collaboration with Hijikata is the longest and most important in butoh, setting the context for other photographers like Hanaga Mitsutoshi (1983); Nakatani Tadao (2003); Ethan Hoffman (1987); Laurencine Lot (2005; Rancilio 1985); Nourit Masson-Sékiné (1988); Ōtsuji Kiyoji (who documented *Kinjiki*); Torii Ryōzen (who, together with Hanaga, documented *Nikutai no Hannan*); Tōmatsu Shōmei (who collaborated with Maro Akaji and the latter's wife and dance partner on the erotic photobook *OO! Shinjuku*, 1969); and William Klein (who was introduced to Hijikata and Ohno by Hosoe, and worked with the pair in the streets for *Tokyo 1961*; Asbestos-Kan 1987, 12–13; Hosoe & Hill 1986; Parr & Badger 2004, 290).

Hosoe also worked with Ohno from 1959, but the prints were not represented via unified exhibition series or publications until later. Hijikata and Ohno did however both collaborate with Hosoe on a photo-project shot at Tokyo's docks and abattoirs as early as 1960 (Figure 18.1). Hijikata was later featured with Motofuji in Hosoe's 1961 photobook *Man and Woman* (*Otoko to Onna*; Figure 18.2; Feustel 2011), and the pair also appeared in Hosoe's 1962 study of Mishima, *Barakei: Ordeal by Roses*. In 1970 the photographer made a sequel to *Man and Woman* entitled *Hoyo* (*Embrace*), featuring Hijikata's dancers Ashikawa Yoko, Tamano Koichi, Nimura Momoko and Kobayashi Saga. When Hijikata's studio Asbestos Kan was scheduled to close, Hosoe contacted Motofuji and shot the 2003 series *Ukiyo-e Projections* with her dancers in the venue. Hosoe's most significant butoh photo-series though was *Kamaitachi* (1969), discussed below.

The body at the limits of visibility: VIVO, “subjective documentary” and butoh

Katja Centonze characterizes the relationship between butoh and photography as “intertwined in ‘elective affinity’” (2012, 218), using Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's metaphor for how aesthetic relations may be likened to variable chemical reactions between differently charged, yet related, art forms. Catriona MacLeod explains that such aesthetic affinities are based upon an imperious “natural law and necessity,” like physical chemistry, while simultaneously being elective and mobile, available for artists to “manipulate” according to their desires (2009, 14). Centonze clarifies that the “natural law” of corporeal desire was seen by Hijikata and his peers as tied to the concept of *nikutai*, or the “body belonging to violence, provocation and carnal desires, aiming at the emancipation of the impulses” (2010, 115–117). This shared affinity for the *nikutai* body joined photographic artists with butoh dancers.

As curator Alexandra Munroe has observed, much of the Japanese avant-garde addressed itself to the:

grotesque and absurd imagination of the primal forces of sex, madness, and death. A preoccupation with the aberrant forms of human nature [which] . . . pervade[d] . . .



Figure 18.1 Hijikata Tatsumi and dancers, from the 1960 pamphlet for *Dance Experience*, photograph by Hosoe Eikoh. Courtesy of Hosoe Eikoh.

contemporary fiction of . . . Mishima . . . the films of Japan's New Wave directors . . . and the plays of Tokyo's leading underground dramatists . . . spectacles peopled with dwarfs, giants, naked women, deformed men, and live grotesqueries of all description.

Munroe 1996, 189

Butoh and Japanese postwar photography were focused on such diverse and challenging constructions of the body. From Tōmatsu Shomei's disturbing photographs of the aftermath of Japan's assault by atomic weaponry (in which a grotesquely melted bottle is likened to a survivor's



Figure 18.2 *Otoko to Onna (Man and Woman) #24*, by Hosoe Eikoh, 1960; featuring Hijikata Tatsumi (1960), photograph by Hosoe Eikoh. Courtesy of Hosoe Eikoh.

skin; Parr & Badger 2004, 274–277), through to *Man and Woman*, reconfigured human forms recur, at once damaged yet aesthetic, sensual yet violent.

Centonze's characterization of the relationship between *butoh* and photography as a flexible, bipolar series of exchanges is apt given the heady environment of the 1960s. Hijikata, Hosoe, Mishima and others shared discussions, drinking sessions, publications, prints and collaborations, generating multidirectional affinities and relationships. As Hosoe put it: “between photographer and dancer, who moves whom – the cooperative relationship – is not so clear. The beauty of my approach is that the photographer and his subject neither pair off against one another, nor coalesce” (Ko-e 2010).

Aside from a mutual concern with the reconfigured body, *butoh* dancers and their photographer-colleagues were linked by the influence of Surrealist photomedia and translations of Surrealist writings by critic Takiguchi Shūzō (Sas 1999). A key source was Surrealist Georges Bataille's championing of indistinct, “formless” structures such as he identified in Jacques-André Boiffard's photograph *Big Toe* (Krauss 1985; Mundy 2001). The French Surrealists and their Japanese sympathizers strove to realize that most paradoxical of situations, where one sees, or intuitively perceives, that which is in some sense invisible because it has no stable form or shape. Author and photographer Nourit Masson-Sékiné opens her own influential photo-and-text compilation *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (1988, 8; Figure 18.3) with a print by Hanaga, showing Ohno Kazuo peeking out of a field of black coterminous with his hair, which encroaches upon his whitened visage. Ohno's wrinkled thumb is visible below, problematizing the otherwise depthless space. Ohno's mouth is agape, the black of the background flowing into his orifices. The viewer cannot determine if the formless Ohno is receding into the shadows, or moving out of them. This is *ankoku butoh* or “darkness dance” at its poetic apotheosis: a body made of shadows which eats space and darkness, even as these forces consumes the dancer's flesh. As Hijikata put it, dancers “pluck the darkness from within their own bodies and eat it” (2000, 51).

While many members of the postwar Japanese avant-garde worked with each other, this does not mean that all *butoh* photographs necessarily conform to, or echo, *butoh*'s own concerns



Figure 18.3 Ohno Kazuo in *La Argentina*, directed by Hijikata Tatsumi, 1977, photograph by Hanaga Mitsutoshi. Courtesy of Hanaga Tarō.

equally. Takiguchi for example was at pains to distinguish the collaborations of Hosoe and Hijikata from those instances of “generic . . . staged photography” which too readily sweep aside the paradoxical act of visualizing that which resists visibility (Hosoe et al. 2005).

What was at stake in these debates is the positioning of the realist model of photography as a primarily mimetic art that transparently represents reality, versus the shared potential of both Surrealist photography and *butoh* to exceed visualization. This was a widely discussed topic not only within *butoh*, but also photographic circles. Taki Koji – founder of the photo-magazine *Provoke* with which Hosoe was associated – claimed that:

The act of expression is the ceaseless rendering of the invisible visible. That which is visible, that which structures the everyday, passes for reality. The act of expression requires a transition from a world of apparent certainties to a world in which we cannot even locate ourselves.

Parr & Badger 2004, 266

Takiguchi defined *Kamaitachi* as closer to “the original meaning of the term ‘happening’” or performance art than to what was ordinarily implied by “staged photography” because in such frightening and unpredictable photo-corporeal collaborations, the outcome can neither be fully known, nor rendered within simple formal boundaries. For Takiguchi, *Kamaitachi* represents that supreme paradox of the photographic medium, an image which acts to “penetrate” below the surface of the visible and make visible that which cannot be seen (“a world in which we cannot

even locate ourselves”). Hijikata’s dance was predicated on the same logic, wherein “that thing which is form emerges as it disappears; form becomes vivid in disappearing” (2000, 76).

Photographic butoh therefore functioned in opposition to the postwar school of Japanese Realist photography championed by Domon Ken, and inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson’s Magnum organization. Cartier-Bresson famously proposed that photography should condense real-life events into a single, objective “decisive moment,” coalescing narrative into an immediate, legible journalistic icon (1952; Reason 2011, 283). The rhetoric of post-war visual arts as a whole was moreover dominated by Clement Greenberg’s proposition that modernism was defined by ever more reductive formal experimentation: painting about painting, or photography devoted to the study of light and shadow such as that pioneered by Edward Steichen through to László Moholy-Nagy (Baird 2012, 98–99). The members of *Provoke* and of Hosoe’s VIVO photography group (1959–1961) defied both principles. Neither objective nor formalist, they called their work “subjective documentary,” drawing from the post-war environment to produce idiosyncratic, psychologically dense imagery (Parr & Badger 2004, 266–307). Mishima commended Hosoe as an artist who “peered into the viewfinder . . . waiting for some kind of metamorphosis to overtake the objects” which he saw in the camera. Mishima likened this transformation to an almost chthonic “reversion” to those “primary images” which existed as indistinct forces and pulsions within what Mishima – echoing the Surrealists – called “the subconscious” (Hosoe & Mishima 1985). For Mishima and the Surrealists, the subconscious was that psychic resource of desire, sexuality, violence and creativity which birthed the *ankoku* of life and carnal *nikutai*. Repeating Breton’s dictum that the eye exists in a “savage state,” Hijikata reflected that “the camera’s eye is brutal,” suggesting that he could work with Hosoe because he was “fortunately an avid reader of the Marquis de Sade” and hence shared with the dancer an appreciation of the violent, primal urges of the body and the soul (Baird 2012, 108).

Intermediality, bodies as media, and photographic theatre

Hosoe described his collaborations with Hijikata as “photographic theatre” or “body theater (*nikutai gekijō*),” implying a dynamic, corporeal project whose final drama was manifest within the published photobook or exhibition, rather than within an initial performance in real space (Centonze 2012, 226–227; Hosoe & Howe 1991). The palpably “fleshy” aspect of the Hosoe’s prints was sometimes literally signified by Hijikata, who stamped posters and images with his hand dipped in ink (Holborn 1986, 32). Hearing about a dance named after his novel, Mishima met Hijikata at a special performance of *Kinjiki* (Baird 2012, 32), after which Hijikata showed Mishima some of Hosoe’s photographs. Mishima subsequently contacted Hosoe in the hope that, as Hosoe put it, he might “become a dancer himself” via the medium of photography, thereby entering the realm of *nikutai gekijō* – an honorary butoh performer within the photographic frame, his status moving towards that of one of Hijikata’s handprints (Hosoe & Mishima 1985).

Not only did the presence within the photographic frame of butoh performers and their colleagues render photographs as a form of corporeal dance, but Hijikata and his peers’ use of photomedia on their stages transformed the dancers into media or mediums. *Keijijogaku* (*Emotion in Metaphysics*, 1967), for example, featured prints of a naked man with his back to the viewer laid out across the rear of the stage. The image states one of *Keijijogaku*’s central themes, namely Hijikata’s interest in vulnerable bodies such as those which have turned away from us to expose their undefended, sculpturally complex backs. Hijikata had previously explored this concept of “a dance of the back” (2000, 39) in his first photo-sessions with Hosoe (Figure 18.1). One print shows the dancers from behind, shoulders hunched and tensed such that the heads are obscured, each body lined up before a decapitated carcass (Morishita 2012). On *Keijijogaku*’s stage, as in the

earlier photographs, the bringing together of live flesh and photography served not only to link media at the level of affinities (photomedia bodies meet dancerly bodies), but also to intermingle and confuse them (dancerly bodies become media, vulnerable meat, and plastic flesh). In *Rose Color Dance: To Mr. Shibusawa's House* (*Barairo dansu: À la maison de M. Civeçawa*, 1965), Hijikata brought onstage a large portrait photograph of *shimpa* female impersonator Hanayagi Shōtarō, who died that year (Baird 2012, 77–91; Asbestos Kan 23). Here the image of the deceased actor, grainy and distant, shared the literal space with the live dancer, posing the question which is real, or which is alive? Both were transformed bodily forms visible to the eye, animated by corporeal forces connected to sexuality and the boundaries between life and death.

It was moreover common for dances to be staged at the openings for exhibitions, and in some instances these events themselves became the subject of later photographs. Hijikata for example performed at the opening of *Kamaitachi* (Holborn 32), whilst Masson-Sékiné recorded Hijikata's former pupil Nakajima Natsu dancing at the launch of *Body on the Edge of Crisis: Photographs of Butoh Dance Performed and Staged by Tatsumi Hijikata* (Asbestos Kan 1987), two years after Hijikata's death. The confusion regarding priority, and the distribution of corporeal presence across and within performances and prints, echoes that produced by the intrusion of the Hanayagi's portrait within *Rose Color Dance*. These co-joined live and mediated performances both reaffirmed photography's status as a mirror to life, whilst reinforcing its distortions, elusions and novel corporeal configurations, an ideal space for "subjective documentary" and the "law" of *nikutai*. Presence rested as much across these relationships, as within specific materializations.

If, as Roland Barthes has suggested, photography is linked with the past tense and with death, recalling an ancient "cult of the Dead: the first actors . . . playing the role of the Dead . . . a body simultaneously living and dead" (1981, 30–31; Marshall 2017, 83), then this is brought to the fore within such events by the deployment of photography, and the affinities it reveals with the dancing body. Both Hijikata and Ohno linked the *butoh* body to a deathly yet animate choreography – a dead sister within his flesh for Hijikata, or the moment when "the dead begin to run" for Ohno (Marshall 2013, 66–67). *Butoh* might be considered in this sense as a revival of photography's cultic origins, a concept also found in French Surrealist writings about photography (Sas 1999; Marshall 2009, 2017; Breton 1960).

Photographers did not simply inspire dance practice (Hosoe's studies of the back informing Hijikata's set), nor did dancers simply participate in projects controlled by photographers (Ashikawa in *Embrace*). Rather there is an interpenetration at the level of body and form which animated both choreography and photography. It is hardly surprising that Hijikata's later, mature works of 1972 onwards took the form of an imagistic, mediated translation project. Dance was generated and notated through the use of scrapbooks made up of images and texts which Hijikata had sourced from art historical books, magazines and photomedia in a manner which recalled the compiling of words, photographic reproductions and sketches in Surrealist texts such as André Breton's 1928 publication *Nadja*, or indeed Japanese photobooks themselves (Morishita 2015a; Krauss 1985; Mundy 2001; Parr & Badger 2004, 266–307).

Seen in light of these cross-art collaborations, *butoh* is not a project confined to dance or to the literal body, but rather to corporeal forms, be these living bodies or their refracted, mediated, semi-human or dead kin (Kosuge 2013). As Imura Takahiko put it, the body is but "one kind of media" (Eckersall 2012, 212). Imura was Japan's leading exponent of Expanded Cinema, or cinematic projection as a form of mediated yet live performance, and he was responsible for popularizing the term "intermedia" in post-war Japan (Ross 2014, 44–53). He collaborated on a pair of "cine-dance" works with Hijikata in 1963 and 1965. European dance critics of the 1920s had seen the origins of performance lying in the totalizing combination of dance, music and *mise en scène* which characterized ancient Bacchic rites (Marshall 2007). Imura echoed these ideas,

claiming that the performative interweaving of media “destroys preordained spatial and temporal restrictions imposed onto the medium,” such that a “Dionysian celebration” is “triggered when one medium violates another” (1966). Comparable Dionysian overflows from one media into the next were widespread not only within Iimura’s work, but in butoh photography – as with Hanaga’s depiction of Ohno (Figure 18.3) in which “spatial and temporal restrictions” are confused, or in the “Dionysian” fusion of meat and back in Hosoe’s early phototheatre (Figure 18.1).

A case study of photographic butoh: *Kamaitachi*

The violent, subjective reimagining of flesh by dancers and photographers, as bodies morphed across a realm devoid of “apparent certainties,” reached its height in Hosoe’s third major series involving Hijikata: *Kamaitachi* (*Sickle-Weasel*). Photographed in 1965–1968, it was exhibited as *Totetsu-monaku higekitekina kigeki: Nihon no butōka, tensai “Hijikata Tātsumi” shuen shashin gekijō* (An Extravagantly Tragic Comedy: A Photo Theater Staring a Japanese Butoh Dancer, Genius “Hijikata Tātsumi,” 1968),¹ before release as a deluxe photobook with inky black platinum prints laid out in gatefold sheets to the right of blocks of blue paper. The physically demanding, theatrical poses depicted in *Kamaitachi* are notable for their variable discontinuity and fungibility. Hijikata moves from sexual predator to clairvoyant, accursed clown to wind spirit, goblin to corpse. What Hijikata is, and what proper form or image he should take, never stabilizes. *Kamaitachi* thereby transgressively conflates bodies and identities. As with all reproducible media, the photographic-series was an unfixed object. In addition to the original exhibition and book noted above, Hosoe has presented the images in various combinations and forms, including as a decorated scroll unrolled before the viewer – recalling the semi-animated painted scrolls or “Nara picture books (*ehon*)” of early modern Japan which featured demonic transformations (Morishita 2015b; Koyama–Richard 2010, 11–24). In these depictions, flesh and self dance across a series of fugitive assemblages. Only movement *across* the photographic void offers something like relief. The mobility of dance seeps through the pores of filmic montage and across the space of the exhibition.

Kamaitachi began inauspiciously with a number of portraits of Hijikata for a 1965 editorial assignment entitled *Virility Series* (Hosoe & Hill 1986). Included in *Kamaitachi* is a frame from *Virility* showing a distracted Hijikata seated in a white kimono with a child’s rattle by his side, whilst a reflective glass ball, a straw hat, a woman’s shoe, and a second rattle, rest on the floor beside him. These objects presage the later child abduction within *Kamaitachi*, confusing the temporal order. Is the seated figure recalling events from the past or the future? The first photographic scenario focuses on a sexual encounter between Hijikata and model Sai Asako, which were later set amidst additional images taken surrounding Kogan-ji Togenuki Jizo Temple and Tokyo’s Sugamo area. Hosoe had been considering returning to the under-developed Tōhoku region of Akita prefecture, to which he was evacuated as a child, in 1944–1945. Upon discovering that Hijikata moved as a youth from Akita to Tokyo in 1952, the pair set out to explore the north, spending much of their time in Ugo-machi.

Re-ordered several times for exhibition and publication (Baird 2012, 251),² the 1969 photobook moves the viewer from Tokyo’s shabby *shitamachi* backstreets and stalls before suddenly relocating to desolate rice fields ringed by mountains. The disorientating spatial trajectory of the journey is echoed in the layout and images. The diptych following Kogan-ji includes on the left a tilted print that funnels movement and the viewer’s line of sight down the side of Asbestos Kan. The dancer, head bowed, drags Sai open-mouthed behind him, abducting her via a door. The driving angles are replaced in the paired image on the right with a frontal view photographed within an entirely different, darkened and shallow internal space. Sai’s

torso is parallel to a sheet on the wall behind her, while the dancer is bent awkwardly before her groin, possibly recoiling. This solicits from her a partially veiled expression of ecstasy or pain. The pairing, Hijikata's revolted or active pose, and the covering of Sai's eyes by her uplifted, crossed arms, renders the encounter ambiguous, suggestive of sadomasochism, if not rape. Moreover Sai's open-mouthed stare at the camera before they enter the building, echoing Hijikata's own glance towards his photographic audience in the first image of the book, produces a sense of self-reflexive voyeurism, of actors who turn away or towards the camera to stage their pleasure or pain. Hijikata is depicted as alternatively watching or being watched, and it is his unstable, shifting provocations performed for various audiences in diverse locales which propels the action.

The next image shows a screaming Hijikata, his face whitened and his hair in a ragged bun, tearing along a concrete path between urban gardens. The buildings behind him blur into an over-exposed void. The following print shows Hijikata fully transformed, a bent demonic figure perched on a silhouetted rice-drying rack which rests beneath scratched, grey skies. Hijikata moves into a mythic realm, with urban Tokyo replaced by the bleak traditional village of Tashiro. Within this rustic setting, Hijikata is surrounded by shadowy peasant structures of wood and grass – “old *minka* houses . . . deep *oshiire* closets and [the] shady corners of everyday rural life” (Muñoz 2011, 167) – that lie amongst desolate grey to black muddy rice paddies. Hijikata acts as a dangerous sprite, the twisting of his visage bringing laughter to farmers and children. He plays with the latter before pulling a girl into patch of flowering weeds. Sporadic bursts of freneticism and physical contortions emerge, the dancer alternating between a grimacing, hunched gait, and hyper-extended, gangly leaps. At times he is lost in endless expanses of shadow. One print consists of nothing but *black ink*. As Bruce Baird observes, “What is telling about the photographs is the stories they only half show . . . as with so much else about Hijikata, there is an iceberg of detail,” of narrative and of visual legibility, which is left deliberately “unrevealed” or otherwise funneled into the inky vacuum of the prints' ground (2012, 107). Space sucks inwards and expands outwards, personages adopt poses, change and contort, skies blacken and fields transform into baked expanses of jagged clots. Confusingly visualized, the series evokes an aporia of selfhood and of the body of Hijikata which rages at its heart.

At times, Hijikata incarnates the *kamaitachi* of the title, a zephyrus demon (a “whirlwind” or “dust devil” in Takiguchi's words) who steals children (Holborn 1986, 32; Hosoe et al. 2009). Hijikata is dressed in a dirty kimono, jaws clenched and head thrown back, as he abducts a screaming baby across a fetid field strewn with dead rice (Figure 18.4). Soon after he is sprawled, face down in hard clods amongst the fields. The closing image finds him imprisoned within the coffin-like frame of a broken rickshaw (Figure 18.5). Divested again of context, and suspended within a space which gnaws at him, the dancer dissipates into the *ankoku* of butoh. Hosoe was to take a similar image of Hijikata's corpse in 1986 (Tanemura 1993).

In his introduction, Takiguchi emphasizes the *kamaitachi*'s contradictory nature: at once animal (a weasel) and a wind-borne “vacuum,” akin to that which lies at the heart of the camera. It therefore sucks into it spirits from out of bodies and the earth. Hijikata concurred, claiming that the images arose “from a phenomenon of the skin ripping and blood spurting forth . . . it's a photographic collection taken with the purpose of slashing space,” this practice having corporeal and choreographic effects (Baird 2012, 109). Takiguchi's essay also echoes Mishima's preface to *Barakei* by situating the work within a Surrealist context, quoting Breton's contention that the “eye exists” in a “savage state,” preying on reality to reveal the darkness hidden within.



Figure 18.4 From the *Kamaitachi* series [#31, Gendai shichosha version, 1969] featuring Hijikata Tatsumi (1965), photograph by Hosoe Eikoh. Courtesy of Hosoe Eikoh.



Figure 18.5 From the *Kamaitachi* series [Final Plate, Gendai shichosha version, 1969] featuring Hijikata Tatsumi (1965), photograph by Hosoe Eikoh. Courtesy of Hosoe Eikoh.

From photography and back into dance

As critics have observed, the landmark performance of *Hijikata Tatsumi to nihonjin: Nikutai no Hanran* (Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People: Rebellion of the Flesh, 1968) had its genesis in the dancer's ruminations on Japanese cultural identity, modernity and embodiment prompted by *Kamaitachi* (Baird 2012, 105–111; Muñoz 2011, 176–179). *Nikutai no Hanran* included in its opening a sequence drawn directly from *Kamaitachi*, namely Hijikata's entrance on a catafalque as the lord of misrule or the sadistic Roman emperor Heliogabalus, discussed by Antonin Artaud (Marshall 2013, 74–75). Here, as with Hosoe's photographs at the abattoirs (Figure 18.1), photography acted as a space for the rehearsal of dramaturgical problems to which Hijikata returned in the dance.

The link between *Kamaitachi* and *Rebellion of the Flesh* was further established by the fact that an excerpt of Tanemura Suehiro's review of the exhibition was distributed at the theater (Baird 2012, 123, 253; Centonze 2012, 229–230; Marshall 2013, 79). The review was later published on the poster for *Shizukana Ie* (*Quiet House*, 1973), reflecting Hijikata's adoption of it as a butoh manifesto. Tanemura compares the dancer to a dripping, “deformed,” carnivalesque or Bakhtinian “fool” who had “supervised” such “glorious revolts of the body” as the nineteenth century Japanese dancing plague *ehjanaika*. Tanemura found Hijikata's performance evoked “the scent of blood and pus,” emphasizing the corporeal nature of butoh photography itself, and which was brought to the fore in the subsequent performance of *Rebellion of the Flesh*. Hijikata came to theorize the poetic brutality of the conditions of life in Tōhoku as central to his own practice, the rhetoric of his 1985 lecture “*Kaze Daruma* (Wind Daruma)” first being realized in the iconography of *Kamaitachi*.

The intense period of photographic collaboration within butoh of the 1960s placed the mediated, deathly, liminal body and its mobile, fetishistic part-objects (backs, phalli, starved ribcages, endlessly morphing forms) at the heart of butoh practice. The butoh body was but “one kind of media,” which shifted and reconfigured itself through a violently conflicted yet vital eroticism. The elective affinity between photomedia and butoh has given rise to a dazzling array of photobooks, exhibitions and collaborations. Whilst this two-way cross-contamination of dance with the photographic took many forms, Hosoe's work with Hijikata provided a model which later exchanges have evoked or built upon. These early projects provided both a justification for, and a series of possibilities whereby, bodies might disappear into the inky blackness of the filmic emulsion only to barely emerge through newly configured, scarcely visible materializations and transitions. Photographic butoh constitutes an erotic deferral of presence (Phelan 2005, 121), and of fragmentation, which streams through the pores of the body and into the grain of scattered prints and images.

Notes

- 1 Some sense of the exhibition is provided in a two-page spread reproduction of the complete series in Hosoe & Holborn (1999, 32–33).
- 2 I use here the 2005 limited, numbered facsimile edition of 500 pressings, with additional English translations. Eight additional images from the series are included in the 2009 edition, which closes with Fig. 18.5, and yet other prints appeared in the 1987 Asbestos-kan exhibition (cover, 96–9); Masson-Sékiné (1988, 61); and Tanemura (1993).

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