

Hijikata Tatsumi and the *fūten*: radical engagements with history and belonging in 1968

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In my keynote I propose to consider Hijikata's seminal dance work, *Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Revolt of the Flesh*, within its 1968 context, and as a particularly profound engagement with the "scars" of post-war Japan. Performed at the Japan Youth Hall on October 9-10, 1968, this work is widely regarded as both masterpiece and transition point within butoh scholarship and the art and performance communities. Yet curiously, given its title, there has been comparatively little analysis locating the performance within an at-once global and local 1968, or in the events of that October in particular. Little attention has been paid either to the performance's location on the outskirts of the Shinjuku ward, in a building confiscated and held for nearly nine years by the Occupation forces, and used for the war crimes trial of Admiral Toyoda Soemu (the only defendant to be acquitted in such proceedings).

Rather than reduce the complex performance to such contexts, I propose to consider the work as a mode of constructive and provocative engagement. I argue that the work is site-specific, engaging with the hall and its sponsoring association's history in orchestrating rural youth and locating regional folk dance and musical performance within a national and cultural sphere. Youth and regional culture alike were mobilized for the fascist imperial state and the postwar state, with both centered upon the emperor. Hijikata's performance engages and explodes these associations through the international avant-garde figure of Roman Emperor Heliogabalus, lord of misrule, and through a movement vocabulary of transgressive and exaggerated gesture and sexuality. I also consider Hijikata's continued exploration of an avant-garde practice of *objets* in this moment, and in particular, in relation to other forms of bodily performance and daily practice centered nearby in the areas proximate to Shinjuku Station—including that of the *fūten*, the young idlers lounging about, attracting media fantasies and panics. I consider the performance's dialog with such modes of abjection, emergent identities, and a wider politics of perception in 1968.