

Animated Hieroglyphs
The Reverberations and Transformations of the Butoh Bodymind

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
of Masters of Sociocultural Anthropology

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Spring 2012

Program Notes:

Introducing 3-5

Scene One: Echo-Somatics: Body(Language): When Somas Become Sonic Syllables 6-29

Scene Two: Eco-Somatics: Body(Weather): Intimate Topologies/Somatic Imaging 30-53

Encore One: Fieldnotes 54-69

Credits 70-73

INTRODUCING

By way of visceral volume and verbiage I danced my way into this thesis. What I have come to express in the following explorative document is lodged in my joints, pasted onto my fascia, woven into my muscle, and is not all conscious. It is a somatic story that shall endure until it expires with my last inhalation; a live performance lasting a lifetime; a durational unfolding of the corporeal articulations of my beating and flowing and excreting bodymind. Being a dancer and a moving explorer I am more comfortable making myself known through the poetic physicality of my kinetic soma. My whole body is a tongue: wet, bumpy, sensate, gurgling, expressive, just as my whole body is also an ear, receiving and moving with sonic communication. In all of its manifest fluctuation I come to speak. With located language. Bodied Language. Visceral vibration. That layers my skin with words.

Although my kinesthetic sense is the foregrounded part of how I live my world, since I began my graduate studies something has begun to change in my relationship to spoken and written language. Language that is perhaps not that different from the writing of my body. Perhaps I have learned to ride the wave of words that by default defines the Academy? Perhaps I have no choice but to participate in an intellectual history rooted deeply in verbal and written discourse? Perhaps intensive study has opened for me more verbal expressive possibility? And then, of course there is the task of completing a written thesis that demands of me the use of words.

But something more is happening. A desire to translate my dance experiences into “English”, and “English” into my dance, has opened up a new realm of conversation. This more worded way allows me to take part in the specifically languaged social that welcomed me into it

first through the tongue of my mother, a tongue that is shared with my peers, a tongue that will ultimately become the gateway/the opening for me to mark my word in this world.

Because of my tendency to in(corp)orate, the expectation of writing this thesis in a strictly academic fashion has been a challenge for me. Not because there is no body in academia, but because it is backgrounded. Having been squished in between tomes of critical theory and subdued by durational sitting while completing my coursework, my body screams to find its physical place in the Academy, not just as a theorized concept, not just as a container to be dragged along to class, but as a real location of inquiry. Through it I have been looking for a way to reconnect the Anthropology of the Body and of the Senses with the very subject about which they choose to produce words. To make the implicit explicit. A rush of questions floods me, questions I hope to address through the form that this thesis will take. They go like this:

How can we, through the writing of Anthropology connect back to the experience whose essence we are trying to distill for our readers? How can we invoke in our audience an experience that would ground their understanding of our theories? What kind of radical participation can writing actually induce in the bodymind of those who engage it? Can writing invoke more than the mere shadow of its subject? Can it actually create an embodied experience, an ambiance, a physical exploration in which the reader can participate? What kind of space can be opened up within the text to give the reader a place in the discourse, to allow her to co-create the thesis?

What has come to me from living and exploring the above questions is the choice to write a performative thesis, including prompts, and spaces in which the reader must be implicated in the text, as a kind of laboratory or exploration in which the fieldwork experience becomes part of

the “ethnography”, and part of the reader’s participatory collaboration in a very immediate and embodied way. The reader must acknowledge her/his active role in the discourse by experiencing the movement prompts included in the text. Spaces are provided for him/her to communicate any ideas, feelings, or sensations that arise from the performance of the prompts, and to note any changes in her/his understanding of the thesis after the experiential prompt is embodied. Besides the writer “performing” her knowledge through written exposition, the reader is “performing” the reading not only through the fluttering of word absorbing eyes, but through the micro-changes that occur when something new flashes across her body. In my play with form I thought it would be interesting also to offer you my raw fieldnotes as an Encore to further compliment this explorative thesis collage. I hope they add some flavor and detail to the work of writing about embodiment.

Drawing off of over ten years of performance practice, and a lifetime of movement, I thus, hopefully, through words, spaces, and experiments, bring to you, dear reader, an Experience.

A Note: Before we begin, please make sure you have the following accessible:

- a pen/pencil or colored pencils (If you are reading a hard copy of this thesis you will be asked to write and draw in the spaces I offer you for reflecting on the movement experiments in which I hope you will participate. Please feel free to mark up the paper. If you are reading this paper on your computer, have some blank sheets of paper that can act as your personal fieldwork journal.)*
- a cloth that can be turned into a blindfold
- string
- your computer for viewing clips of dance performances. (If you are reading this paper on your computer be aware that there are links to these clips in hypertext form. Just click on them. If you are reading a hard copy of this thesis, you will find the link cited in a footnote, along with search words that can be typed into Youtube to locate the films I intend you to see.)*
- a human partner (for two of the explorations)
- your imagination
- your curiosity

** I realize there are certain complications with just reading this thesis online (you do not get to mark up actual paper with your reflections, or just reading a hard copy of it (you do not have the luxury of one-click hypertext). I have tried to provide for both scenarios.

SCENE ONE: Echo-Somatics

(Body)Language: When Somas become Sonic Syllables

Entry Point: When Words become Bodies

October 2, 2010

Dance Laboratory. Writing stories in the space, out of the fountain of our body pens. 55 Bethune street in the West Village, an artist residency, one large studio overlooking the Hudson and all of downtown. The Westside highway spills into aural ventricles of visible song; a loud hum that melds with the music of our dance. This whole big mess of movement finding solace in our cells. We jump around, to the blasting beats of Del tha Funky Homosapien and Yoko Ono Plastic Ono Band. Sweet sweat and slippery sinew. Feeling the week in our feet.

When our breathing becomes labored enough, and our energy spirals into special storage, J-- walks over to the music box and presses stop. We all sit down and breathe and become quiet, listening to the space around us. The hum of the river of cars below still marks the flow of time, and after what feels like a long, extended interval, J-- suggests an exercise, the kind Hijikata Tatsumi (one originator of Butoh) is famous for: making words into bodies, bodies into words. We give each other verbal prompts that suggest objects, situations, dilemmas, thoughts that we can embody through our dance. As I so dreaded, I was to go first:

Become a watermelon that starts as a seed and goes through its lifecycle until it bursts with ripeness under the sun and is devoured by birds

I walk across the room and start to become witnessed. My eyes close and I all I can see is a watermelon, and my fear of the awkwardness of being seen as one. After some breaths I let myself seep into this other space in my body. J--'s words repeat and repeat behind my eyes. Slowly I slip. I live out a watermelon lifetime as I extend and retract. Plump with green zebra skin, swelling with sweet water between leaves and stamen and vines that shade out the sun in patches. I sense that there is an expanse around me, but I cannot see it. What I know are the tenacious tendrils that carve out my little dirt bed. Out of the top of my head springs a curly that cues my ripeness. The plumper the prettier, the more rotund the more ripe the more ready. I perch on this thought and slowly surpass my peak. Birds chirp and swoop above:

November 16, 2010

So what is the importance of becoming a watermelon? Can humans really become watermelons? What are the conditions that allow this transmogrification? Can merely declaring, with word, that you are an object transform you into one? Do other people see you as a watermelon when you become one?

I write this first Scene to play with what it means for words to create a body and for a body to create words. Searching to question and extend the boundaries of the person and to make thin the distinction between the self and the other. My first Entry Point is the Butoh of Hijikata Tatsumi that arrives to me in the fragmented pieces of his recorded performances and his writings which philosophize and create his practice. Through his dark-toned wanderings I am introduced to his world in which bodies can turn into objects, thoughts into things, words into

bodies. But before I enter into his particular artworld, I will first bring you into the world of Butoh for which he provided the dark, black stage curtain.

As an introduction, here are some words from a *Butoh fu* (Butoh notation) that he used to create a performance:

a person composed of particle sand tactile sensation
his skull is packed with branches
small branches in his head snap
a bird flies from his temple
an extending neck a slug crawling along his backbone
a flying grasshopper
a stick
a sunflower
a forehead
a puddle on the sole of the foot
insects in space
people melted in furnaces in Auschwitz
grass turning pale
(Hijikata 2000: 61)

A visual of *Butoh Fu*:



Butoh, (originally Ankoku Buto: the dance of utter darkness), originated as a movement revolution in post WWII Japan in response to the horrors of war, the woes of poverty, the docility of western modern dance, and the corresponding residual trauma. The stark outline of the dark conditions surrounding this birth provides only the scrim of the stage behind which the movement developed. To a more profoundly personal source, Butoh owes its first coalescence as a dance form. It evolved deep in the psyches of two men: Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, who came together to allow Butoh an embodied presence. When I hold images of their performances in my bodymind, I not only see dance; I feel a charged *jouissance* that propels us all headlong into life, often painfully so. I feel those charged spaces in between joints, wound up in muscles, plaqued onto bones, that store emotions and somatic syllables. I hear words and symptoms screaming out of viscera as they are tightened and squeezed and jolted from their slumber deep inside the body.

As a kind of mystical web of body, space, and spirit, Butoh resists definition. It is not merely dance or theater, and sometimes even escapes the stage, with which it is most easily associated. It can be a feeling experienced in daily life, or the breeziness of the wind passing through. Sometimes it can invoke emotional catharsis, sometimes it can be a kind of playful embodiment of the things in one's environment one has always been convinced were "other". Sometimes it can be a genuine smile. In an interview with literary critic Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, Hijikata speaks to the versatility of Butoh,

Paintings, too, are created by human beings and reveal their ultimate "butoh quality". Really, it can be seen by anyone. But people stick to their own little world, their own particular genre and lose sight of it. Lots of people are now calling for an end to genres, but if they would just apply the idea of "butoh quality" to everything, the problem would be totally resolved," (Hijikata 2000: 49).

In a sense *Butoh* is a kind of divine movement that lingers in the world of the unspeakable, the unsayable, the ineffable, the Real. It is a quality with which people, objects, thoughts, space can be imbued. It is the breath of the universe which can be exhaled through the landscape of a performer's body.

But, despite its indefinability, for the sake of clarity, I will try to more concretely describe Butoh, so that we might be able to connect with its visceral essence. *In preparation for my words below, please watch an excerpt of a performance of Hijikata's, Hosotan (Smallpox), 1972¹. Then write or draw in the space below what you experienced:*

Often awkward, grotesque, affectively rich, shocking, and violent, but sometimes light and dainty and soft and idiosyncratically gentle, Butoh, in the form of dance, embodies a range of emotions from fear, to sadness, to anger, to wonder, to happiness. A ritualized space of extreme otherness and alterity imbues its performance with trance like qualities. Typically performed in white body paint, with tattered costuming and shaved genderless heads, Butoh's often slow, crouching, and contorted movements speak to the audience through extreme sinuous

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vetSYKychwI> Search: Hijikata Tatsumi, Hosotan Part 2

verbiage. White bodies almost become white projection screens on which the audience might witness their collective unconscious. The reverberations of human experience emerge through trembling bodies and chattering reflections.

Hijikata's particular Butoh was said to be from the devil, while Kazuo Ohno's was imbued with the spirituality of an open heart. They formed a kind of yin-yang pair, and together embodied Butoh through a large affective range. In this thesis we will specifically look at the dance of Hijikata, and so must venture into his story.

From the countryside of Tohoku, Japan, in the 1950-60s, Hijikata moved to Tokyo intent upon dancing. He emerged as an explorer in a Japanese art scene that was trying to forge its way into the future. Contemporary artists were concerned with creating modern works which neither mimicked western art nor regurgitated a Japanese past. In the dance world, the German Expressionist movement infused the kinesphere with a foreign choreographic sense, which both attracted and repulsed a young Hijikata. For a short time he dabbled in as many foreign forms possible, and looked desirously upon slender balletic spinning, until he realized that his stiff, metal-like awkwardness was suited for something else all together. This was the eve of Hijikata's particular Butoh; the one that tends towards darkness. Nanako Kurihara writes in her dissertation on Hijikata's dance,

His approach emphasized the body's role as an object, which in turn facilitated its transformation into various things and characters. . . . Hijikata believed that the human body was highly domesticated by society. By de-domesticating it, he could attain a state of latent chaos. His universe was one in which ugliness and beauty, life and death, the erotic and the repulsive, male and female aspects merged and repeated in cyclical patterns. (Kurihara, 3).

Although he does not directly use words in his performance, his training and choreographic explorations have verbose foundations. Besides being a voracious reader (mostly of French literature, Jean Genet was his favorite), in his training Hijikata used words to guide

and manipulate his body. Through his poetic speech and body language, he transformed himself into objects, letting go of the human body proper, becoming enmeshed in a world of other. He was able to become a wet rug, the wind, a dog, a piece of wood, an insect, his sister, and more.

I laugh as I read what he writes in a piece called *Wind Daruma*. His tone is serious and faithful.

The feeling somewhere inside your body that your arm is not really your arm conceals an important secret. The roots of Butoh are hidden there. Then I think to myself that I am an empty box. And from somewhere close, guys appear, saying “I’m an empty box and giggling. Some of them say, “We’re just like funerary urns” and somehow communication happens. (Hijikata 2000: 75)

Much like Hijikata’s words transform his body into objects, by reading his words I am launched into the imaginary world where self becomes undone and I seep out into the space around me. I begin to wonder. Interiors are exteriors are interiors. I too, often feel that my arm is not my arm, that my leg is not a leg, that my head is pushing against the walls of my world, that I am expanding. And sometimes in public, I look at a hand, desperately clutching the rail of a subway car for balance, and I mistake it for my own.

Take pause now, and stare at your own hand. For at least three minutes. What do you notice?

As for me, I am intrigued by Hijikata and want to know more. What could be the secret to his transmogrification? What could be his drive?

Entry Point: The Trickster in his Artworld

HIJIKATA: I love it when a human being almost becomes a thing or part of a human completely turns into a thing, for example, an artificial leg.

SHIBUSAWA: don't [you also] become an animal?

HIJIKATA: I do, but in that case I don't merely imitate the animal. What I want are the movements an animal shows to a child. Take a dog for instance. How it moves when playing with a child is totally unlike how it moves when playing with grown-ups like us. To get to that point you've got to become a single piece of bone. (Hijikata, 53).

When Hijikata says he can turn his body into a thing, an element, or another person provocation slaps us awake. A first reaction might be incredulity and then dismissal. How can a human male become a piece of bone? Or a watermelon or an empty box for that matter? Hijikata seems to be either magically defying the basic laws of the quotidian or imaginatively lingering on the boundaries of *something else*. Like a trickster who lurks on the periphery of society, Hijikata's unique way of becoming is not of the normative standard, and thus opens the world up to new ways of reconfiguring its sedimented habitus. Is his practice some sort of communal countercultural hallucination or has he tapped into some of Art's most fundamental capacities? For the purposes of thesis writing we face now the process of dabbling in theory.

We turn first to Arthur Danto, philosopher and art critic. In his essay, *The Artworld*, he takes us into the question of differentiating between real objects and art objects in a world where art moves beyond the representational. He invokes the character of Testadura (hardheaded), who can see nothing but the concrete. If Testadura saw Hijikata move his body disjointedly and grotesquely, he would see nothing but a human body in motion. What Testadura would not be able to see is that, because of the parameters of performance, his otherworldly rehearsals, and his linking words, we can start to see Hijikata as the thing he is trying to embody.

This possibility is illustrated for us by an example Danto gives us: a painting illustrating the death of Icarus. Pointing to a white dab in the corner of the painting one says “That white dab is Icarus”. Now we all know that that white dab cannot possibly be Icarus, and yet within the context of the painting, whose title highlights the centrality of Icarus, it most certainly is. He is and is not Icarus simultaneously. Our language, via the title, and our verbal pronouncement of ‘*the white dab is icarus*’ provides the link to the world of artistic identification. In this artworld people become things, words create bodies, and oil and water fuse in an eternal concoction of paradox. In this sense, when Hijikata says he turns into bones, flies, or boxes, he really does, while at the same time he is also himself dancing. According to Danto this capacity to see within the artworld, “is readily mastered by children,” (Danto 1964, 12), a point that will become key to further exploring the transformations of Hijikata later in this Scene.

For our purposes, to this artworld we must add a couple of complications. We must remember that the conditions of a realtime performance are not those of a painting, and that the audience in Butoh dance has a much more complicated role to play in the formation of Butoh’s artworld. Unlike paintings, performances are not fixed in space and held in place. They are ever evolving and active, and especially when improvisational in character, sometimes flee the titles given them. It is impossible to fix an entire performance in time, to observe it, to point out the dots that might be Icarus. Were we to try to make a dance a painting, it might look like a long roll of film, extending in space, marking off the corresponding time in meters. But even with such an artifact of reified performance, our viewing of it would take on the life of a secondary performance, laying itself out in the amount of time it took for a single viewing. Specks of images would remain impressed in our minds, and in this sense performance would morph into

bytes of memory. Each person would experience the artworld in many different forms, depending upon their particular perspective and the memories invoked. The artworld would morph a multiplicity of myths in this relationship where the divide between the performer/audience becomes thin, and many personal languages are invoked. Dancing across the stage, the performer is like what Artaud (one of Hijikata's favorite writers) might have called an "animated hieroglyph" (Artaud, 54); like a floating signifier, waiting for its interpretant audience to assign it meaning. Nanako Kurihara adds to this saying, "As early as 1960, Hijikata wrote that dance is not about showing, but about 'being watched, rubbed, licked and whacked.' Spectators were not merely onlookers but subjects who inflicted a gaze on the dancer's body," (Kurihara, 42). The dancer's body becomes a kind of fetish or sacrificial object which leads the audience through transformation, (Kurihara, 42).

We are just beginning

And now stumble down, and further down, into the artworld which fuses all things and lauds the loquacious wri(things)/writings of Hijikata.

Entry Point: Sticks and Stones are my Bones, and Names will ever be me

Also in early spring, the melting snow flows into the rivers with a rush and swirls around. I jump right into that whirlpool. And I grab onto the roots of a willow tree...Shouting, the adults come looking for me and I am rescued from the whirlpool. There I am born again; I am born. I am reborn again and again. (Hijikata, 75).

Entering into the world of the just being born. And born again. Each time Hijikata yawns into the world, he dances his child and invokes the darkness of the womb. Harshly, cuttingly, stiffly, he relives the violence of being born into the only world that he knows, and the one he wants to transform. If Danto thinks that the artworld, where all possible worlds can be

and are constructed, is the world in which children linger, we must echo with a cry from Vygotsky who made the stuff of children his legacy.

Robert Sharf, in his discourse on ritual in Buddhism, summons Vygotsky from the depths of language's soul. Vygotsky, on a mission to understand how children developed and internalized speech and language, and became objects unto themselves, offers a complicated but relevant segway into Hijikata's artworld. The story, combined with my own twist, goes something like this:

In the beginning of their lives children are enmeshed with their mothers. Their identity not only depends on their mother, their identity is their mother. S(he) is the fountain of sustaining milk. Mother and child as of yet are inseparable, and the child lingers in a realm of speech that is only beginning to move from moans, giggles, and cries, to signifying actions like pointing. In this stage, a child still sees form and content as inseparable, words are part of the "natural" character of objects, and the whole world feels as one. The word apple is intrinsic to an apple. The word horse is a name that is part of the natural character of the horse.

As the child begins to develop, with the aid of social relationships, he/she is able to cut and differentiate his/her identity from his/her mother, and also begins to reassign meaning in the world of speech and language. Play is the ground for learning. Sharf summarizes Vygotsky saying,

Play is the domain in which the young child discovers, through continuous experimentation, that an object's sign can be displaced onto something else, turning a "stick", for example, into a "horse". For the toddler, play is not a retreat from the "real" world of human society; it is, rather, the child's foray into it. (Sharf, 6).

Through play a child may come to understand this arbitrary relationship of the signifier to the signified, the cut between word and objects, the distinction between self and other. When they begin to play at reality games, for example, in which one child is the parent, and the other

child is the child, the objectification of the self begins to occur. Sharf writes, “the child normally behaves without thinking of herself as a child, yet now she consciously seeks to display herself as a child, constituting herself as an instance of what she already is,” (Sharf, 7). In this way she comes into existence for herself, but through the relationship with the other/the object. The bridge in this developmental process of becoming self conscious is language.

Scan the room you are in at this moment. Let your self choose an object in it with which you would like to dance. Spend some time observing this object. Smell it, listen to it, touch it, look at all of its surfaces, taste it. When you are pulled into this observation, begin to move how the object tells you to move, while saying its name out loud. Take a moment to document your observations.

When Hijikata becomes an object, it is not only in an artworld that he does so, it is also in the world of child’s play which he accesses through poetic language, and through poetic body language. He is able to manipulate the rules that govern signs, reframing and reforming the world. Hijikata premises his dance on the arbitrariness of the signifier that corresponds to objects that exist independent of language. To honor such arbitrariness he poetically reassigns the meanings of words to create a world in which people can become things, and things can become people. He plays at the sacred interstice of signifier, signified, and self, and brings into

being ritualized performances of altered identities. His bridge to this other world is in syllable and phoneme.

But what does this say of his own Self? Where does he go when he becomes objects? And how can we understand his altered subjectivity? Does he see objects as having their own subjectivities? Is he in relationship with them? Or is his becoming them a kind of self-annihilation? Why does he need to transform himself?

Entry Point: Animating and Relating

Viveiros de Castro's essay, *Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies*, intricately weaves a picture for us of a world in which non-human objects and animals are seen as different forms of human subjectivity cloaked in distinctively non-human clothing. Animals are of human nature, as are rocks and trees, and other inanimate objects, and as such the whole world takes on a relational quality. One can converse and form a relationship with whom one comes across in the environment, but the ability to "cross ontological barriers deliberately and adopt the perspective of non human subjectivities in order to administer the relations between humans and non humans" is a capacity reserved for the Shaman (Viveiros de Castro, 468). Viveiros de Castro further stipulates, "Only shamans, who are so to speak, species-androgenous, can make perspectives communicate, and then only under special, controlled conditions." (Viveiros de Castro, 471).

Highlighting the shaman as "species-androgynous", enacting his transformations in "controlled conditions", we see that not only does the shaman have to be a very special kind of human, he also has to set the stage, so to speak, in order to make transmogrification possible.

But to be a Shaman is it necessary to come from an Amerindian culture, or any other culture that is said to be “shamanic”? Can some artists, who hold ontological transformation at the core of their practice, be shamans as well?

Bringing ourselves back to the case of Hijikata, and his world of transformational dance experience, “in which distinctions between performer and audience, subject and object, did not exist,” (Kurihara, 47), we can see both parallels and disjunctions with the world of shamanism. By training continuously to become objects in rehearsal, and then enacting them on stage one could say that Hijikata was practicing to become “species-androgynous”, to let his subjectivity communicate with the environment around him, to make thin the boundary between different beings-in-the-world. The “controlled conditions” then, that would provide the altered state of transformational space would be those of the stage, of Hijikata’s artworld. Described in these terms we can almost say that Hijikata is a kind of shaman, shifting between worlds where material boundaries are thinly woven, and communication happens between the essences of things. Hijikata would spend days before performances fasting and avoiding sleep to develop the conditions to alter his consciousness. And then Being witnessed, whether in rehearsal or on stage, provided the social gaze which gave power to his transgressive movement.

Shamanism, however, in the world that Viveiros de Castro is writing about, is a practice predicated upon the social fact that animals and objects are endowed with human quality. Shamanism is a relationship between humans, the environment, and the spirit world that exists like a telephone wire in service of communication and exchange of perspective. Whether Hijikata’s world personifies objects as such, it is hard to tell. At times it seems that he sees the world of objects as animated. He has a degree of sympathy for things as illustrated when he

writes, “Once on the sly I put the kitchen dipper in the middle of a field. I did it because I felt sorry for the dipper, stuck in the sunless kitchen, and wanted to show it the world outside,” (Hijikata, 75). At others times it seems that the world of objects is just a dead space that he can flow into, a world where he can be safe and escape, a world where his spirit is welcome. He says, “...the object calls for a spirit, the spirit of the dancer, which means that a human being is transformed into something not human,” (Hijikata, 53). In this latter quote Hijikata seems to be saying that the object world is inanimate, but that it becomes animate when he enters it, and vice versa: human beings are human, but become non-human when they objectify themselves. On the edge of paradox Hijikata constructs a world for himself where he becomes like a god, the animator of all things, but simultaneously is annihilated, vanishing into the other.

The difference between Hijikata and a shaman is also found at the intersection of language, implicit and explicit. Whereas a shaman’s transformation is collectively inscribed into the culture that believes in shamanism as a possible and ready relationship between humans, animals, and objects, Hijikata’s world of Japan after WWII was looking towards the modern and how to get away from such spiritual practices that once characterized a Japanese past. Implicit in a shamanistic discourse would be the conditions for seeing/understanding the transformation of the shaman. In contrast, spectators coming to see Hijikata perform would probably not see on his body the objects that he is trying to embody. They would project onto him their own subconscious material and participate in transforming him for themselves. The audience would form him in their own particular narrative language, while we glean Hijikata’s personal

intentions of transformation from his writings, from what he said to his students in workshop, and from what his “*butoh fu*”, or butoh notation, poetically inscribed about his performance.

More examples of *Butoh Fu*:





But in Hijikata's world there is something more at play than just Vygotskian object play, Shamanic-like transformation, or Danto-ian artistic identification. There is something about Hijikata himself that yearns for, or even needs the paradox of the subjective object and the objective subject. Something deep inside him guides his art, and forms his artworld. Let us keep wandering, wondering together

down

down

down

into the dark womb of Hijikata's origins:

Find a dark space in the room you are in and crouch in it. What do you feel?

Entry Point: Experience and the Unconscious

When Hijikata first emerged as a dancer, instead of calling his performances performances, he called them dance *experiences*. Instead of predicating his work upon the separation between artist and audience, he invoked a more participatory feel in which he not only followed his deep internal impulses, but through which the audience could feel part of a ritualized experience. Kazuo Ohno, co-initiator of the Butoh movement, said that Hijikata's use of the word 'experience',

Has something to do with "presence", to use a contemporary word. It is close to the imagination. For example, my action is an action of the dead. If you don't communicate with many dead people, what you do is not persuasive. The imagination has to reach the point that it touches the dead. (Kurihara, 48).

"Presencing" entails not only entering into the artworld, but also bringing to bear an actual experience, past or/and present. When a performer is truly present, the audience can feel it by the way the performer perches over an intense affect; hovers around something at stake. This authentic presence always comes by way of personal experience. For Hijikata, memory could be invoked through the body, and movement could lead one to make known the presence of visceral charge and unconscious material. Kurihara writes,

Hijikata's memories were embedded in the body and became activated involuntarily. He said that many gestures which he had observed in his childhood-- those of his family members, neighbors, and even the dog next door-- were stored in his body like "scattered rafts". Sometimes they spoke to him, and other times they emerged in the movement of the hand. They existed in the unconscious domain. (Kurihara,76).

Butoh, for Hijikata was not only a way for him to activate the memories of his childhood or recuperate the voices of his past, voices which clung to his body with the desperation of time, it provided him with a way to rework and reform all that had happened to him as a young boy.

Entry Point: Childhood

Hijikata's childhood was not an easy one. Always living in fear of an alcoholic father who often beat his mother and violently smashed things in the house, Hijikata grew up in a helpless position, clinging tearfully to the skirts of his mother. He remembers his childhood in his most famous writing, *From Being Jealous of a Dog's Vein*,

You see... 'my old man' was a scary father. He threw things at the children, but the one he beat first was mother. Once, she ran out to the doma... tap, tap, tap... but he ran after her. The sound of hitting... slap, slap, slap. Just my mother being silently beaten. (Hijikata, 5)

In this short excerpt Hijikata creates a kind of childish rhythmic sound poetry. His traumatic memories are stored in an imaginary world of rhythm that reads much like a child's book. There is a distance and a detachment that is created in the way he writes, although he is recounting a visceral and terrifying memory. It is like his words are licking his traumatic past clean.

Sometimes things got so bad for Hijikata that he would turn his world inside out into a world of fictive imagination. Kurihara writes, "Reflecting later, Hijikata felt that he had acted as if playing the "role" of the child in this performance of his father's. Reality became fiction in his mind.... He later recalled that during the course of these traumatic episodes, 'I felt I had to create a little theater by myself'.... he [Hijikata] played the role of child, as if his home was a theater," (Kurihara, 22-3).

Harkening back to the developmental theories of Vygotsky we must once again invoke the activity of child's play. Sharf's reiteration of the Vygostkian reality play echoes in our mind,

Two children, for example might make up a game in which one plays the role of the mother and the other the role of the child. The second child is playing at what is in fact the case. Yet we recognize that there is a difference, since the child normally behaves without thinking of herself as a child, yet now consciously seeks to display herself [as one]. (Sharf, 7).

In Hijikata's early years we see him learning about the world through the dissociative state of looking in upon his home life as if it were a theater piece. Trying constantly to merge again with his mother, pulling at her skirts, screaming for escape, little Hijikata could not return to the womb, to non-existence, and instead learned of the darkness of the world. He was left alone, to play at his imaginative world of theater, where he could relate to himself as an object in the theater. There is no one to mirror him back to himself. The violent world of grown-ups reverberates in his mind and through his body until it becomes a faint dream, he is caught in the imaginary world of his dissociation, forever fractured, forever fragmented from himself.

Once a protective defense mechanism that shielded him from the pain of his childhood, this experience of fragmentation and shift in perspective became the basis of Hijikata's creative work. Dissociating from himself allowed him to take on the life of the object. As inert and inanimate, objects were not only not going to be violent; he could at once annihilate himself in them, but also control them by becoming them. This transformation of his childhood was transferred to the stage he created for himself as an adult, where he could also become the object of attention for the audience. The "animated hieroglyph" of his body spoke of his pain as the audience read off of him the words and screams that had been compacted in his body for so long.

This internal silent scream has been repeated and repeated in Butoh performance, and has become one of its signatures. It loudly escapes from an open mouth, from a deformed, fragmented dancer whose voided lips speak of horror. Perhaps it is catharsis, perhaps transformation. The sounds, the words that the audience can see escape from this screaming body writhing are the ones that will touch down deep into the core.

Entry Point: That Girl is my Sister

At this time I would like to describe for you an excerpt of a Hijikata dance experience called “The Girl”, 1973. It is an eleven minute excerpt of a 90 minute piece. You can join watching by following this [link](#).² Two viewings would be ideal, one before you read my words below, and one after you read my words and they have been etched into you. This small experiment will help you understand how words can create a body and a body can create words.

a pink robe punctures the darkness with light, propped up by a body that looks like a standing fetus. hands curved towards wrists like disabled caterpillars. Looking around, surveying the security of the path. searching. there is no way but down and down and down, settling deeper into this girl body. an erect masculine posture in a pink dress prompts permissive poetry. I take my liberty at seeing through this body what comes up through my own brain body being. Though what comes is more in the sound of affect, puncturing me in my belly. The girl steps in the space in awkward high heels, as if they were the hooves of an animal. A sacrifice, and a fall down again into deeper body consciousness. When foot rises in contortion, face responds as if on a connecting string, grimacing with the grotesque like a fixed face puppet, whose wooden wields uncanny ululations. Another fall backwards, legs spreading apart, but resisting the loss of innocence, like a nutcracker lamed by a diamond. She yields without a scream, but silently pumps her mouth open and closed again as if to speak. and falling again. Curling into a ball, bashful and modest after the ravishing. seeing-holes wide open, eye-shadowed with blood, in traumatic shock her puppet face drools, summoning the dead up and

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCT3vp0Gu1o&feature=related> Search: A Girl Hijikata Tatsumi Medium.

down. stockings go back on. mamma never told her they would not keep out the cold. Stiffly, erectly, the girl walks through the darkness, as if, somewhere inside she were a man.

take a pause and close your eyes. let this be an experience.

*

*

And softly coming back to

the shock of the light and the glare of this screen.

I will tell you more about this girl, who lives in Hijikata's body:

He holds her inside, this girl, his sister, this memory of his sister who helped raise him. Because of the complete destitution in which his parents found themselves early in his childhood, they sold her into prostitution along with all of the furniture in the house. Or so the story goes, its trueness perhaps questionable. Hijikata recounts the memory, with the distance and wonderment of a child,

One day, a casual glance around the house revealed that the furniture was all gone. Furniture and household utensils are something you can't help but notice. And around that time my older sister, who always sat on the veranda, suddenly disappeared. I thought to myself, maybe this is just something older sisters naturally do--disappear from the house. (Klein, 6).

He writes later, "I keep one of my sisters alive in my body when I am absorbed in creating a Butoh piece, she tears off the darkness in my body and eats more than is necessary of it--when she stands up in my body, I sit down impulsively," (Viala and Masson-Sekine, 73). Again we feel Hijikata embodying the other/object, perhaps of his trauma, while his subjectivity takes a back seat. And yet he is able to keep her close, and control the memory of her by becoming her. His words connect us with the object of the memory he is embodying, his words bring us into his

world. Perhaps they are his way of reaching out to the social, perhaps his words are the only way he can relate to a human way of being?

Entry Point: Those who came after

The following excerpt is from my creative journal. It is a description of the performance of a post-Hijikata Butoh company, Sankai Juku, who radically altered Butoh, calming its violence, and choreographing its movements. Hijikata's influence peeks through, though, especially at the end of a performance called *Tobari*, when we are left with silent sounds coming out of a wide open mouth. Through open orifices of those who came after, Hijikata still speaks.

October 8, 2010

Tonight I went to a performance of Sankai Juku at the Joyce Theater. Tobari – As if in an Inexhaustible Flux. Butoh gone big. Sexless, genderless bodies painted white, loincloths indicating where the umbilicus of humanity has been severed. The backdrop is black and starred, and locates the moving bodies somewhere in the realm of the intergalactic. The stage floor is layered thinly with white sand that is churned up by floating feet, creating a deeper otherworldliness, a liminal space, in the screen of dust that remains in the air. Taught, compact, and deliberate, the dancers move in calculated and choreographed articulation. Fingers turn into flower stamens, open mouths indicate the void, bodies mark out trajectories like shooting stars. Each joint is charged. Legs are there to support and transport. Gestural movements performed in synchronicity elicit a feeling of the social, albeit stark. In this synchronicity the

individual becomes multiple, and one feels the pull towards something greater. Repetition and its meditative hum of bodies spirals into the next moment when Ushio Amagatsu, the director of the company is left alone, bare, for an improvised solo. A moment of nakedness, a moment of exhale, he opens his mouth to let out a silent scream, releasing his whole body into the breath that escapes. Tremendous trembling and tenacious terror bubble out with the last gasp. A climax, a catharsis. This muted scream lingers. Many words tumble out of a silent open mouth, as if they had been trapped inside for centuries but could no longer be stuffed down; popping under too much pressure. In Silence I hear the loudest part of the performance. I am left teary and gaping. I hear my own heart sounding.

An excerpt of the performance³ can be seen [here](#).



A photo of the Silent Scream of an Anonymous Butoh Dancer, from the documentary: Baraka (1992).

³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdwL27NzIVg> Search: Sankai Juku Official movie from “Tobari”

SCENE TWO: Eco-Somatics

Body(Weather): Intimate Topologies, Somatic Imaging

Butoh plays with time and also perspective....If we humans learn to see things from the perspective of an animal, an insect, even inanimate objects, the road trodden everyday is alive--we should value everything.
--Tatsumi Hijikata

It is assumed that the task of reality acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (religion, art, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is lost in play.
--D.W. Winnicott

Modern Man can be touched by a pale shadow of this, when on a southern moonlit night, he feels mimetic forces alive in himself that he had thought long since dead, while nature, which possess them all, transforms itself to resemble the moon.
-- Walter Benjamin

Since Hijikata expressed the first shadows of Butoh in the late 1950s, uncovering in his multi-perspectival language the potential for transformation through the union of the body and the word, many other performers have attempted to project their own particular influences on the movement, both in Japan and abroad. In the first Scene we are left with the thundering resonance of a silent scream that transforms the meaning of its performer's body into an imaged signifier, an animated hieroglyph that reverberates Butoh's historical corpus. In this Scene I will present to you another variation on the theme, a practice called *Bodyweather*, that has been particularly influential both in Japan and internationally. Conceptualized by Min Tanaka and company, *Bodyweather* has homes in the rural spaces of Japan, Europe, Australia, and the United States. Min, (as he is called by his students), who originally resisted studying with Hijikata because of his intense adulation for the peculiarly charismatic guru, eventually trained with him for a two month period in 1984, and reports that he,

... was very surprised by his way of working. He [Hijikata] used about a thousand images from nature applied through the body, and I had to remember every one. Each day he changed the order of the

movements. The images were of such elements as wind or sunshine, and he used them not to provide form, but to provide inspiration. The movements were natural. (Holborn, 66)

This experience with Hijikata manipulated Min's body so deeply that he would eventually use Hijikata's word/image laced *Butoh fu* in his own practice. By declaring himself "the legitimate son of Hijikata," (Tanaka,155), Min both gives homage to this particular lineage, while forging the way for a new generation of movement exploration.

Throughout this Scene I will continuously refer back to the themes of word, image, and eco-somatic intimacy, to play with how Min's process both coincides with and differs from Hijikata's, while also trying to flesh out what the Bodyweather process is, through a more descriptive approach. The brief introduction that will occupy the next several pages will fade slowly into a more creative exposition of my recent dabbling in Bodyweather. Through experiential vignettes and performatives prompts I will hopefully recreate, in *Your flesh*, at least a semblance of the Bodyweather ambiance. The bulk of the theory of this chapter is based on that which I have lived via my recent experience with Hisako Horikawa, the co-founder of the Bodyweather Laboratory in Japan, and Min Tanaka's right hand lady, and my studies with Diego Piñon, who worked and danced on Min's farm, and incorporates Bodyweather principles into his own dance practice called, *Butoh Ritual Mexicano*. Mostly I will be speaking about my recent experiences with Hisako, during and after which I was able to scribble copious fieldnotes about the experience for the purpose of this thesis (which I have included as an *Encore*). But first a few musings about Bodyweather history and philosophy.

Down on the Farm

In the summer of 1985, after a lifetime of love for dance led him to become a known solo performer in Tokyo, Min decided to leave the city to take up life on a farm in rural Hakushu, in

the Yamanashi Prefecture. Both personal and a political, Min's move not only signaled a symbolic departure from the increasingly commodified life of the city, it danced him into the arms of a life that would more directly communicate with his depth of spirit. In the countryside he would have the space and time to communally collaborate in the development of a new training modality. About the flight to the countryside Min says, "I wanted to return to the original form or the primitive form and so I started to be a farmer . . . it was my dream--and to study about dance. In Asia and Africa it's quite similar, most of the dance started from the ground, from agriculture. In *Kabuki* and *Noh*, the movement comes from farming. They are based on an agricultural body, which is related to a farmer's life." (Marshall, 60).

*See the farm and Min and his dance, getting their images into your experience.*⁴

The agricultural body Min tries to accentuate is not only one whose labor aesthetic keeps the repetitive rhythm of a dance step, like a farmer would while hoeing a carrot patch, it harkens back a tightly swaddled Hijikata, abandoned daily in the fields while his parents tried to eke out a living from the land. Hisako, during workshop, told us the story of what Hijikata referred to as the beginning of Butoh. She said,

He [Hijikata] was born into farm life. As a baby, he lay in a straw basket in the fields, scrunched up all day while the adults worked. Baby cried, no one heard. Baby swallowed tears. When the work day was done, the baby was taken out of the basket, but couldn't move because he was scrunched up for too long. He was stiff. When he did finally started to move, his movements were slow and disjointed. This was the Birth of Butoh.

Hijikata's first words were these swallowed cries, pronounced and then inhaled, let out and responded to only by the presence of the wind passing by, of the sky overlooking, of the

⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9mW06VbRyg&feature=related> Search: Tanaka Min Document 4

atmosphere that held him in his straw cradle, of the faint voices of his caretakers far in the distance. Having harvested these memories for storage, Hijikata's dance inevitably oozed out a laborious aesthetic, inflected with swallowed tears, and stuck body parts. Somewhere in the unconscious of the collective root cellar of Butoh this aesthetic of labor lingers, alongside the desire of getting back to the "original body". Instead of fleeing agricultural space as Hijikata did in his adult life, revoking the site of his swaddled sorrow, Min goes back to the farm to reconcile with his origins, to please his primal pull.

Known as the Bodyweather laboratory, Dance Resources on Earth Center, Artcamp, or Hon-Mura Project Organic Farm (Marshall, 56), Min's new agricultural home would itself become one of his most important collaborators, whose constant input allowed him to envision the evolution of his dance practice. 'Dancing the place, not in the place', became the credo of Bodyweather Laboratory, which sought, through deliberate interaction with the environment, to bridge the perceived separations between the human being and the natural world that characterized a modern age. Bodyweather sought not only to re-place the human being in his landscape, but to remember him *as* a landscape, *as* a process of continuous weathering. Jonathan Marshall in his article *Elemental Body*, quotes Min Tanaka attempting to explain the philosophy Bodyweather, saying,

. . . the body is not a set entity. It constantly changes, like the weather. The body that measures the landscape, the body in intercourse with the weather, the body kissing [the] mass of peat, the body in [a] love-death relation to the day. (Marshall, 56).

In these words we feel not only an intimacy between the body and her environment, we are splashed by explicitly sexual references to 'intercourse' and 'kissing', in an attempt to express just how very far into each other "nature" and the "human" go. In fact, the categories of

“human” and “nature” cease to exist in the practice of Bodyweather. Experiential genesis for the practitioner, becomes a sort of ever-fluctuating love conversation in which the boundaries are blurred between human and non-human interlocutors, in the same way that human lovers might feel their ‘twoness’ as a ‘oneness’ in the act of making love.

Staying with the discourse on sexuality, Min furthers our image of what he is trying to do via Bodyweather when he says, “weather is a genesis. It arises *between* persons. Each of us was born from two persons. So I am determined to make “two” my minimal unit.” (Snow, 56). For the Bodyweather practitioner, the feeling of sexual union, of conception, of womb-dwelling, and of the birth of a child’s experience in the world are sought after experiences that can be perpetually recreated by interacting with the world and by realizing our mutual inseparability with it.

If we flow from here, with two as our minimal unit of experience, we necessarily come to an eventual extinction of the idea of an individual, discernible, stable self. One’s dance with the Other, leads to what Min calls, “embodying the body that belongs to Nobody.” (Snow, 69). Self-hood becomes evacuated, creating a world outside that is ripe for active engagement and interaction. Something “out there” shows up in the Bodyweather practitioner’s field of experience, whether in the form of a person or a tree or a grain of sand, and actively calls for intercorporeal connection. Bodyweather practitioner and scholar, Peter Snow, further articulates the Bodyweather practitioner’s world not as an individual self-occupied space, but as a space,

. . . consisting in networks of intercorporeal relations. Relations between bodies, between parts of bodies, between bodies and selves, between individuals and the group, between bodies and worlds....all investigated as instances of multifarious relations between bodies and weather, (Snow, 9).

Here we can see that Snow extends the meaning of intercorporeal relationship to include not only relationships between humans, but between humans and the world and the entire set of elements

in it. One can potentially enter into intimate relationship with a rock or a tree or the wind or a chair or a spoon or the space. And if one can enter into such an interaction with that which we usually think of as “inanimate”, must it be that these objects really have a stance and a mind and an agency of their own? After all, if a relationship is necessarily between two, both entities must somehow participate in the communication.

From this shift in perspective, a new animated world lights up an emergent perception. To help us understand this capacity for relationship we turn to Japanese phenomenologist, Shigenori Nagatomo. In the first chapter of his book, *Attunement Through the Body*, he highlights philosopher Ichikawa Hiroshi’s discussion of a human holding a stone, and tries to animate the perceptive conversation that occurs between them. Nagatomo explains Ichikawa’s thought saying:

(1) An act of perception extends over into the object perceived, and (2) in such a process there is a “bodily dialogue” with the object perceived. He argues these two points by pointing out that we do not make contact with the world by means of the surface of the perceptual organs, nor do we passively receive a given stimulus from the external world; the latter is implied in the phrase, bodily dialogue, since a dialogue is by definition a dialogue only when two or more participants are actively engaged. If it were otherwise, we would not be able to detect “depth” in scenery, or would be unable to grasp the shape of a stone. (Nagatomo, 13).

The physical images that we receive from a stone we hold, comprise part of the language that the stone is making available through interactive dialogue. The stone is present, and it is helping to sculpt a very particular perceptive experience. It imprints onto the hand of its holder, and announces its presence in hardness or smoothness or roughness or coldness. In his own words Min Tanaka hints at this enlivened relationship, saying that, “Sometimes the trees give a stronger energy than the human beings. When I am dancing I feel many things passing through my body,” (Tanaka, 149).

Ichikawa via Nagatomo has something to say about trees and ‘energy’ too. We read on and come to a section in which a citation by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty is taken up. The passage which is discussed lays out an artist’s experience in a forest. The account parallels Min’s experience of ‘energy’ coming from a tree. In the story we witness an animated world opening itself to a perceptive experiencer. Nagatomo writes,

. . . Merleau Ponty cites an artist in the *Primacy of Perception* who says ‘In a forest, I have felt so many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some day, I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me, that I was there, listening.’ . . . this kind of personal statement presupposes an instance of ambiguous oneness; a “oneness” between subject and object, between interiority and exteriority. (Nagatomo, 54).

To perceive this ambiguous oneness which allows us to feel the languages of trees or stones, or to recognize our self as created in dialogue, one must be or become sensitized to the subtle body movements and ‘energies’ that develop in relationship. Ichikawa holds that it is the work of the artist to cross the boundary of the form. He says that, “artists grope for a way to express ambiguous oneness, and they dwell in the interiority of the world by transforming the world, as it were, into one’s body”. (Nagatomo, 54).

Now rewind and zoom into Min’s word ‘energy’, highlighting it for this paragraphed moment. He cannot see this ‘energy’; it is something he feels. But what is the ‘something’ he feels, and how does it emanate? We turn, for the last time to Nagatomo, who brings the concept of ‘energy’ into his own philosophy of Attunement.

The emanation of an **energy** from the personal body is a divine gift in the sense that it calls for a recognition of its pervasive presence in the living ambiance which embraces the personal body as a contingent being, for it shares the same “natural” elements which comprise the totality of physical nature. (Nagatomo, 203).

Here Nagatomo not only accepts willingly that there exists such a thing as ‘energy’ (even though we cannot see it) coming from the human body, he also indicates that it is shared by the totality of physical nature, and is what allows us to Attune to Others. Our personal body and physical

nature dialogue not by engaging in English or Japanese or Greek, we dialogue through an energetic language which establishes intercorporeal relationship. Language extends beyond phoneme and syllable, and enters what Peter Snow calls, ‘the image of the in-between’. Metaphorical ‘words’ sound in energetic spaces between interlocutors.

From a footnote in the Introduction of *The Poetics of Space*, by Gaston Bachelard, we receive a reference to and quote from a philosopher named Eugene Minkowski which might help us give more voice to this concept of ‘energy’. He tries to understand how the forms and images we see (of vases, trees, people) take on an invisible ‘energy’ that enlivens them and makes them available to perception. In Minkowski’s words we hear how he describes an enlivened, energized world in terms of Sound.

If having fixed the original form in our mind’s eye, we ask ourselves how that form comes alive and fills with life, we discover a new, dynamic and vital category, a property of the universe: **reverberation**. It is as though a well-spring existed in a sealed vase, and its waves, repeatedly echoing against the sides of this vase, filled it with sonority. Or again, it is as though the sound of a hunting horn, reverberating everywhere through its echo, made the tiniest leaf, the tiniest wisp of moss shudder in a common movement and transform the whole forest, filling it to its limits, into a vibrating, sonorous world... (Bachelard, xvii).

Funny enough, in this quote too, like in the entire discussion of ‘energy’ leading up to this point, there is another mention of a forest. For Minkowski, leaves and moss shudder, a well-spring laps against the sides of a vase, and the whole forest moves by reverberations that animate and echo-locate and form places and movements of vibratory communication. The images, the forms, the solid signifieds of the ‘inanimate’ world are revealed as beings animated by Sound. I think Minkowski would agree that by ‘energy’, he means that he is feeling the ‘vibratory’ language of his tree-partner. And so we come back to embodied language and incorporated dialogue.

In an interview with a fellow Bodyweather dancer, R--, I found the theme of Sound and reverberation jump out again, this time referring to a developing relationship between himself

and a rock on the East River where we were dancing. When I asked him to describe the experience he offered these words:

Being on a solid surface allows my ears to hear things. The rock almost becomes my ear. I think I could hear things better forming off of it. I heard music. Because there is natural music in the air, and I think my body responds to it. At one point I could feel dub music forming from all around me. It's like picking up on the vibrations of things. (Vasilas, 4).

Again we see a vibratory language become apparent through R--'s interaction with the rock. The words that develop are manifestations of a natural music that is always 'in the air'.

And so I would venture to say here, that Bodyweather takes Hijikata's image and word laden *Butoh Fu*, the bridge of his transformation into Other, and extends its reach beyond syllable and phoneme, into a world of sonorously animated intercorporeal conversation. Bodies brushing up against bodies, even at a distance produce 'in-betweens' that produce energetic images. Words too are felt as sounded images. Tanaka brings Hijikata back to the farm, the rooted origins of Butoh, and lets him dance with his world to the pulse of the musical language of Our Nature that chatters an accompanying chorus.

Many questions arise at this point with regards to how one comes to detect and be moved by this reverberatory language. How does the Bodyweather practitioner come to incarnate the infinite sonorous influences of her environment? How is it that an extra sensitive, extra-perceptual, relational Bodyweather body is created? Is eco/echo-somatic intimacy and resonance a sense that must be cultivated as vegetables are on a farm?

The Bodyweather process is a highly articulated entryway into eco/echo-somatic relationship, involving what Peter Snow has broken down into three series of exercise: mindbody work: a series of intense macro-movements that work to tire the body and exhaust its habitus; manipulations: partnering exercises in which one person moves the other who empties herself to

receive another's influence; and omni-central imaging: the process of becoming Other via holding images and words in the body, or via giving movement to the images and reverberations that arise in the in-between of one's relationships. This process seeks first to exhaust the body, to open it up to the sphere of relational weather and communication, and then to finally transform its quotidian isolation into an ever evolving relationship with the Other by moving multifarious physical images and their reverberatory qualities.

Peter Snow argues that it is the ability to omnically image which resides at the height of the Bodyweather practitioner's development. Min elucidates its expansive quality saying, "If I have the chance to get stimulation from outside through my skin, I contain more than is inside of my clothing. That is Body Weather. It's omni-central, as if there are many eyes, many centers, moving." (Marshall, 61). The person who is riding omni-centered change accepts to be dressed up in many different image cloaks, that become sewn and marked into his body via the vital spaces and languages of the in-between. Much like Hijikata becomes Other by swallowing and ingesting illogical word combinations, Bodyweather practitioners become Other through their embodiment of images, and their felt interactions with the reverberatory language of their world. The image that Min speaks about, we will define as that which arises in the in-between, affectively tinged, and vitally felt through one's interaction with an Other. It can be a feeling or a word or a visual or a symptom that flashes up through interactivity. It is the articulation that arises when worlds brush up against each other. It is the fruit of the space in between. Jonathan Marshall describes the kind of imaged transformative process Bodyweather relishes in, saying,

The body is always moving in response to internal and external stimuli, endlessly transforming. Like the elemental body in performance, Tanaka's discourse continuously elides closure, morphing into a dizzying profusion of physical images, terms, and metaphors (primitive, infant, foetal, aged, farmer, liquid, air, weather) even as the dancer attempts to verbally explicate his psychokinetic amoeboid methodology. (Marshall, 66).

Perhaps the final piece of what Marshall is saying, that even when a Bodyweather practitioner tries to describe his psychokinetic amoeboid process, he must do so through an imaged, imagined, poetic language, is why I feel I must now evolve this thesis into a more figurative space.

And so we come to the tail of our theoretical exploration of Bodyweather and Min Tanaka, and Hijikata, and perch on the edge of entering our own experiences. But first one last informative bridge to the meat of the forthcoming experiments . . .

I met Hisako Horikawa, Min's imaginative left hand lady, during a Bodyweather workshop that was given right in Brooklyn this past September 2011. Her first 'words' of greeting were a smile and a cat-like meow that escaped from her body in a sort of hello. Many of the words she used were in fact purring animal sounds or loud gentle touches, speckled with a few discernible English sentences thrown in for insurance of comprehension. If you were to meet her you too would notice how she seems to live in another world; a creature whose sensitivity is palpable. Her practice has become her body in a very deep way.

Experience her dance in The Rite of Spring (October 1990).⁵ Fast forward to minute 2:42.

Moving In

What I present to you in this next section are both my own reactions to working with Hisako distilled from my field notes and embodied experience, and performative prompts that will help you understand what kind of practice Bodyweather is. I hope that you will participate,

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdJa2Sh80os> Search: Min Tanaka-The Rite of Spring 2/7 (Butoh Dance)

and take the time to write or draw your experiences in the spaces I have provided for your co-authorship and interaction with my thesis. Or perhaps you will sing a song and write down its words. I am curious about what images might be offered to you, or what words or reverberations might find you in our particular 'in-between'.

Entry Point: The First Blind Glances See Us Through the Space

The first day of a two week Bodyweather Dance Experience at Cave Arts Space, Brooklyn. Hisako Horikawa has come to us from Japan having cultivated her own Butoh on a farm, the Bodyweather farm, in the countryside surrounding Tokyo. She explains that her inspiration for movement comes into her through the wind that tickles the patties of rice she plants and through the sun that honey-coats her hair. Her dance is not her own, but belongs to the Nature that she Is and is continuously Becoming. She affirms that all of what she has to offer us in this workshop, in the form of small vignettes of experience experiments, will serve to awaken our senses, and theoretically reawaken us to our own Nature.

We begin with an intensity that shall be sustained for the coming two weeks.

Hisako asks us to close our eyes and tie a cloth tightly around our sight, to lean into the handicap of our fragile humanity without beaming and clawing onto the stability of visual dependence. Blindness begs for touch and smell and taste and sound to unravel the Way. Skin and bone and visceral optics crack open creakily. Their sight unpracticed and innocent. Their breadth barely beginning. Not seeing with my eyes slows me down really fast. Almost to a gluttonous glacial arrhythmia. I linger in each micro-movement it takes to shuffle in frozen staccato through the space of the dance studio. Barely able to lift a toe without the threat of

wobble. Emotionally trafficked highways of uncertainty crescendo to their peak darkness in the effort that even just the sloughing off a dead skin cell requires. Momentous feeling and micro experience. Small 'energies', as Hisako calls them, accumulate and highlight parts of my body I knew not I had. Without eyes, I am able to listen to and follow these small energies that guide me into opening the eyes of all of my cells. Into feeling a reverberating world.

Hisako then directs us to find a partner. S(he) will hold the tips of our fingers in hers, to guide us in a pointed exploration first of our own bodies, then of her's, then of the space and all of its crevices and surfaces and interiors and emptinesses. The whole world opens for me on and through the tiny skin surface of this tip. Intaking information as it licks first my iliofemoral crease and then my partner's clavicle and then the grout in the brick wall. The responses I feel from that which my pointer finger touches are loud. Body parts and building parts enter into conversation of their own accord. Their presence puts me into contact with my own boundaries, and pushes beyond. After spending some time becoming present to this tipped experience, my finger begins to disappear. It is eaten by that which it touches, that which touches it. It enters into somatic intimacy with the environment that has shown up of its own accord. In my tip I feel *The Body that Becomes. Becoming other. Otherwise becoming.*

Exploration: Get a piece of cloth. Any cloth, that can be wrapped around your head as a blindfold. Tie it tightly around your eyes, making sure no light passes through. Take fifteen minutes and explore your environment sightlessly. Record the feelings/reactions/images that come to you as your particular environment shows up for you.

Entry Point: Manipulations/Stimulations, Lying and Standing

Practicing the Yield. Hisako directs us to make groups of four people, three of whom will be actively stimulating and moving and juggling the fourth who will lay on the floor yielding to the weighty feeling that gravity enacts upon her body and to the manipulations of her peers. There will be the movers and the moved. And they shall affect each other, trading places, and switching roles constantly. Experimenting with what it means to let go into the intentional action of an other, or to try to enact one's intention on a presence with whose worldly form one must negotiate.

Hisako scurries to demonstrate the exercise on one of the experiencers. Straddling the woman she has asked to lie down, Hisako rocks her own weight forward and her hands pounces onto the bony headlights of the hips, pressing alternately into each side, tipping the pelvic bowl as if it were a mini seesaw, left to right to left. These balancing kneads are rhythmic and slow and serve to establish deeper contact with the ground as evidenced by the way the woman's lower back exhales more deeply toward the floor. From the hips Hisako flits to the arms, vigorously squeezing them until she reaches the wrists which she grasps, lifts, and waves to create ripples of effect in the entire upper torso. Then with exigent concentration she places the arm to the floor, detaching from it readily, and lunges her attention to the leg, which she grabs by its ankle and pushes towards the body core in order to plie the knee and crease the femoral joint, allowing the entire leg to splay out to the side in a half frog position. Here Hisako laughs and says that it is our turn to explore and to feel and to increase our awareness of how the body can be moved and move.

In my group I am the first to lie down to make myself available to somatic stimulations. I consciously choose to open myself by letting down my muscle rigidity so that the other's hands and breath and intentions may enter my body. At once I become overwhelmed by sensations, as if tossed under water and inundated by churned-up sand tornado-ed at me by a wave of oceanic current. Each stimulation from each of the six hands rubs my self control into some other part of my consciousness, leaving me completely vulnerable to the other's touch, to the weather that sweeps across my body. The pulsations of this strobed stimulation outline the contours of a new body that is becoming apparent to me, one that feels its form in relationship, one that is formed in the conversation between itself and the responses and actions of its environment.

Pat flex pat pull push knead scratch yank separate condense extend hug cradle stir

Barely containing the sensuous information that runs through and blurs

shhhhhhhh ahhhhhh and xxxsssss falling into oooooooooooooohhhh

I feel a pause, and an idea condensing. Awkwardly my partners begin to lift my entire weight off of the floor a few inches, but because I am limp I am heavier than when solidly formed. I slip through their grasp. Hisako comes to help. She is strong and initiates a better hold. This time I am raised several feet off the ground and urgently ambulated in circles around the studio. Heavy pattering steps and groaning breaths indicate that this is not easy for my partners. I become more aware of the burden of my weight. And I breathe groaningly and imagine myself a corpse in a body bag being lugged to the grave. All I want to do is get out of there. Is to vanish, to become weightless. But I have already let go of my yield and become tense, and there is no such possibility. Panicking I writhe internally and feel my face scrunch into pugnacious sourness.

This tension radiates down my neck and invokes a memory of unwanted dependency. Of utter vulnerability to a world raging and fast.

When peak effort is reached I am lowered to the ground, prodded a few more times, rocked vigorously, and smoothed out. I lose myself again into the floor and the patter of hands.

Hisako's voice initiates the coming back in a sonorous O-kaaaaaay.

It is difficult to open my eyes. But eventually they crack into a crescent moon as I find a cross legged seated position. The time it takes to reenter everyday consciousness feels sickening. Desires not to see form churn and question the stability of Material. Resistance hangs from eye lash and sends a cue to drape.

Visual vacuity had made my experience intensely voluptuous, and I don't want to end it.

I don't want to come back.

Not to a world in which I think I have to stand upright all on my own.

Exploration: This exploration must be done with another human. When you find a time in which you and a partner can explore together, find a space and take turns exploring each other's bodies. How do they move? What are they made up of? What parts hold tension? How do you juggle another's body? Where do you go when you close your eyes and open yourself to the influence of another? What happens when you explore another?

Entry Point: At the Park: The Umbilical String

Walking from the studio at 55 Grand St. to Grand Ferry Park a couple blocks away at the mouth of the road. The park is tiny. It abuts the East River and stares south to the Williamsburg bridge which rages with the rumble of the J/M/Z. A crimson-painted brick tower welcomes us at the entrance as we wobble over its encircling cobblestone pavement to a blacktop path leading to a barricade of boulders that walls against the current. On the way to the riverside, to the right, we pass a treed picnic area with green enameled metal tables dug in and secured to the gravel pebbled ground. To the left, an open sun-exposed scar of dirt about the size of two small New York City studio apartments. To the other side of this scar is a deep and craggy subcutaneous gash that was created by the city as a channel for pipes; a vein that secures the redirection of water into nearby architectural bodies. Spots of weeds are the unifying theme between all of the differing landscapes of the park, along with speckles of trash that have been gratuitously shed.

All eight of us dancers and Hisako gather at a bench in the picnic area. She laughs mischievously as she wrestles a ball of string from her neon pink canvas bag. We pair off as instructed, and Hisako cuts off a piece for each couple that will become our only way to physically connect. She tells us that we will move each other through the park using this fibrous communication. The person to be led will be blindfolded and must feel the other's movement residue coming through the string. Then, after each has had a turn, both partners will un-blind themselves and try to lead each other simultaneously, under this umbilical influence.

So we begin....

Unravelling the chord from me to you. Stepping backwards, teetering away, creating a space. Exhale, and again, blow away with the wind. Let the slack turn loose and straighten with

the distance. Release into, fiercely. Separating more. While feeling a concomitant clinging and depending. Two more steps back, and one to the left. Unwinding and binding and finding your breath. Unfurling your fingers, and their desire to linger. Rewrapping the string tightly on the tip of your pointer. A loopy trap and pull and a presence. On the other end: your life line to a true desire. In the form of a trace of the Other's slight movement. Tugging ever so slightly in accord and rebellion.

As we explore it becomes more difficult to tell who is leading and who is following, even when the leader and the follower are predetermined. The string moves up, and down, slantedly and strung out. Quivering in relationship.

Now I am leading my blindfolded partner. I can see his breath flutter the tail of the sight-binding cloth that hangs over his nose, and see his hesitation in the tininess of his shuffle. He does not trust me yet, as evidenced by his free hand groping for something on which to cling for balance. I am afraid of my ability to lead him, but I know it is about trusting our connection, and that to achieve fluency we must let go of our thinking minds and begin to feel each other's life line. As we shuffle together, changing levels through stringed signal, we come to the 'V' of a cluster of saplings near the picnic area. A treacherous choice of path. But I choose to continue, and by default so does my partner. This path will require crouching and crawling. Avoiding and maneuvering. Touching and receiving. But there is an attraction to the openness of the branches which seem to have highlighted the way for us.

My partner senses from me an increase in stringed movement and begins to slow down to feel and receive the impulses. I guide his finger to touch the barked passage way. The saplings touch him back, speaking their textured language, letting him know that the way is populated

with other presences. He leans into the tactile communication as one would into a friend, and is reassured by the response. Solid availability. I smile as I watch the new dance partners sway slowly. And as we progress many new relationships form between string, partner, space, tree, and me.

Exploration: Again with a partner get a piece of string and bind yourselves together by tying the string onto your pointer fingers. Lead each other through the space. At first move around the objects in the room (or in your outside space), and then move through them.

Entry Point: At the Park: Directives on the Rocks

Barefoot and blindfolded on the rocked lap of the East River. Lodged between crags and jagged sags. Pelvis tipped anteriorly, sit bones anchored superficially to a downward stone slope. Legs bridge the space between the rock I sit on and the two directly below. Torso reaches in a micro lean forward, with a dangle in the arms. I prop myself up this way to leave enough room to follow the voice directives of my partner that will guide me into four simultaneous actions to be performed slowly. And even more slowly than slow. A kind of puppet dance led by vocal strings and traces, mediated by environmental conversation. As actions reach their full expression they will be replaced by others, so that there are always four to hold and move at once. The partner who is guiding will have to understand how to prompt her partner given the conversation that develops.

Right elbow to left knee

Nose to the Sky

Navel into your back space

Mouth open as wide as possible

Pause. Ssssssslllllloooooooowwwwww.

Right knee to touch Left knee

Pause. Feeling the wind scream across the river, through body that shudders in response.

Lick your lips

Grind your pelvis deeper into the rock

The conversation develops.

As we flesh out the dance together, an unexpected level of complexity develops for me. An emotional wave of heat pricks as I resist taking orders from my partner and from the stone's stubborn solidity. These partners, human and rock and voice, have minds of their own that I must allow to act across and in relation to my body. The combination produces in me an urge to destroy. To make the exercise more comfortable for myself I know I must release into the rock and the words of my partner, but the urge to kill them remains stronger. Shaking spirals through me as I concentrate on the way boundarized forms collide and remain distinct from each other. This makes time exist more strongly than usual and highlights the suffering of duration.

Somehow, when I feel like I can no longer continue the exercise, something happens. Like releasing a choking inhale held too long, I hiss out a breath that melts my lower back and abdomen. This release smooths the wrinkles on my face, and props up my quivering extremities. The gratitude my muscles express relieves my anger. When they relax, I let myself be supported by something beyond my self, something that can extend the finite energy of an individual wrestling life alone.

Palm of your left hand as open as possible, extending towards the River

Mould your lips into a smile

Laugh heartily

Exploration: Again with your partner. Choose a space in your environment, and assume a comfortable position of any sort. Your partner will give you four verbal directives that you will let into your body, allowing them to transform you slowly. You must perform these actions all at the same time.

Entry Point: At the Park: Trunks and Trees

There are infinite places in the park available for exploration; most of which we can normally not see or perceive. Hisako tells us to choose one that calls to us, whether we can see it or not, whether it feels like plain space, or it is occupied by an object who is characterized by a form that we have come to know categorically. She directs us to dance in response to this particular space, listening to it and letting it animate our movements. Immediately my impulses bring me to a tree in the picnic area. There is something about it which reminds me of myself. Perhaps it is its height and roughness and vulnerability to the wind. I walk over to it slowly and deliberately, making a choice to become aware of how our particular relationship creates an experience. First I stand with the point of my nose only a few inches away from its bark. Immediately the depth of this skin pulls me in. Cavernous canyons of cutaneous growth, layers of chipped cliffs covering a growing core. This arbored articulation is entrancing and mesmerizing. I forget for a moment my own trunk, as the tree narrates its self in pattern and form and shadow and color and the way it lets the wind through its branches to tickle its leaves. Its language is one of presence and movement and cyclical perviousness.

My eyes crescent open, and from this crack I begin to become aware of other eyes upon me. Human eyes, park-goer eyes, that are watching this new romance flare up. What is it about their gaze that remakes me as a singular form for a moment?

I close my eyes again and lean my trunk into the tree's, it accepts me as a dance partner, and I wait to move until I can feel its impulse. The rhythm that emerges is glacial and gluttonous. I fall into the crevices of bark as my fingers trace its texture. I penetrate cambium with a ravenous heart which intimately devours the touch between us. A lick of ecstasy.

Tree, I can feel you so loudly.

So sensuously.

*So fully that cry comes to water us both, to feed the life that flows between our skins and
in.*

We are reverberating buddies.

Exploration: This experience is better had outside, but can be done inside if you are working within limited circumstances. Wherever you are, choose a space or an object that calls you. Don't reflect, just follow your impulse. Move into this place. You can keep your eyes either open or closed. Stay there for some time. And just feel. Wait to move until your partner (the space or object) communicates movement to you.

Entry Point: Image: The Little Boy who Cried Wolf and Became a Wet Newspaper

*Choreography by image, a **Butoh Fu** experience in the memory of Hijikata Tatsumi.*

Getting an image into the body in order to Transform. To dance the dance of Becoming.

I will tell the image story in Hisako's voice. It goes like this:

you are a small boy walking in a forest.

there is a small wind blowing.

you feel the wind on your skin.

in the sky there is sun. coming through the trees.

into the body too. feel where the sun is.

listen to the wind in the trees.

the ground is very

soft.

warmth from the sun.

body is light.

wind becomes stronger, enough to make your body go down to the ground.

hear the sound inside the ground. something is moving.

you are becoming animal. animal fur growing, becoming wolf.

feel on your face the moon rising.

wolf screaming at the moon without sound.

rain coming down. feel its drops. Wet body, heavy on the ground. very very wet. very very wet.

Then becoming a wet newspaper. really wet. really very wet.

then the coming sun makes the newspaper dry.

then the wind comes and blows the newspaper away.



Hisako Horikawa dancing.⁶

⁶ <http://bodyweather.blogspot.com/search/label/Hisako%20Horikawa>

ENCORE:

Fieldnotes: A Bodyweather Workshop Experience with Hisako Horikawa, September 2011, Cave Arts Space, Brooklyn, NY

Day One:

- walking blindfolded in the dance studio (one hour) (*lost my balance a lot as I walked slowly, continued grasping the air with my hands, trying to hold onto the space so as not to lose my balance. Feet shuffling heavily, carefully. I was hesitant to walk with a pace faster than a glacier's. Fear of bumping into things/others. When the exercise was over it was hard for me to come back into the light-filled studio, and talk, and process with others*).
- body stimulations: one person lies on the floor, muscleless. Just oozing into the ground. The other person manipulates and explores her body. Lifting, prodding, rolling, shaking, tapping, massaging any part in any direction with any intensity. The partner being moved must open their bodies to the influence of the other with minimal resistance. (*touch me more, I want to drink you in. I could lie here, being manipulated by you forever. I was able to relax into it, without a desire to control what you did to me.*)
- One person walks blindfolded, her partner leading her. Partner holds her pointer finger out and guides her first to touch her own body, then her partner's body, then the surrounding space. Then level changes and changing body positions are signaled by the partner through the guidance that the pointer finger receives. (*touching my partners body was delectable and yummy. Her body felt like my own. It was familiar. I wanted to jump into her clothes with her. Her hair smelled of coconut shampoo and smoke. The skin under her arms was not taut, but wobbly like a turkey's gobbler. I wanted her to take care of me for the rest of my life. When she put my finger into a crevice in the brick of the back wall of the studio it felt immensely deep. So much information into the tip of my finger felt like an overload. It was vibrating with experience*).

- partner stimulations of different body parts: standing. Partner receiving the stimulation goes with the touch, body follows in an appropriate response to the intensity and direction of the stimulation, and then goes back to neutral. Play between letting go and being in self. opening awareness of body.

Day Two:

- Blindfolded: walking, crawling, crawling backwards, rolling, feeling the space (*zoning out, losing time, I sped up moving forwards and slowed down moving backwards. When I was just feeling the space I was more zoned out of ordinary consciousness, but when I interacted with the space with the specific goal of rolling or crawling I was less zoned out and more aware of my body as an active force*)
- stimulations: with level changes, 3-4 people on one recipient. becoming sensitive to the weather impulses (in the form of people's influences on you) moving through you. Hisako makes sure to remind us to remember any images that come up while we are being moved. (*lying down, one blob, formless. the environment gives you form. once our heads are raised from the floor, the human in us takes shape, consciousness shifts. Becoming more sensitive. Having many hands on me was very exciting! So many things happening at once. I was not able to concentrate on all the changes simultaneously. But it felt invigorating, like my heart was beating with the patter of six hands. Images that came up for me: being tossed underwater wave, bombarded by water and sand, personal: nervous to be picked up, feeling heavy and dead, only concentrating on one sensation at a time. Also: the image of being tickled ceaselessly as a child.*)
- slowly: waking up from the dead after 2,000 years. Body coming to life. Feel all of the movements from small to big come alive through your body. (*joints felt creaky, movement was not gliding and smooth because of the inflection of slowness, but in incremental progressions that popped and stopped, inched into a discernible change in position as I could imagine it in my mind. Could not open my eyes after the experience. I was numb to my everyday self, in another world, unable to speak to others, floating and elsewhere.*)

- moving each other's bodies in a repeated pattern three times. the one moved has to repeat the pattern another three times without muscling the movement. By relaxing while moving. The exercise is about isolating movements and body parts. Finding how the leg moves without stimulating the hip. Finding that the body has many different minds in each of its parts and cells. *(My partner was unable to do this exercise. When I moved her she did not resist. But when she had to repeat the pattern on her own, her physical form showed no signs or traces of movement. I waited for her to move, and thought perhaps she was just moving really slowly. But after sometime I grew impatient and asked her why she was not moving. "I am", she said. "I have been moving the whole time." But I could not detect any change in her position. I think what was happening is that she was holding the image of movement inside of her, but she had not yet learned how to let it communicate through her body. There was a disconnect in the conversation between her inside world and the outside world. (I later found out that she is schizophrenic).)*

Day Three:

- Park on East River: concrete, trees, weeds, buildings. There is a cobble stoned area that surrounds a deep-crimson tower. There is an industrial space, a river, a building wall, and a street that surround the park space in all of its three hundred and sixty degrees. There is a picnic area with benches and tables, a bare spot of earth, a valley full of pipes and weeds, and a blacktop path that takes a tour around the entirety of the very small park. *(So glad we made it outside. I wanted to feel the weather from the landscape, and not just from the impulses I received from partnering stimulations.)*
- standing stimulations with partner: with relaxation: arms, head, hips, each other's heads at same time. *(It was very hard to relax all of my body while standing and maintaining just enough energy to stay upright. It was especially difficult to release my head. My partner knew my body well, though she had only just met me. When she grabbed my head, she grabbed it firmly and began to make circles with it rather assertively. Electricity traveled down from the top of my cervical spine, flaring out into my shoulders. My neck was awakening by this affirmative touch. I began to feel so many currents of energy that had been hidden before. At*

the same time I began to relax, I noticed and judged that I was not yet relaxed enough. Our heads are heavy and we use so much energy holding them up in our daily lives, to work against habit was the task at hand, and ironically it was taking effort to relax.)

- String: leading each other blind: through the string you must communicate to your partner your intended movement, starting off by communicating and directing a change in level, from crouching to tiptoeing on point. How can you give directives through a string? What does it mean not to see? *(I Become more apart of environment because when blindfolded I do not see distinctions, features of things, or facial intentions of my partner. I become engulfed by my own light reflected to my closed eyes through the blindfold. Streams of blue and white beaded lights come toward me through the back of my eyelids. Imaging on the other side of sight. I become the consequence of the other's impulse combined with these images of my internal light. Turing my brain off. letting myself be moved and affected by my partner's intention and by the environment, by the other at the end of the string. Self dissolves into a relationship.)*
- game: first person puts hand out partner tries to hit it with her hand, head, knee, butt. get the blood flowing. It becomes difficult when your partner puts her hand in an unreachable place, and you must jump to hit it with whatever part of your body is the hitter at that particular moment. *(Sometimes when I practice Butoh, or Butoh influenced movement , I get sick of moving glacially. This game got my blood flowing and I felt present and vital and alive, and in touch with my competitive, aggressive self, a part of me which I relish.)*
- standing stimulations: wait until other person moves you. you are not limp, you still have energy in body: little energy, but still energy. So when for example, your partner pushes the inner crease of your elbow into your back space, you do not just relax and flop into it, you allow her impulse to move you, but when she disconnects her touch, you continue to feel the residue of her intention and you slowly let it fade, letting your body flow slowly to its original position. *(Hisako was a stickler for subtly in this exercise. She could see every inch of us that was too much in control, or too little in control. My question is what is it that has the capacity to have control at all, whether too much or too little? She commented that she practices and experiments with movements for at least eight hours per day, in addition to the training that*

she receives from her work on the farm, and that the four hours we are spending each day will give us but a small sip of what could be in store for us if we practiced all the time. The transformations that come over us through this exercise are loudly noticeable to Hisako. I notice them as well in my partner, but in a less glaring way. Tapping into the subtle body).

Day Four:

- Mindbody exercises back and forth across the room. These exercises involve more explicit movement than the stimulations or the blindfolded work which are characterized by their slow, internal character. One sweats during Mindbody work. It softens and warms the body in preparation for deeper work. Many different movements are to be executed quickly and articulately. They are characterized by jumping patterns that integrate foot work with arm work, diagonal lunging patterns that integrate both body halves through crisscrossing, and undulating articulations of isolated body parts from torso to legs to arms to head. The exercises then evolve into a play of becoming. Hisako guides us through several *Butoh Fu* (*images to be held in the body, images that become the impetus of transformation, the linguistic bridge to an Other*). We become animal, a snake, an old man with a long beard with which he writes his name on the flood holding the hand of a little boy while listening to an old small lady on his shoulder, a drunken fish trying to fill his cup, a thin walking line, a balloon, a creature squat-walking with a garden on her head, scratching and tickling the plants, an animal again. (*I am so intrigued by this exercise. I feel endless possibilities of becoming. I can be(come) anything! Infinite creativity. Infinite wildness of weather manifestation. Infinite potential. It is this kind of out-of-the ordinary change that I live for, this high of not having to be a fixed 'self' in a defined form. I become inebriated by this discovery that will allow me to challenge quotidian experience, to break patterns, to awaken to life in a deforming and reforming process. To challenge the every day that keeps us in boxes of identity. To surreally reassign meanings, to recreate things that were once static and dead in their fixity, juxtaposing them into ironic cultural criticisms. The whole world comes alive, and the kind of reinvigoration that takes place makes me think that the whole world has always and forever been more animated than I had been taught to believe by my parents, by my teachers, by my schoolbooks, by my culture. Being offered this embodied opportunity to Become a child again, in the sense*

of being able to see the world anew, remaking relationships with lived experience, makes my daily rigidity melt. I open and become more supple and vulnerable to the world around me. If only we could still taste the residue of our once newborn eyes, our once open bodies, then our world would be a better place. This is the task of the artist. This is the task of the dancer.)

- standing stimulations. We worked through a series of simultaneous stimulations, where two people would simultaneously explore each other's bodies, while trying to relax into the guidance of their partner. We then moved to perform stimulations in a line. The whole group lined up in a conga line formation, whole body to whole body in extreme proximal orientation. Then Hisako directed us to influence each other, stimulate each other with more than just hand-directed manipulation. As a group our hips began moving together, first in figure eights that kept pelvic bowls inline and in touch with each other. Then these figure eights began being performed with changing levels of verticality. Taken to maximum expression, this movement forced the whole group to fall sequentially in a domino effect. Laughing. *(In the stimulation line I both felt fear that the group body could not take care of my body as well as I could on my own. I have an old knee injury that makes me more protective of losing control in a situation like this. But once the group began swaying, I had no choice but to follow. My mind was taken over by group mind. In the first part of the exercise, where we had to simultaneously stimulate each other while standing offered a challenging possibility of both being relaxed and active at the same time, existing in contradiction as a way to open up an interesting possibility of movement.)*
- standing stimulations with one partner. Person being stimulated maintains what Hisako calls a "little energy" in her body. Tension between feeling impulse of the other, responsiveness of one's own body, and a relaxed activation that allows the conversation to develop. *(mind beginning to calm down. Little to say about this standing stimulation that seems to be the exercise that Hisako repeats and repeats in many different ways)*
- Slow movements while sitting in a group circle, cross-legged: Hisako directs us to work on our perception of time by closing our hands, which rest in an open position on our knees, in intervals of 5 mins, 10 mins, 20 mins. She sits with her watch, timing the exercise precisely,

commenting that we should become more sensitive to time. When we are done with this first exercise, we form groups of three and must practice walking towards each other in a gesture of hello that we must agree on as a group. The groups must create a configuration that does not locate its peopled points more than five feet away from each other. The coming together will be timed in a ten minute interval, and the gesture of hello will be performed from the beginning of its expression to the end of its expression during that time. We repeat the attempt twice. *(Amazing how time stretched out and condensed in these exercises. I both felt impatient to know how long I had left in each exercise, but was surprised when Hisako signaled their endings seemingly so quickly after they begun. My group hello was never completed, except by me. I was able to complete the gesture, but too quickly as I felt like ten minutes was not enough time to get close to a full expression. The two others in my group only performed the very beginnings of an indiscernible hello. We were introduced to another aspect of transformation, a temporal dimension).*

Day 5:

- Mindbody exercises again across the floor: Sweating and attempting coordination through diamond walking, reverse diamond walking, diamond walking plus side stepping, diamond walking plus side stepping plus clapping, walking on paper, lying down on the floor rolling with a ball of air in our arms, rolling in a scrunched up child's pose, pointing and turning, RightLeftRightLeft pointing while turning with the spotting of the head...and then becoming an animal and a snake. *(So much sweat and heavy breathing! I can feel a vitality which charges my battery. When I am challenged by an exercise that my body cannot keep up with, I struggle with a judgmental internal disposition that prevents me from reaching the relaxed state I need to develop in order to move beyond that which I think I cannot execute. I notice when I stop thinking about the exercises in an active cerebral critical manner, and begin to manifest how I imagine them to feel like, my body is able to stretch beyond its normal capabilities. The dangers of over-thinking become apparent. At least the kind of over-thinking that comes with cognition localized only in a judgmental mind. I try to open up the other minds of my entire being. Those in my muscles, those in my bones, those in my synovial fluids, those in the space around me.)*

- guided stimulations with teeth breathing, all actions done on the out breath, on the exhale. The person being stimulated is lying down, allowing entrance into her body by the stimulator. The steps are as follows:
 - check relaxation of your partner's bodymind
 - move her hands above her head, her elbows in towards her midline, stretch and pull up
 - press her hands into the floor with your own hands
 - with her elbows inward and overhead, push them towards the floor
 - move her arms perpendicular to her torso in a cross position, put your own hands under her collar bone on her pectorals, at the deepest part of her breathing press down and open her shoulders laterally.
 - press her lower ribs down towards her butt and the floor and press open laterally
 - rotate her hip bones towards her ribs and open laterally.
 - push her toes towards her head, rotate them out and open to touch floor
 - massage her feet
 - check if her arms are relaxed and move her head in freestyle circular movements.
 - press down on the pressure point in her third eye with the mouth of your palm

(This is a highly structured exercise. In a way such precise direction frees one from having to "create" something, or be engaged in an active exploration. But there is discipline involved in remembering the sequence of manipulations. I felt my body becoming more sensitive, as I feel in all styles of manipulation. Awakening the sensuous body in a highly articulated way. Hisako provided more verbal guidance during this exercise, and I realize that her words and images spoken allowed my body to open up to more possibilities. When she said the word 'stretch', my body responded to her speech act by releasing more into the extension that was being enacted on me by my partner. The power of language to affect the body).

- picture frame dances: head theater. we had to imagine that our head was framed, and that we were living a performative photograph of sorts. Our head had to dance and tell a story, gesturing within the confines of this small demarcated space. Our partner was the witness of our head dance. She would verbally comment on what she saw when we were done. Almost like she was giving notes after a rehearsal. *(I remember being flustered by the small space to which I was confined. Like I felt that my head only had a limited articulative style that was*

even more limited give the frame of the experience. However, by the end of this exercise I discovered that this exercise actually forced me into a situation where I could open myself to more creative movement for the very reasons that I also felt limited. The restriction actually opened possibilities. Dancing with a handicap is a good way of finding new and creative solutions to remedy a stifled previously sedimented movement pattern.)

- *Mirroring exercise. Limited to the arms and hands...partner tries to follow the movements of these distal parts as you do them, simultaneously performing them back to you. (so strange to see yourself through someone else's body. or at least to see how they see you through your movements. Or how you look to another person. Or how you look to yourself through an image that is being reflected back to you. The following process was challenging, but once I got into it I noticed myself moving more with my partner, rather than letting her move first and then mimicking her. I was becoming more attuned to her, and was able to stay more in the moment witnessing and experiencing her immediately.)*

Day Six:

- *At the park: Standing stimulations of arms, head, and hips. One on one. Standing actively while easing into a passive manipulated state. (This time doing the exercise I was partnered with Roland. He was a lot less confident about his knowledge of my body than Milvia had been. I was very aware of his hesitation, and then aware of his resistance to my tactile directions especially when I was manipulating his head. His muscular back and shoulders seemed to speak of a daily resistance that had become an embodied habit. When I whispered to him to release, I noticed a subtle relaxation in his presence that actually lightened his body to my touch).*
- *Blindfolded explorations of the park. Undirected and Alone. Your partner is there for protection of your physical body in the space. To avoid any danger that the landscape posed to a body unfamiliar with its layout and scope. Unmediated play. Lack of sight. (In my experience the space became wider and more interesting without having my eyes to help me form it. I was able to approach the environment from a more innocent and vulnerable position. The steps that I took while blind were micro-steps. And the things on my trajectory, in my*

surrounds, seemed to step in to meet me rather than the other way around. My environment became an active participant in my experience. The consciousness that usually associate with sight, a consciousness that can 'see' and guide me in the space was mediated by the fact that I could not have access to it. I had to open my other, bodily eyes to the interactions with the space. With each micro-step, shuffled deliberately and humbly, I wondered what would come to meet me, announcing its presence by grazing my fingers or my leg or grabbing onto the folds in my sweater.)

- slow motions: a group of three people moving slowly in their own specific directions, but relating to each other despite the distance. 15mins. The trajectory is predetermined, and must be performed at a pace that allows its completion in the allotted time. You must observe the spatial relationships to each other, while negotiating the small energies in your body that both propel your progression, but compromise the equilibrium of an upright position held into slow motioned movement. *(I was on a bench on the cobblestoned are that surrounded the red tower at its center. My intention was to stand up and walk to the tower, climbing its base and hugging it, all in 15 mins. I was only able to complete the standing up from the bench and the execution of a few small steps before Hisako sounded out her Okaaayy that signaled the end of the exercise. The others in my group completed even less of their intended trajectories. We were all surprised how short 15minutes was. Came out of the exercise so aware of the micro-movements of my body, but unable to snap into 'reality' time. Perhaps this time is just an illusion, as is the concept of 'reality'.)*
- Voice directed dancing. Sitting down against a wall. One person gives direction verbally to her partner. She must speak four different directives that her partner will perform slowly at the same time, holding her attention on four different actions at the same time. When one is completed, another verbal directive will be given, and so on until Hisako signals the end. *(This exercise was the most frustrating exercise for me. Emotions welled, and for the first time during this workshop I was about to burst. Ready to scream and lash out at my partner, but knowing that I should not, I gulped down my anger. I was pushed beyond the limits of skeletal, muscular, and emotional motion and flexibility. It is extremely difficult to take direction from someone who is giving you a movement series that they don't feel in their own bodies. The*

mechanics of getting out of certain twisted positions that develop as a result of incongruent directives are difficultly understood by someone they are not happening to. My partner gave me a movement combination that was physically challenging, almost impossible for me given the restrictive position in which I started. Against a wall, with my legs folded into my chest. I was shaking, trembling as I forced myself beyond my own structure. For this exercise one would have to really let go of the self, and it was impossible for me in that moment).

- *slow dancing with an object for 10 mins (I chose a folding chair with which to dance. The choreography turned into the process of lifting the chair and trying to open it. I became hyper-aware of the chair and its physical aspects. It saw the plasticity of its plastic, and the scrapes on its metal frame. I felt the difference in temperature between its parts and my hands. It communicated to me the strength which was required of my pull to open it. A moving meditation, a practice in awareness, a relationship that allowed my to blossom into movement, within the confines of the character and disposition of the chair.)*

Day 7:

- *stimulations lying down, two on one. Repetition of same lying down exercises from previous days. (This time experiencing the exercise I was more able to let go of my fear of being picked up. I feel minimally resistant during the exercise, until someone tries to elevate my body off of the floor. Instead of becoming self-conscious about my weight this time, I was able to diminish my resistance. How did I do this? What part of me was relaxing? What is the self in these Bodyweather exercises?)*
- *Standing stimulations, first one on one, then two on one. You must listen to the tactile directions and intensities of two people at one, while yielding to them both, while maintaining little energies in your body. (There is definitely a storm of experience that blows when you must negotiate more than one person's weather at the same time. I felt more played with and manipulated rather than explored. The scene reminds me of a scenario in a Pina Bausch performance, when there are ten men poking and prodding a woman who is inertly and continuously making herself available for their curious intentions to project themselves on her body. It also brings up for me images of rape. Is your body only yours? Where is the origin of*

movement between two people? Is it my body that provokes a particular exploration, or your intentions that form my body through their explorations?)

- slow movements guided by the verbal directives of your partner. She gives four directives at once. This is a repeat of the first exercise of its kind. *(oh no! I thought. Not this exercise again!!! I dreaded the frustration of being forced to move past my limits just because my partner's words said so. I made a pact with myself to breathe into my body, to help it move, to support it with a cushion of inhalation. This approach actually helped me become less frustrated. Breathing into my body: a concept that harkens back to the practice of meditation or yoga. Don't underestimate respiration!)*
- standing stimulations one on one, repeat a couple of times with same partner. *(dreading repetition of the same exercises over and over. But Hisako says that we are working really hard to process the levels of societal mask wearing that our experiences have adopted, to break through to a more subtle body, a more original, authentic, body. I wonder what authenticity means, and if it is actually possible for us to distill into that ideal.)*

Note: I forgot to mention from the beginning but I will highlight that we were always verbally processing each exercise after its completion. *At first I was angry at having to speak and "kill the mood of melding" that I would get into.* We switched/melded the thinking mind/feeling body, and confounded the boundaries between everyday consciousness and something beyond.

Hisako tells us a story about Hijikata: **He was born into farm life. As a baby, he lay in a straw basket in the fields, scrunched up all day while the adults farmed. "Baby cried, no one heard. Baby swallowed tears." When the work day was done on the farm, the baby was taken out of the basket, but he couldn't move his body because he was scrunched up for too long. He was stiff. When he did finally start to move, his movements were slow and disjointed. This was the Birth of Butoh.**

Day Eight

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Day Nine

- standing stimulations with little energy (*my mind is starting to calm down as I experience this meditative relationship*).
- standing stimulations with little energy: before the person moving returns to her original stance, the stimulator gives her another direction. Many motions/stimulations happen at once. Stimulator must dance with person stimulated in the direction toward which he/she gives the stimulation. (*Again we begin to layer a multi-dimensional, multi-origin-al coordinated stimulation-scape onto the relationship of our bodies. Now the relationship of the stimulators body to the stimulated's and to her own intentions is created by the web of interactions. It is not only the person being stimulated who receives the influence of another body. The stimulator herself is visibly affected by the body which she stimulates. They affect each other.*)
- At the Park: On the Rocks next to the East River in bare feet. Slow movements via verbal direction from your partner. Partner sustains your movement in four different directions to be slowly performed simultaneously. (*Shoelessness is my feet's preferred state. They like to feel free and able to touch the ground below. Without shoes, I feel that somehow the connection between me and the earth is stronger and more intimate. I hopped out onto the rocks to look for the perfect place to prop myself and move into the exercise. A cluster of three rocks called me, the larger on which I rested the tail of my coccyx, and the two below on which I distributed the weight of my body via my feet. I dreaded being dictated to. I hated the other exercises based on verbal movement prompts. But somehow, as the exercise progressed I found that negotiating my body on these rocks, via my partner's words, was somehow easier than negotiating my body in the dance studio against the flat planes of the wall and the floor that seemed to be so rigid in their communication. These rocks, and the spaces in between them worked better with the dimensions of my body. Though rocks are usually thought to be hard, I felt their relative pliability and flexibility compared to the built walls of the dance studio.*)

- Slow stimulations by an environmental non-human Other. Each person chose an object or place that called to them. We were instructed by Hisako to wait to hear/feel this new dance partner's intensions/voice, and then to move in response to its forthcoming presence, to its impulses. Feeling the animation of a world once thought to be inanimate. Half of us were to dance and the other half were to watch the interactions from afar. *(I was immediately called to dance with a tree in the picnic area. Without too much second thought I went towards it, in response to its image calling to me. When I arrive at its trunk, I opened my arms into a hug, and draped my body onto its stability. I waited. and waited. And the barked crevices began to reach out towards me. Most strongly at first to my fingertips that fell into its grasp. Rubbing my fingers over the bark made them numb and vibrating. Every detail of every tree cell appeared to me in my relationship. Tree talk. I felt like I was being taken into the crevices. Our conversation shifted when I felt an observing park-goer add the chatter of his gaze into the connection. Feeling this gaze made me lose touch with what the tree was saying. And I was sad, and wanted to obliterate my relationship with all human "understanding" and witness. I wanted to linger in the constancy and tactility of tree tongue. When I had to switch into observing Ximena dance with her partner, a rock of the barrier against the East river, I was taken into the gridded details of her cells, the depth of the hairs on her arm, her whiteness, and the way the rock supported her sacral balance. Dazed and clear that there was more to a tree and a rock than the eyes can see).*

Day Ten

- stimulations/little energy *(A repeat. Hisako tells us we are becoming more subtly transformed).*
- Breathing exchange. One person breathes with differing qualities of wind, and the other has to mimic the quality. Then onto the mirroring of the breaths, one adds voice, emotion, body gesture, and everyday sounds. We can be as strange and creative as you are compelled to be. For example, one could express a breath that ranges from that which flutters lips to a series of staccato exhalations, adding to it groaning, animal gestures, growling, picking your nose, or exaggerating a sad or happy face. Perhaps punctuating it with a surprise scream. *(Finally some comic relief. I laughed so hard during this exercise I felt like my abdominal muscles would contract into a fist tension. Exaggerating everyday noises and gestures welcomed into our*

experience an element of absurdity and grotesqueness. Stretching our habitus into its transformation. Losing grip of the everyday brain washing, and body taming. Wild transmogrification.)

- slow movement vignettes outside on the street, exploring transformation by holding an image in your body (*I stood by a lamppost propped up, with the center of my weight leaning into my sacrum's connection with the metal base of the post. I began moving to conjure up images that readily came to me as I transferred my weight into my frontal space. I imagined that I was inside of a big wedge of swiss cheese, trying not to fall into its holes. As I danced that image in my body, my head began to turn into a cherry and then into an oven mitt. Becoming baked as my dance evolved. So deep so deep I went. I had a hard time coming back from this other world, I had a hard time remembering my own form.*)
- choreography by image. *Butoh Fu*. In Hisako's words, the story goes like this: you are a small boy walking in a forest. there is a small wind blowing. you feel the wind on your skin. in the sky there is sun. coming through the trees. into the body too. feel where the sun is. listen to the wind in the trees. the ground is very soft. warmth from the sun. body is light. wind becomes stronger enough to make your body go down to the ground. hear the sound inside the ground. something is moving. you are becoming animal. animal fur growing, becoming wolf. Feel on your face the moon rising. wolf screaming at the moon without sound. rain coming down. feel its drops. Wet body, heavy on the ground. very very wet. Then becoming a wet newspaper. really wet. then the coming sun makes the newspaper dry. then the wind comes and blows the newspaper away.

GET THE IMAGE INTO BODY TO BECOME SOMETHING (*words, images, bodies, beings, all exchanging the residues of their worlds in an offering of possibility. I am reminded of the time I spent in Mali and Burkina Faso, dancing and conversing with the people of the land, who, in passing, mentioned how some people of the village could transform themselves into animals, magically and essentially. I never knew whether or not they meant this literally, but dancing with Hisako, and experiencing bodyweather, I wonder if it might actually be a possibility.*)

Last Conversation with Hisako: PHILOSOPHY

“Think about your body in daily life. Show these images to yourself first when you dance. Who am I? The body can tell you something. In surrendering to the environment many things coming in...don't be afraid. Maybe this is more deeply yourself. How to find the movement of your dance around you. How you can see you. Inside of body opens with breathing, and changes. Find more space inside.”

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