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# Wind Daruma

*Hijikata Tatsumi*



1. Tōhoku kabuki keikaku 4 (*Tōhoku Kabuki Project Four*, 1985) choreographed by Hijikata Tatsumi at the Stadio 200 (Studio 200). (Photo by Kamiyana Teijirō)

I've gone and caught a terrible cold, and I bet there are people in the audience too who have colds. It's the first cold I've had in 20 years. With this cold I don't sweat much, either night or day, but my nose runs and when I blow it, my ears are affected. When people around me with colds blow their noses too, they make a snuffling sound. It's like there's a communal society in the neighborhood (*laughs*). Let the same sickness strike and people flock together, it seems. I've thought for a long time that maybe we should give up our delusions about good health and just bring a cold into each neighborhood. People might then get along with each other. But, it's true that a cold can be the start of all kinds of illnesses so you can't be careless.

From talking about colds, I'd like to talk a bit about cold Akita, where I grew up and where a blustery wild wind blows. In Akita, or I should say in all of the Tōhoku district, there's something called a "wind daruma."<sup>1</sup> I'd better explain this a bit. Sometimes when it gusts up north, the snow swirls around and the wind is just incredible. Then a Tōhoku person can get wrapped in the wind that blows from the footpath between the rice paddies to my front door and, garbed in the wind, become a wind daruma standing at the entrance.

The wind daruma goes into the parlor, and that already is *butoh*. I'd like to talk a bit about this idea of a wind daruma.

At first I thought I'd talk about a "gathering of emaciated bodies." I don't know why but people in Tokyo seem to have become madly busy and are always talking about taking care of their health and getting deluded about health. Some people even run mindlessly along the streets. I'd like to measure human beings, and the dimensions of their overly soft lives, with a standard meter-measure of emaciation. There is something odd about health delusions, and that's why I've settled on this lecture topic. I myself have been gathered up by a cold (*laughs*). Because of my cold I guess I can't help talking about these things.

I was worried that there might be something I was forgetting to say about emaciated bodies so I asked Fujii Sadakazu, an acquaintance who lives in Kamakura, if there were any useful chronicles of emaciation. He told me about a book called the *Nihon reii ki* (Japanese Miracle Chronicle)<sup>2</sup> and said I should go buy a copy at the bookstore and read it. But I told him that even if I read it I wouldn't understand it and asked him to write down what he knew about the book and send it to me. I have his note right here and would like to read it to you.

Long, long ago there was a priest named Kyōgai, who wrote the *Nihon reii ki*. This priest had a dream about himself, on the night of March 17th in the year 788. In this dream he had died and piled up firewood to burn his own corpse. His soul stood near his body watching it burn, but the body just did not burn the way he wanted it to. So Kyōgai broke off some branches and skewered his burning body with them, then turned it over and over to burn it up. Then he told other souls who were also burning their bodies to do as he had done. And his legs, knees, joints, arms, head, and all of his body burned up and fell to pieces. Kyōgai's soul spoke out loud, then raised its voice and cried out. But none of the people nearby seemed able to hear. So Kyōgai's soul placed its mouth against one person's ear in an attempt to pass on this last injunction but the person did not answer, probably because he was unable to hear. And Kyōgai wrote this: "Since the souls of the dead have no voices, they are unlikely to hear my cries."

But there's something strange here. Kyōgai didn't write that during his dream, but after he woke from it. Otherwise how could he have written this story down so quickly? My wind daruma is whirled in the wind and comes tripping along the footpath between the paddies thinking all the while about its own bones burning up, just as this priest recorded.

On the one hand there is cremation. But the wind daruma is conducting an aerial burial of its own body, its own soul. Aerial burial and cremation get jumbled together and though the wind daruma tries to shout, its voice gets mingled with the wailing of the wind. Whether the wind daruma is shouting or the wind is wailing, it puffs up bigger and bigger and finally makes its way to my door. How did it feel when it arrived? The story I just told about the priest merges with the wind daruma and lurking there is a condition of an extremely mysterious wind daruma. Even when the wind daruma comes into the parlor it doesn't say much. It flops down by the open hearth. Then for a long time a family member adds charcoal to the fire, without asking it anything either. Whenever I saw something like that when I was a child, I always marveled that though it seemed vaguely weird, it was still somehow familiar. It made me wonder what had actually happened. It's something that happens a lot, like when a checked piece of baggage arrives, then a letter follows it. This is how a wind daruma speaks about what happened to its own body.

"Ō-ō-te-ha."

"Ah, you cried, 'ō-ō.'"

“Byū-byū.”

“Ah, the wind is whistling ‘byū-byū.’”

And I start to understand a little what that “ō-ō-te,” “byū-byū-te,” and “ha” are about, how harsh it was and what kind of a face it had, a face that has looked into the world after death. It had become masklike. It was neither flesh and blood nor was it playing a part in telling a story or relating some piece of fiction; it was a person who had ended up inhabiting a live body, a body that had been reborn at that place. There are, however, different kinds of wind daruma; this is one of the better ones. There are some that come in together, crying “ō-ō-te, byū-byū-te.”

Even in summer people in Tōhoku, when they enter the house, stamp off the snow that gets stuck between the teeth of their wooden sandals [*geta*] during the winter. In summer they make a clatter with their *geta*, but even in summer they are unable to rid themselves of their winter habit. But then summer there is cool; it's a summer that can make you shiver. There's also a time when just the wind comes in; it's a nothing-but-wind daruma. My family ran a *soba*<sup>3</sup> restaurant, and our house had a lot of empty rooms, what with my older brothers being off in the army. Often I was there all alone, which was pretty scary.

Whenever I was all by myself and heard the clatter of *geta* at the entrance or there was any sign that a wind daruma had come in, I would run around the house so it wouldn't know where I was. I'm not sure if this pertains or not to today's talk, but there was a wind daruma, whirled and carried by the wind. Rolled along the footpath between the paddies and burning up its body as it came, the wind daruma was brought to my house. Yes, I think now that I truly got to see something good.

In early spring the wind is something special, blowing over the sloppy, wet mud. Sometimes in early spring I would fall down in the mud and my child's body, pitiful to its core, would gently float there. I try to speak but it's like something has already been spoken. I have the feeling there is a knot of wood, somewhere in my lower abdomen stuck there in the mud, that is screaming something. While in the mud, it occurs to me that I could very well end up being prey. At the same time that this unbearable feeling surfaces in my body, something strange takes shape in the mud. It's as if my body had, from its very core, returned to its starting point. Fallen down in the mud and barely able to move, I see myself with the narrow gaze of a baby whose eyes appear to be awake but are really asleep. And then, a baby's head comes rolling in the mud. Is this strange? I think so. I mean, why would there be a baby's head rolling around there? Anyway, I fool around in the mud with that thing like a baby's head. I don't feel I'm playing; it's more like I just end up doing it. Though I may not be able to explain why that was, it really happened and that's why I can talk about it now. Whether it's a squash blossom fading or a horse getting thin in the face, it all comes down to a tale of the body. As I'm sunk there in the mud, a mouth comes out from the sole of my foot and sucks the mud up from my sole. Tongues of mud appear between my toes and my head and feet go topsy-turvy. These early spring images from my utterly pitiful childhood come to mind, images of turning into a Japanese poplar and being blown in the wind.

I often think about how important the soles of the feet are to Japanese. They walk as if stealing their own footprints. My mom often told me, “Run with the mind of a blind person.” Inside my body even now is this feeling that I grew up with my head and the soles of my feet turned upside down. If you don't do anything else, however, you'll turn into mud. And you can't make do with mud alone. But I can, I know, declare that my *butoh* started



there with what I learned from the mud in early spring, not from anything to do with the performing arts of shrines or temples. I am distinctly aware that I was born of mud and that my movements now have all been built on that.

It's a peculiarity of mine, but I cannot eat crisp rice crackers. I can't stand that crunchy sound they make when you bite into them. I like instead to eat soggy crackers, after steaming them over a kettle to soften them up. I've come to rely on a body in the state of being soggy and soft, like the melancholy folk song "Sado okesa." I also had a strange habit of resting my body in a place where there was no chance of rescue. "Weak brat" is what people in Tōhoku call it. Well, I may be weak but that's because nothing around me has clear contours and that's why I gravitate to mud, to Japanese poplars, and to soggy rice crackers.

The time I'm talking about was, I think, 1933. Apparently the year I was born, newspapers carried articles about the railroad in Manchuria being blown up and Zhang Zuolin being killed and how someone named Hitomi Kinue won something at the Olympics. I looked it up later and that's the kind of time it was. It was a period when the Asian sky was gradually, eerily becoming overcast. In a corner of the earthen-floored room, I was made to eat a piece of half-burnt charcoal, which was supposed to cure children of peevishness. In the past, too, children with worms were often made to eat half-burnt charcoal. The woman who made me eat the charcoal came from a farm. Her body half-turned to smoke, she picked a cucumber from the field and ate it in a corner of the earthen-floored room. Then there was the soot, which came from the cook stove. I wore a kimono tied with an *obi* like that soot. Until I went to school I was never made to wear underwear, which is why my heart always used to thump away, with the pulse of a dog. I became a restless brat. Bored, rattling around the empty rooms of that gloomy soba restaurant, I was possessed by the thought that if I didn't somehow smash up this world, something terrible would happen. That's the kind of thing I now remember. Sleet fell, and I had an awfully monotonous boyhood.

But early spring is the busy season for farmers, and everyone goes out then to work in the paddies. In the houses nearby there's nobody home. In most families, the kids who were two or three were tied to posts in their homes. I would go to sneak a look at these kids, who are fascinating. They move in strange ways, like the ones who make their hands eat something. Being that age, they of course don't consider what strange things they are doing or even that they themselves are human. While I'm engrossed in looking at one of those kids, the mother returns home and says, "So you like children, do you? Well, starting tomorrow don't come around here anymore." She thought I was weird for going around so much to look at those kids, who treated their hands as if they were not their own hands. Their bodies were their own but their hands they treated like things. That's why they probably felt themselves to be "other." They did all kinds of things, like sometimes twisting their ears



2. Hijikata Tatsumi in *Hōsōtan* (*A Story of Small Pox*, 1972) choreographed by Hijikata at the *āto siatā Shinjuku bunka* (Art Theatre Shinjuku Culture). (Photo by Onozuka Makoto)

to pull them off. Though this story sounds totally ridiculous, those movements there later had a far-reaching effect on my butoh. What I learned from those toddlers has greatly influenced my body.

On a somewhat bigger scale, it's a cabinetmaker. A master cabinetmaker can tell the weather better than the weather report. He pays more attention to the weather than a forecaster does. He planes boards everyday and studies the humidity conditions. You can think of an old cabinetmaker as a weather forecaster. But because this old fellow works so hard, he sometimes lets his hands rest, on top of a block. At a quick glance, these hands seem like a plane or another carpenter's tool. They are at once part of his body and not. A carpenter's hands are somehow connected to the hands of that toddler that made its hands eat something. I resolve this connection later in my butoh, but talking about the substance of dance techniques isn't very interesting. When I was involved in doing research in such things, though, I found the following in a certain book: "Some young children give indications of feeding something to their toes, some try to show their calves what is outside the room they are in, and some try to move pebbles in order to show some new scenery to the stones in the garden."

Well, isn't that what I saw? 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. 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 some guys appear, saying "I'm an empty box" and giggling. Some of them say, "We're just like funeral urns" and somehow communication happens. I once became a wicker trunk, which became a bellows that drove each and every one of my organs outside, then played. At the same time, when I saw a horse standing still, I felt like taking a saw to it, or I felt like chopping the river. You can do that, after all, when it's frozen; so go chop the river and fetch it and your body will quickly extend. It's the same with the sky. Think of it as a single plate and you can shatter it. That single plate is a human plate. Smash it and there will probably be some kind of uproar. Such extensions of the body, not necessarily delusions, will wildly increase.

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. "What's happened? Did he die?" 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. It's no longer enough simply to be born from the womb. I am reborn again and again. I make such experiments anywhere at all. In the past everyone had a water jar filled with water. I used to slice at the water in the jar with a sickle. "Stop there, slice!" I would order. How I try somehow to stifle time. It's a blood relation with my butoh, an-

other blood relation, isn't it, that I was registering there. This can't be accomplished by training. My body trains itself as a matter of course. That's why, I often used to say, my butoh is absolutely not a butoh dancer of experience, much less a mastery of butoh. When you come in touch with such things, something is naturally forced out of your body. I often used to say that there's just not enough time to express anything.

Not all my stories are about busy doings like these. A cautious brat who always, always felt that my internal organs were easily tricked, I imitated an idiot, with my mouth gaping wide open. When I then look outside, lots of adults come into my child's line of vision. There is a person walking who is trying to catch up with her body and a man walking who is panting as his body catches up with him. I feverishly look at all. But it also rains a lot. So I sit on the porch and watch the rain splashing down on the cabbage patch. That porch is important. Where does the rain start and where does it end? The surrounding space too gets mixed up in this time of rain with no start and no end, and there is no longer any distinction between time and space. And I wonder if, like the rotting cabbage, I will end up rotten to the core. That is the "ma" that they talk so much about in Japanese *kabuki* dance (*nihon buyō*).<sup>4</sup> That "ma" also rots. I call it "rotting ma." This "rotting ma" is terrible. And I make a quick escape into the closet. Nothing of this could be perceived from without, but I was grappling desperately with these things.

When I made these different things—whether real or not, though in fact all of them did happen—come erect and I thought about them, I was sometimes seized by the notion that one sperm was fluttering down the long hall of a school. A sperm abandoned by rhythm staggered along. When I recall my boyhood self, I shed tears in spite of myself, though not in front of others.

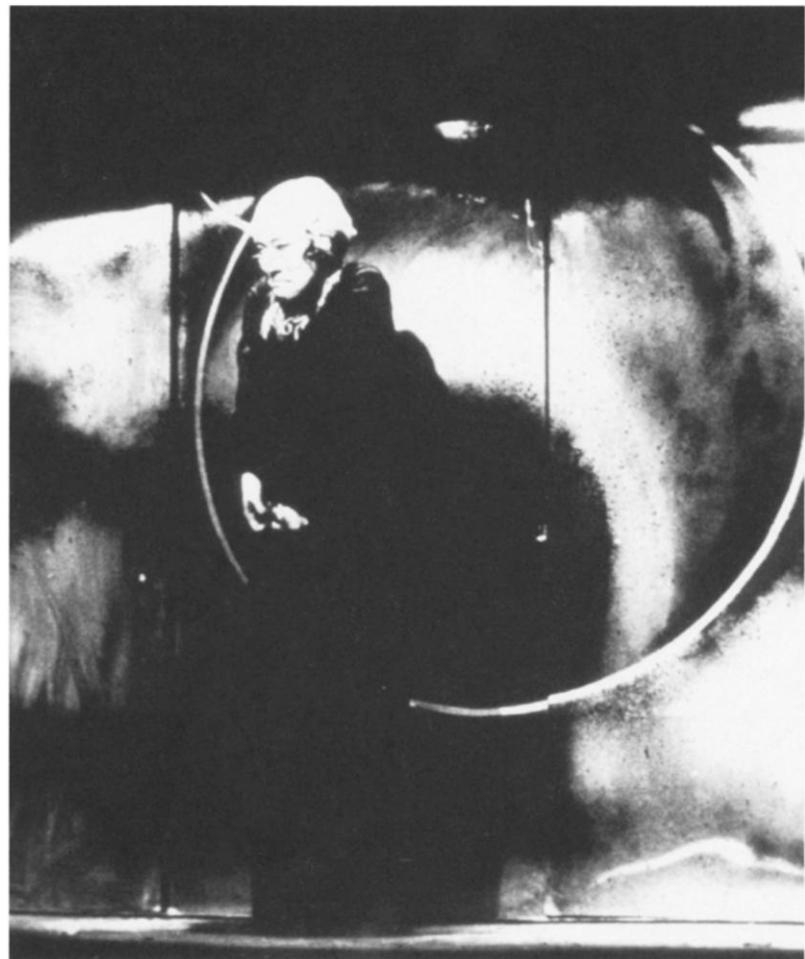
Let me talk about my mom. Well, this is not exactly about my mom. The snow drips down and that's how babies dripped from my mom. Eleven of them. And I was the last. The day after having a baby, my mother was already back in the kitchen, washing dishes. With 11 children, there are lots of older brothers and sisters for me. All my older brothers went into the army. My dad has them drink some *sake* from a sake cup, and maybe he said something like, "Do your best," but I don't really know. Then they all get red from drinking sake. They get that way because they are all such serious big brothers. And when they come back there is sand in funerary urns. They left red and came back sand. Ah, that thing which is form emerges as it disappears; form becomes vivid in disappearing. Not that I was thinking such thoughts at the time. I didn't think them until I came of age. I wonder if my mother thought the same thing. I didn't want to go to school but neither my mom nor dad ever ordered me to go. It was the complete opposite of families today. Anyway, I didn't want to go. I vacillated between going and not going. It was my body that vacillated. So, pulling my knee joints out of place, I sat on the road. Then the plane of my joints, dislocated from the confines of thinking with my head, stretched out wider and wider. Oh, I don't have to go. Saying I'll do this or that, I vacillate; I just need to dislocate my joints; these are the things I was doing.

Because this was the kind of boyhood I had, and because there was nothing else to play at, like a thief I studied the gestures and manners of the neighborhood aunties, my mom and dad, and of course all my other family members. Then I put them all inside my body. Take the neighbor's dog, for instance. Fragmented within my body, its movements and actions became floating rafts. But sometimes these rafts get together and say something, there inside my body. Then they eat the darkness, the most precious food my body has inside it. One time the gestures and movements I had gathered inside my body got

connected to my hands and came out. When I tried to grasp something, the following hand held on to the grasping hand. A hand chasing a hand ends up being a senile hand unable to reach anything. It does not go directly to the thing. That is how the body's made up. It was not that I had discovered the form wherein things are at last reached in a roundabout way. This is quite a bit different from the dance I learned after coming to Tokyo; no one, two, three, one, two, three, going roundabout, sliding meaninglessly in space. This struggle with invisible matter has emerged as one theme inside my body. In the midst of grasping something a hand becomes senile. It happens a lot to old people. And a hand ends up going for something and never coming back. On the way it flickers out. A hand straddles something; a hand disappears. If you listen very carefully, you will understand that I am not necessarily talking nonsense or talking out of desperation. I "gathered" the dogs in the neighborhood and lots of other animals too. I'll tell you something easy to understand. They raise silkworms where I come from. When silkworms feed on leaves there's no end to their munching. And there's a man who grinds his teeth while taking a nap to the sound of the silkworms' munching. Those sounds, of munching and grinding, get linked together. I can hear those sounds: a napping man grinding his teeth and silkworms munching on leaves. Then, his lightweight cotton kimono having lost its color, he wakes from his nap and stands up, all the while grinding his teeth, and goes where the silkworms are munching. The two are connected. When that's the case there's absolutely no need for dance practice. These are the kinds of things I think about.

I would like to make the dead gestures inside my body die one more time and make the dead themselves dead again. I would like to have a person who has already died die over and over inside my body. I may not know death, but it knows me. I often say that I have a sister living inside my body. When I am absorbed in creating a butoh work, she plucks the darkness from my body and eats more than is needed. When she stands up inside my body, I unthinkingly sit down. For me to fall is for her to fall. But there's even more to our relationship than that. She says to me, "You're totally immersed in dance and expression but what you are able to express emerges somehow by not expressing it, don't you think?" Then she quietly disappears. She's my teacher; a dead person is my butoh teacher. You've got to cherish the dead. Because we too, sooner or later, some day far or near, will be summoned, we must make extraordinary preparations while alive not to be panicked when that time comes. You must bring the dead close to yourself and live with them. Everything now is light. When we carry light on our backs, isn't the burden borne on the back of our darkness? That brat has everything his own way, eats the darkness greedily, and scatters the remains everywhere. That's why darkness escapes from the night. There's no darkness to nights anymore. Darkness in the past was translucent. I'd tell this story if there was time for it but no there won't be any time for it.

Let's move the wind to a rice paddy. And that brings up something called an *izume*, a kind of thermal container. It's a basket, woven of rice straw, for keeping rice warm. People put their babies in these baskets and took them along to work in the paddies. They set them down, four or five, in the fields. Of course, the children set down there defecate and urinate and their bottoms get all itchy. But the children are tied in the baskets, which are stuffed with all kinds of things so that they are unable to move, and they bawl. They bawl in this field and that, but no matter how much they carry on, their hard-working dads never give them a glance. These dads have it rough. They labor mysteriously at a labor that is beyond overwork. They labor bent over and that's why they can't look back. But the children bawl endlessly. In the damp open sky a



3. Ashikawa Yōko in  
*Geisen jō no okugata*  
*(Lady on the Whale String,*  
*1976)* choreographed by  
*Hijikata Tatsumi* at *Asbestos Hall*. (Photo courtesy of  
*Keiō gijuku University Art*  
*Center*)

gluttonous wind swallows those children's screams. No matter how they scream, the sound never reaches the working adults. The children's throats swell. Everything before their eyes goes black and they faint. It's like they are sleeping, then waking, then sleeping and waking again. After a time they realize that crying does no good. Then one parched eye floats with a plop in a saucer of tears. Their faces are sticky with tears and mucous. They pick it off and eat it. They are plucking the darkness and eating it. What were the children thinking at that time? I like to imagine, however unlikely, that they may have been thinking what a great big fool the sky was or wondering if they were in a graveyard. Even though the sky is a big fool, the children were placed from the start in a contrivance where their voices would not carry. There they learn to play with their own bodies as toys, they learn to pluck the darkness and eat it. At dusk the children are taken from the baskets. Because their legs are all folded up, they can neither stand nor stretch their legs. The adults stand around them, watching with faint smiles. But the children are solemn. They won't even look at their parents' faces. At that time what was the whereabouts of my folded-up legs? I simply can't talk enough about it.

I don't think this is only a talk about dance. Can even expression, when it reaches the place it set out for, actually accomplish anything? This is the problem contained in the folded legs of those babies and it is transformed, faltering

and stammering, into bowed legs. Foreign people are able to speak smoothly and coherently and dance on graceful legs. Children and working adults, because they have lived and died repeatedly, trot along on two sticks, without bending the joints of their legs. There was a guy, too, with one leg. Children were carried home. You should experiment in living with a dead person. It will add an imperceptible flavor to your life and food. It's pretty good, sprinkle it around.

Ah, is the time up? It's just like a nurse, isn't it? Starting tomorrow, if you look at butoh in such a light you might just be able to understand it pretty well. It was probably hard to follow me because of this cold of mine, but I thank you all very much.

*May 1985*

*Originally printed as "Kaze daruma" in  
Gendaishi techō*

#### *Translators' Notes*

1. A *daruma* is a limbless figure weighted so that it always bounces upright when knocked over. In Japan it is widely believed to be a symbol of persistence leading to eventual success. Daruma is an abbreviation for Bodhidharma, a mythical Middle Eastern priest said to have carried Zen practice and teachings to China about 500 CE.
2. *Nihon rei ki* is a collection of Buddhist fables written between 810-824 CE.
3. Buckwheat noodles.
4. "Ma" refers to the space between. In Japanese dance and music, the word means a resting beat, or a beat in between words which produces an expected rhythm.

4. Hijikata Tatsumi and an unidentified Tōhoku bride at the Harumi Wharf in 1959. (Photo by Hosoe Eikō)



