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CONTEMPORARY NIGHTMARE

An avant-garde dance group dances *Forbidden Colors*

Mishima Yukio (translated by Bruce Baird)

I heard from someone that Hijikata Tatsumi of the Tsuda Nobutoshi Dance Studio presented a modern dance work using the title of my *Forbidden Colors* (*Kinjiki*) as its title, but I missed the opportunity to see it. Actually, I surmised that it was probably the excessively idealistic work of a literarily green youth. However, after visiting the Tsuda Studio and seeing with my own eyes this *Forbidden Colors*, Wakamatsu Miki's *Black Point* (a work I am told concerns impotency) and some rehearsals of topics, I couldn't help but having a profound interest in this most avant-garde experiment.

I was asked to provide titles for improvisational exercises at Tsuda's studio and I proposed 'Dali's Melting Clock' and 'The Marquis de Sade.' It was a mistake to have proffered the latter. Of the ten-plus men and women there, some had read Sade and others had not, and likely only knew his name and some vulgar ideas about him. One will easily comprehend that even if they come together and perform an improvisational dance, the varying levels of education of those people render it impossible for them to grasp a unified image. Of course it is not necessary in such an exercise for the members to have exactly the same idea. Even if one part of the group does not know who Dali is or what psychological symbolism he put into the Melting Clock, that is not a hindrance in the least. It is sufficient if a "distortion" is born from the imagination of 'melting' and 'clock.' And because their creativity lies in the various movements of the body and not in words, it is sufficient if an ideal stimulus evokes a unified image in the various non-everyday bodily movements.

First an idea is proposed. Then various components of bodily movement are extracted and structured. I was able to fully taste the attraction of that kind of creative process during the lesson. Of course all sorts of dances are created in this manner, but I had the impression that there is no more nakedly pure process than that of "modern dance." However, an idea gives birth to an action, and an action gives birth to a purposeless energy, and that energy flows back to the idea and enriches it and causes it to divide and develop. At that moment, I was able to understand a deeper and truly musical interest in the comparatively long creative process of *Forbidden Colors* and *Black Point*. I have a feeling that there is no more interesting dance art in Tokyo at the moment.

From watching the circus, gymnastic competitions, and various sports, we have figured out in so far as is possible what movement possibilities there are in the human body, how much it can bend and contort. We have come to understand that compared with the language of the

alphabet, the language of the human body is significantly restricted. Watching modern dance, or the improvisational exercises, the movements and forms did not surprise us that much. What was surprising was the way the sudden movements of the body, or the sudden shouts did not correspond to [answer to] any of our everyday expectations and instead continually and exquisitely betrayed our purposive consciousness. In this respect, the impressions that we received were of an entirely different character from those received in sports in which power is concentrated in accordance with desire. I think you will be able to imagine this from the photographs, but the alienated feeling that comes from fixed psychological laws being crushed all at once by strange and shocking movements of the body is not available in the dance that has retained classical techniques. That feeling of alienation is agreeably piquant. However, after a fixed period of time, the dance continues and then finally it ends. The audience will be hard pressed to understand why it continued and why it had to end. But that strange density certainly comes from the irritating feeling of discontinuity. The thing which preserves the temporal continuity from beginning of the dance to end is not music but a few sweaty half awake, half dreaming bodies, and this is an expression of the significance of the purity performed by dance with regard to the body.

The black hen that is a sacrificial animal in the vodou ceremonies in the West Indies has been transformed in *Forbidden Colors* into a young boy with a white rooster, and the scene of a vodou priest and a female medium falling to the floor and one lying atop the other has been reproduced in *Black Point* with a young man and women entangling each other in a strangely masochistic way. That these hit me with such force perhaps lies in the fact that they exude a ritualistic fragrance that is rare in modern arts. Discontinuous continuity is a characteristic of religious ceremonies. It appears that these people are seriously celebrating the fearful nightmare of the modern.

Work cited

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