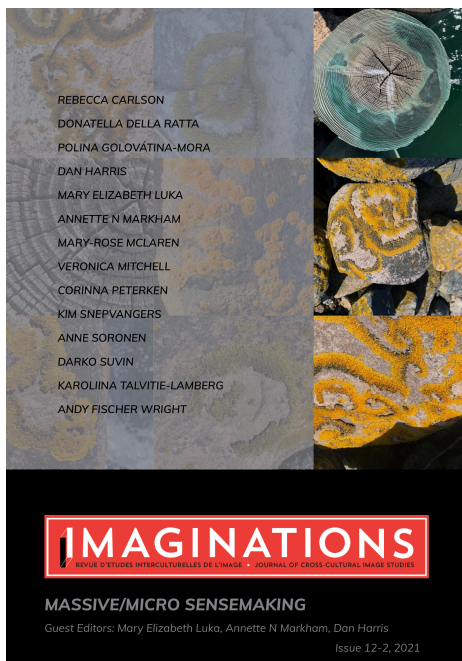


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SATOH'S DANCE OF ANGELS AS A DRAMATURGICAL  
DISCOURSE SEEKING AND DOUBTING THE YOUNG  
GENERATION'S REVOLUTION

DARKO SUVIN



*To the memory of my friends:  
— Yamamoto Gen and Napa  
— Sam Noumoff who impelled the beginning  
— and her that I call Kazuko, sine qua non*

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Reflecting deep societal and personal fissures scarcely visible on the surface, many forms of art may, at their best, foster through their sensual shapes an estranged way of looking at reified power relationships and existential quandaries, thus helping personal and collective subjects to move toward political clarity (cf. Suvin “What”). Such art opposes the pragmatism or fake realism of the powerful and the conformist that, as the great historian E.H. Carr put it, “excludes four things which appear to be essential ingredients of all political thinking: a finite goal, an emotional appeal, a right of moral judgement and a ground for action” (85). The new stance may be elaborated before the political movements, as a prefigurative practice, or it may happen after them, as an echo or unfolding; or indeed, in a most interesting case, during the struggles, as an immanent depth probe or taking stock. This is clearly the case of Satoh Makoto’s Kuro Tendo group in its performance of *Tsubasa o moyasu tenshi-tachi no butō* (*The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Wings* hereafter, *Dance of Angels*).<sup>1</sup> My horizon for evaluating it is of the kind Ernst Bloch described speaking of music: “This world is not that which has already become but that which circulates within it, which [...] is imminent only in future, anxiety, hope” (1088).

In a previous publication for a specific venue with what I now consider to be an unclear horizon of ‘own’ vs. ‘foreign,’ I have written about the dramaturgic discourse of *Dance of Angels* as compared to its triggering factor, Peter Weiss’s *Marat/Sade*, and their differing relations to the central theme of radical revolution. Now, the earlier discourse about the Kuro Tendo, which translates as Black Tent Theatre (hereafter as a rule BTT) play will be enriched by an insistence that this play can be best understood through its most intimate relationship with the great Japanese student and youth rebellion reaching its height in 1969-71.<sup>2</sup> A comparison with Weiss will only be used at the end as a strategic way to appraise and judge Satoh’s play.

To put my cards on the table, my horizon for evaluating this play is to keep in mind the possibility of humanising power relationships

of the kind Ernst Bloch described speaking of music: “This world is not that which has already become but that which circulates within it, which ... is imminent only in future, anxiety, hope.” (1088). I have written much more about the political implications of a dialectics of “possibility”; however, in this essay I shall omit my reservations about Satoh’s sharp notional rejection of Hegel, who insists on determinate division and specific opposition, “until we come out on the other side – a requirement that seems to me to distinguish this dialectic from the more absolute skepticism of deconstruction” (Jameson 85).

I shall begin with a sketch of some aspects of the Japanese *angura* (underground theatre) stance pertinent to my analysis and then discuss the play’s paradigmatics by means of its dramaturgic agents, spaces, and meaning. The syntagmatics of its flow will be indicated by means of pregnant examples within a dialogue with its Japanese audiences in the midst of the youth revolt, without a full blow-by-blow analysis. Finally, I shall draw a conclusion about the values at stake, oriented toward the horizon of revolution.

## 1. THE BLACK TENT THEATRE PLAYS DANCE OF ANGELS



Figure 1: Kuro Tendo (BTT) Stage image from 黒テント  
<https://btt-tokyo.amebaownd.com/>

1.1. In their "Prospectus 1970," the Theatre Center 68/70 announced a three-months' tour of their "mobile theatre caravan" consisting of two 3.5-ton trucks, and sundry other vehicles "[which] will carry our tent, lighting and sound equipment and a company of 35 people around the country" (10). The black vinyl tent (from which the theatre took its later name, Kuro Tendo 68/71) slung between the two trucks produced a mobile enclosed space of 30 x 15 metres and sloping up to seven meters high, seating up to 300 people; another report speaks of a maximum of 800 people, including standing room.

The Prospectus announced the performance of *Dance of Angels* as "a multileveled collage based at center on Peter Weiss's play [*Marat/Sade*] and [borrowing] from [...] a wide variety of political and other writing" (11). The borrowings ranged from the fantastic and surrealist tradition beginning with Lewis Carroll, to modern activist writings, and to Sartrean existentialism. However, this was all inserted into Satoh's Japanese ascendancies and his own idiosyncratic system, so that here reference will only be made to the radical rewrite of Weiss's historiosophic framework, though I shall mention Benjamin when I discuss the "Angels."

An extraordinarily high degree of both theatre information and theatre sophistication permitted Satoh and his group to enter into a critical dialogue with Weiss's play which amounts to a *counter-project*. In an interview with me, Satoh, the driving force in this collective "total theatre," explained:

"Weiss's play had been a model that moved me. However, *Marat/Sade* placed the normal, non-mad words into a situation of madness. The meaning of these words was seen redoubled by madness. The meaning of these words was seen redoubled by madness. The basic idea of Weiss's play is excellent. But the madhouse itself is in Weiss historically determined by the social system of modern times, born in the French Revolution. For the actors in *Marat/Sade* it is the same to play lunatics or politicians; these are just roles seen from the point of view of normality. Our group took dream instead of madness." (Interview with D. Suvin, Dec. 21 1987)

I shall return to the key concept of dream as compared to Weiss's ambiguous madness of history. Clearly, Satoh and Weiss shared the central preoccupation with radical political change to save the world amid the apathy of a majority of citizens. However, the Satoh group also had some central objections to Weiss, spelled out in his "Comment":

"While having everything develop in parallel, I also want our uncertainties, Weiss's uncertainties, to remain alive and to actually appear on stage. [...] [T]o force bourgeois consciousness and proletarian consciousness off to opposite extremities of history [...] is to presuppose salvation through historical dialectic." (21-22)

This final analysis of Satoh's will itself be critically examined in this essay. Nonetheless, it will be taken as the statement of his very original critical sensitivity, which can be queried as to its ideological horizon and consistency but not as to its self-awareness. It developed within the theatre's fundamental feedback between performance and audience that changes both (cf. Suvin, "Performance").

1.2. If *Dance of Angels* is a counter-project to *Marat/Sade*, it is also the (up to that time) most vivid Japanese repudiation of the European-style, naturalist or 'realist,' *shingeki* theatre. Born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of the modernization of Japan, and looking to Ibsen and Stanislavski as its patron saints, *shingeki* appeared to the *angura* theatres of the 1960s generation as not only hopelessly out of touch with their problems but also as a major problem itself, precluding any possible solution. With its closed buildings, organized but safely passive audiences, a vaguely liberal or rosewater-socialist individualist progressivism, and a highly respectable if small niche in the society of the budding 'economic miracle,' it was for the young theatre people analogical to the corrupted father to be overcome in the political psychodrama that unfolded during the Anpo anti-militarist demonstrations of the latter 1960s. This was not fair to radical exceptions such as Senda Koreya's Haiyû-za theatre,<sup>3</sup> nor to the his-

torical achievements and even a possibly useful role of *shingeki*. Yet the claim by the BTT that *shingeki* “has lost its antithetic *élan* [...]”; rather, it has become an institution” (Tsuno, “Tradition” 11; see also his “Biwa” 9) has a solid nucleus of uncomfortable truth about cooptation into the dominant “repressive tolerance.” *Angura* was born repudiating the *shingeki* hallmarks of 19<sup>th</sup>-century psychological realism, with ‘round’ characters and a linear plot, plus the privileged status of hallowed written drama in a permanent theatre venue. To the contrary, *angura* was a ‘poor theatre’ in constant conflict with bureaucratic authorities and their egregious abuse of fire-laws and sanitation codes to prohibit performances. When choosing actors, enthusiasm and commitment outweighed professional training that was very rare; few were paid in cash, working conditions were poor and precarious (cf. Eckersall 41 and *passim*). While words remained important for *angura*, they were in frequent interaction with music, noises (such as the Angels’ motorcycles), dance, and song in fluid and rapidly changing imaginary spaces that emphasised body-centredness. The actor’s body was the same body as in political demonstrations yesterday, it was supposed to be more intelligent than the words it spoke. Youth mobility claimed the freedom so far reserved for businessmen and the jet set; the *angura* poverty and wandering broke out of the loved or hated bourgeois salon of supposedly realist dramaturgy, and its troupe collectivism—though often accompanied by a firm guiding nucleus—broke with actor individualism.

Satoh’s generation had also gone back to the repressed popular culture of the century’s beginning, in part harking back even to some pre-Meiji cultural traditions. The “small theatres” organized around *auteur*-directors, playing in narrow basement rooms, in discos, over coffee-houses, within the precincts of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, or under elevated superhighways, revived some elements of the plebeian—popular or bohemian—theatricality of street entertainers, sideshows, cabaret or vaudeville (cf. on *manzai* Tsurumi, chapter 4), and improvisations, which “had never lost their [...] spark completely” (Buruma 4, cf. Raz 36). The burgeoning popular music in which their generation was immersed was grafted onto that: Satoh’s *Woman Murdered in Oil-Hell* was a rock-musical adaptation of Chika-



matsu's puppet play, and *Dance of Angels* is halfway to a rock musical, with music by four composers, of which the best known was the protesting folk-singer and songwriter Okabayashi Nobuyasu.<sup>4</sup> These theatres had also looked at the re-exhumation of Japanese folklore, often rather theatrical, pioneered by Yanagida Kunio and Origuchi Shinobu, and the attendant photo-albums of archaic feasts and performances.

Finally, the *angura* visual *écriture* was shaped by two major influences. The major graphic influence on the media avidly consumed by the young was Tadanori Yokō—from comics and graffiti through posters and other commercial illustrations to the immensely popular *yakuza* movies; in theatre, surprising conceptualizations of space and lengthy time were first seen in the dance-dramas of Hijikata Tatsu-mi in the 1950s-60s (cf. Richie, also Watanabe). In his wake came the poetic and grotesque drama theatre of Terayama Shūji, and then the generation of younger dramatists and theatre groups, among which Kara Jurō's "Red Tent" and the early phase of Suzuki Tadashi were the most cognate to Satoh's collective. At this time of mass explosion of *manga* in weekly publications and then on TV, the link between comics and activism was well known. Many *manga*, eagerly read by intellectuals and male students, dealt with past peasant revolts and Japanese history, as well as directly with Mao, the Burakumin pariahs, poverty, oppression, class warfare, and the Anpo movement itself (cf. Andrews 129). *Manga*-like bold simplifications and cinematic cuts were, to my mind, a major component of Satoh's style.

From *angura*'s founding gesture, Fukuda Yoshiyuki's *Document No. 1* of 1960, it was not only "played as a parallel discourse to simultaneously occurring events of the protest struggle," it also aspired to be "a process of making theatre from protest, [where] the gap between the human and political dimensions of reality was reduced, and protest activity ideally and symbolically became a form of art and vice versa" (Eckersall 49). While there was no pretence that the stage was reality, reality often became theatricalised; the German Idealist conception of 'two realities,' the low pragmatic and the high artistic one (still observed by *shingeki*), no longer fully applied.

Within this constellation, Satoh and the BTT clearly emerged as the most intelligently political unit, at the extreme anti-militarist pole of the New Left and youth movements of the latter 1960s in which they were deeply involved. As the whole movement, they were also strongly against existing ideological and power hierarchies, thought not without tensions of their own between plebeian impulses from below and their top power group of writers and intellectuals. Satoh himself (born 1943) had since 1966 written a trilogy of short plays and three full-length plays; in the following decades he became one of the most ambitious and sophisticated playwrights, as well as directors and theatre organizers, of Japan. Already in the preceding play *Nezumi Kozō the Rat*, his central preoccupation had been with the coopted failures of plebeian, potentially revolutionary subversion. In *Dance of Angels*, written and performed during the hectic months at the height of the youth revolt, this preoccupation became thematically foregrounded, and the play grew to be not only the culmination of his work so far, but the clearest depth intervention of the whole *angura* wave 1960-71. In this case, the consubstantiality of theatre and youth rebellion took the most interesting form in which a part of the movement being as it were the organ for a criticism of the whole.

## 2. INTERPRETATION: DRAMATURGIC AGENTS AND THEIR SPACETIMES AS METAPHORIC STRUCTURE

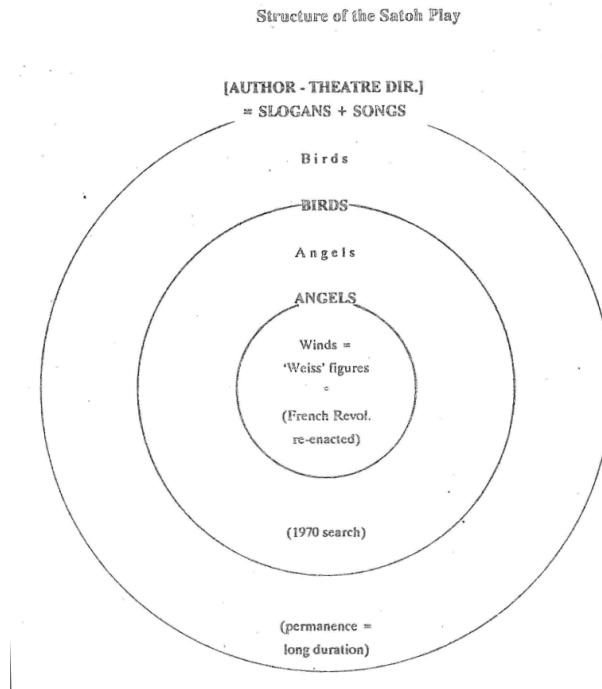


Figure 2: Structure of Satoh's Play.

Satoh's play has a four-level structure. One each is built around his three types of collective dramaturgic agents—Angels, Birds, and Winds—while the fourth level is the 'authorial voice,' or *intentio operis*, as manifested through songs with music, and slogans projected on the screen at the furthest end of the tent.

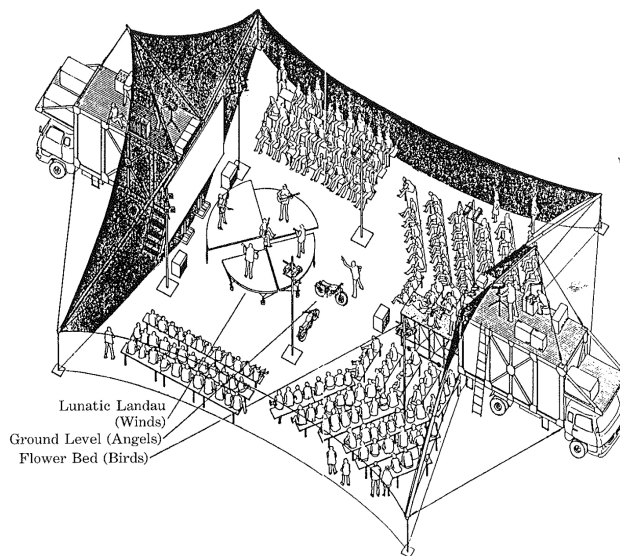


Figure 3: The Dance of Angels who burn Their Own Wings: The Black Tent Theatre as it was arranged for the 1970 production (in Goodman, David G. Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods. Sharpe, 1988, 290).

The imaginary spaces are hierarchical insofar as each has a dominant and a subordinate species: Birds command Angels, and Angels send forth Winds to sound the past; yet the Angels are in rebellion, culminating in the armed insurrection of the diseased Angel Red. The physical space is also carefully tri-partitioned into: 1) a circular area at the further end—as seen from the audience—divided into four movable pie-shaped wedges raised to unequal heights, called *kichigai basha*, “Lunatic Landau,” and housing the Winds; 2) a small high area at the other end, overlooking the rest of the acting and audience space, and called *hana no shindai*, “Flower Bed,” housing the Birds; 3) the ground in between these two spaces, housing the Angels and eventually their motorcycles. Yet the spaces are not rigidly partitioned but elastic; while remaining roughly tied to a given type of dramaturgic agents, they do at some points admit others. In par-

ticular, the Angels are not only spatially but also in terms of plot the central bearers of this play, communicating with and entering into both other spaces. At least as important as fixed architectural space, and probably more so, was the space created around the dramaturgic agents by their looks, gestures, actions, and words. The Angels were dressed in blue jeans with beads until the final scene, when their dress dramatically changes and they sprout white wings. The Birds were in pure white with large wings; they screeched and moved like ungainly birds of prey. The Winds were dressed in rags, they had no wings, and enacted most of the Marat-Sade conflict remaining from Weiss's play. Any interpretation of *Dance of Angels* has to construct the paradigm of the play by finding a meaning for these agential species, and for their relation to each other as well as to the manifest epico-lyrical level of songs and slogans. (Such an interpretation would finally have to be integrated by means of a feedback to the full syntagmatic flow of this ballad-play, which I cannot do here. Let me only note that the flow was immensely appealing in its use of sound and movement interacting with words, yet rather cryptic even for its original audience.)



Figure 4: "The Birds dance before their King." Photo by Mikoshiha Shigeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiha Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*. Photograph n.d.

2.2. None of these three agential signifiers is easy to read; much would depend on the way they are performed. However, the *Winds* are the least difficult. In Japan, an open country that traditionally depended on winds, their power—clearest in the typhoons—is a traditional theme of history (for example, the *kamikaze* or Divine Wind that saved the country from Mongol fleets) while in lyrical poetry from the *wakas* on they have to do with passion. In Satoh's play, the division into Red and Grey Winds is to be read as *empty and self-destructive power*, much akin to the ongoing youth revolt factions. The Winds were for Satoh a swirling tempest "of passion and delusion" (*Dance of Angels* 310), with the foci of bodily, individual passion and self-expression on one hand, and the cerebral, political passion and revolution on the other (the Red and the Grey). They oscillate between collective and individual enactments, so that Sade is principally presented by Red Wind 1 and Marat by Grey Wind 1—the Old Left

colour of blood red for revolution supplanted by the tired grey of abstraction.

The *Angels*: there are heavenly flying beings in the Japanese tradition, and in the science-fictional Astro Boy in *manga* read by most boys between 1952 and 1968, but not really angels as divine messengers. I assume that for the BTT they were suggested by and then re-fashioned from Walter Benjamin. His Angelus Novus (itself strongly reinterpreted from a Klee painting) is the personification of history, swept along by the wind that blows from Paradise, looking backward at a landscape of catastrophically heaping rubble, which is the unfolding past (84-85). The Benjaminian tempest called Progress has caught in the Angel's open wings, it does not allow him to stop and redeem the dead and the rubble; he is carried along in horror backwards toward the future. Satoh's *Dance of Angels* is a blend of the US Hells Angels bikers (already used in his modernisation of Chikamatsu—see Goodman "Satoh" 173-79), popularised as an emblem of counter-cultural youth through US movies, and of an almost Benjaminian sense of agents existing within catastrophic present history and looking for a way out—or a way of making sense—of it.<sup>5</sup> They are "messengers from hell" (Theatre 11), and hell is where the present generation (or indeed the whole people) lives. As compared to the Winds, the Angels are *the doubting and questing aspect of the youth revolt* and the Satoh troupe. A special role is reserved to Angel Red, who will be discussed later.

Finally, and most puzzling, what of the *Birds*—ironically defined in Marcusean terms as "the forces of benevolent repression" ("Theatre" 11)? Clearly, they are the hypostasis of existing social hegemony as experienced by Satoh's New Left sensibility: beautiful on surface but a quite negative power—if themselves beset by problems (cf. also Yamamoto interview). Birds have strong associations to a supernal, not earthbound, power. Possibly, their spacetime and power dominance over the Winds and Angels are a laicisation of Japanese *kami* (*numina*), who are traditionally dangerous (they may be benevolent and/or malevolent) and who, in the tradition derived from one kind of folk theatre, *minzoku geinō*, descend onto the performer (Raz 10-16).

But what are the Birds paradigmatically, within the play? The answer may perhaps be best found if one examines the relationship of the agential spacetime levels to the implied *time-horizons*.

[2.3.] This play is based on a metaphoric or analogical logic, where—in the post-Surrealist tradition—anything may metamorphose into anything else if sufficiently buttressed by connotations brought along by the solicited audience. Within this metamorphic logic, the semi-numinous spaces of theatre (cf. Suvin, “Performance” 15-17) have since Modernism ceased hiding their undoubted links with numinosity. None of this implies religious faith by author or performer: it implies, however, the recognition that major questions of collective salvation have in past human cultures been imaginatively articulated (and also bent) as theological questions. The Japanese cultural and theatrical tradition is perhaps the major enduring case of links with numinosity. Particular spaces or points can even become—indeed, in Esoteric Buddhism the centre of everybody’s being can be reborn into—a purified abode of the divine (Grapard 199, 208, and *passim*).





Figure 5: "Red Wind embraces Red Wind 6" Photo by Mikoshiba Shingeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiba Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*.

As to temporality, I accept David Goodman's analysis that the Angels' position on the ground level—at the end they roar in and then out of the tent—signifies that they are rooted in the same historical spacetime as the audience; in brief, they show forth *historical, goal-oriented time in the present moment*. They come into and go out of the play searching for "the weatherman," inverting the US student revolt song "You don't need a weatherman / To know which way the wind blows," but also connoting its activism. If they do not find a way out of their—and the audience's—hell, they might be condemned to cyclically revolve within it forever (another *topos* of the Japanese

religious tradition). Goodman also rightly notes that the Winds are deputised to present the past. The historical time of the French Revolution—or other analogous revolutions since, most notably the Russian and Chinese ones, as well as of the Second Anpo protest movement—is seen as a dead-end, and this kind of revolution (at least) as past, in all the senses. However, the interaction in which the Angels constantly manipulate, deride, and devalue the already ambiguous enactment of history by the Winds, seems to leave the Angels with no way out either: *historical time as a whole has apparently run into a dead end*. This concept is physically personified in the appearance of the most important dramaturgic agent, Angel Red. He is the only one distinguished from the others (called Angels 1-5) by name, by a half-mask, and by using a drum or trumpet to sometimes function as Weiss' privileged Herald-commentator. Angel Red is thus both “the image of the labyrinthine contradictions of the revolution” (Goodman, “Revolutionary” 119) and, as in Scene Six, suggestive of a helpless *hibakusha* (victim of an atomic bombing, cf. the Fujimoto quote in 3.3). The grotesque half-mask shows him as “the victim of an incurable disease [...] his movements are slow and painful: his gaze wanders aimlessly in space. With the passage of time, his condition will gradually worsen and his [red] spots will increase in number and virulence” (*Dance of Angels* 305).

The events of the play show that the three agential types are both commensurable and different. They are similar insofar as they are all *flying* symbolical fantasy types, derived as much from comic strips of the *Flash Gordon* kind or *manga* as from any ‘high’ tradition (for example, Aristophanes' *The Birds*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, or Modernist poetry). But they are distinguished by *degree of power* and by *historical horizon*. Winds and Angels are (to different degrees) *the ruled*: the Winds are ruled more by their own blind passions than by external dictate of the Angels and Birds, the Angels seem ruled more by the external dictate of the Birds than by their also undoubtedly present confusion. The direction of the Angels' search may be unclear or even wrong, but the necessity of the search for a better climate is nowhere put into question. (Indeed, like the Angels, even the King of the Birds complains constantly that he is cold.)



Figure 6: "Scene Seven: Angel Red is restrained by the Birds" Photo by Mikoshiha Shigeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiha Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*.

However, if there is some clarity as to the orientation of the ruled, the temporal horizon of the rulers is not clearly articulated. Within the play's metaphoric logic, the Birds are the most material and least fantastic beings on a scale on whose other end are the Winds, while the polyvalent Angels are ambiguously in the middle—quite earth-bound as today's biking Hells Angels, quite allegorical or transcendental as seekers for a way out of the hell of our society. Thus, while the Birds can and do order the Angels about as their servants, they are not ontologically different from them, nor are they unreachable godheads. It is most important and revealing that Angel Red can at the end of Scene Seven without any absurdity attempt to assassinate the King of the Birds: the attempt is simply foiled by the guards, in strict parallel to an aborted plebeian revolution. I would therefore dissent from the thesis of Goodman, this play's most meritorious and knowledgeable first interpreter, that the Birds are wholly supernal *numina* or that they dream all the other agents (Eckersall 76). They are probably *homological* to the *kami*, as lungs are to gills or Godot is

to God; but it is dangerous to reduce analogy or homology to identity. Rather than divine or meta-historical, they seem to me an image of a powerful and (in Japan for the last seven centuries) undefeated upper-class hegemony. Their historical horizon is neither the present nor the past but *permanence or duration*: in the BTT's main theoretician Tsuno's discussion with me, he saw it as the cyclical time of ruling tradition—Benjamin's enduring return of the same but apparently new. Thus, Goodman's argument that the King of the Birds is God (Jehovah) seems to me unfounded.<sup>6</sup> That monarch has instead, to my mind, connotations of an ideal-type Emperor (*tennō*), and Tsuno agreed with that: "We [BTT] hated such a recurrence and cast about for ways of destroying it." If so, it would be strange if Satoh (whose play *Nezumi Kozō* is a ferocious attack on tennoism) were to agree that the Emperor is divine, ontologically different from the struggling and fallible people represented in *Winds and Angels*. No ontology need be: the knife bites into the Birds, the tea of the Mad Hatter's party—or of the tea-ceremony—feeds them, nor do they lack politico-existential problems (the motif of "who's that behind me?"). They are not necessarily eternal or divine, nor are they more immaterial than either *Winds* or *Angels*, they are simply—but very weightily—*long-duration upper-class power*.

2.4. In this interpretation, at the end of the play the future is epistemologically unclear but ontologically open (while oppression by supernatural powers would have implied the pre-established closure of classical tragedy). The *future is, as always, contingent*: as Aristotle put it, "it is not necessary that [a sea battle] should take place tomorrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place, yet it is necessary that it either should or should not take place tomorrow" (182). The revolutionary past is seen as an awful mistake and failure; the present is so far also a misleading failure. Pessimism dominates, but nothing is forever predetermined. At the end, after a full annihilation of the *Winds* and the abortive rebellion of Angel Red: "One entire side of the tent suddenly opens onto the outside world. The Angels come roaring out of the distance on their motorcycles and drive into

the tent in a cloud of exhaust smoke and dust. They are clothed completely in white” (*Dance of Angels* 344). They dance and sing “The Lunatic Landau Rock.” Since that Lunatic Landau (*kichigai basha*), derived from Weiss’ Lunatic Asylum (*kichigai*), had been the scene of the total collapse of the Winds playing at Marat and Sade; since that energetic song is “an unabashed paean to youthful optimism” (Goodman, “Satoh” 270); and since—as their final gesture—Angel 1 picks up Angel Red’s dropped knife, a clear impression arises that a battle has been lost but the undecided war goes on.

Yet, finally, the play remains ambiguous: the “audience ‘release’ is then in its turn cancelled” by “a return to our miserable reality and to the beginning of the play” (Satoh, Interview), symbolised by its first and last slogan “THIS IS A DREAM,” now “flash[ing] on and off” while the company sings the highly ambiguous final song “So Long For Now” (*Dance of Angels* 344-45). The play as a whole clearly shows forth not only a painful contingent defeat but also the collapse of the myth and horizon of predetermined, linear progression toward revolution, shared in Satoh’s spacetime by the Old and the New Left. Their kind of struggle, linked with collective and/or individual terrorism, cannot be won. For Satoh, “The play has two aspects: 1/ writing it meant we [the BTT] didn’t go out and throw bombs, which we probably would have done otherwise; 2/ it was designed to overcome our socio-political situation or condition” (Satoh, Interview). If the Angels, still waiting for an updated Carrollian “weatherman rabbit” (*Dance of Angels* 344), have learned nothing from the experience with the Winds, defeats will go on. This is possible, but remains to be seen.

### 3. REVOLUTION, DRAMATURGY, AND A HISTORICAL LESSON

Finally, what is the historical lesson to be drawn from *Dance of Angels*?

#### 3.1. Disalienation and Politics: The Involution of Revolution

My horizon is one of human creativity as emancipation, a disalienation that pivots upon self-determination and self-government leading to direct democracy. I would argue that to a large extent “the movement for ‘student power’ [...] is a natural descendant of [the revolutionary tradition of workers’ councils]” (Stedman Jones 52). I have come to some insights about that tradition in a book diagnosing ‘socialist’ Yugoslavia, and I briefly present here what may be of general validity (see much more in Suvin, *Splendour* 298-317 and *passim*). Matters of political economics, power, class conflicts or regroupings, and ideology are to my mind *means* of human liberation, an exodus from bondage. As Marx told us once and for all, the titanic forces of production called up by capitalism are fettered by political power relationships, which are in the age of world wars increasingly enforced by the capillary State in the service of by now mainly destructive capital. Very simply, capital means the power of command over labour and its products, wrote Marx in many variants (for example *Capital 1*, chapter 11): the emancipation of labour, the disalienation of our lives, means that *labour commands itself*. All of us proletarians, living from our work, associate to command ourselves. The horizon to be striven for may also be defined as freedom as creativity (cf. Kosik 67-68 and 124-25)—that is, *a marriage of work and poetry*.

The insurgent youth of the 1968 moment thus to my mind rightly felt that spontaneous plebeian democracy is the only way to counteract not only the deep physical misery of the manual workers, but also the “moral and civic” misery of all those working within authoritarian and hierarchical organisations (Supek 139 and *passim*). The concept of self-management, in French *autogestion*, was the only

one that could link the New Left goals of self-realisation and direct democracy in collective decisions, new lifestyles, and new ways of exercising power with minimum or no violence (cf. for Europe Gilcher-Holtey 120). Here we cannot do without the lesson of Gramsci (cf. Suvin, “Communism”). To him, politics is “the central human activity, the means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world,” since in it “understanding the world and changing it are one”; and this applies to revolutionary attempts at liberty and solidarity as well as – perhaps more than – anywhere else (Hobsbawm 321). Yet just here the Left had largely got mired into a malignant mutation: Stalinism as a structure of feeling—which was, as argued earlier, for Satoh and some of the factions a lay analogy to tennoism. Its belief in necessary progress was by Gramsci scathingly called a “[fatalistic] ideological aroma [...] rather like religion or drugs” (*Selections* 336). Stalinism’s monolithic centralism, with one-way traffic from top to bottom, is a parody of Marxism and communism, or their perfectly alienated form (cf. Petrović, *U potrazi* 219 and “Humanism” 2-3). This inner organisation of the increasingly restrictive Party and its State was, as Mladen Lazić wittily notes, an image and allegory of the very structure of a new oligarchy as a new collective ruling class (42; cf. also at length in Suvin *Splendour, Lessons*, and “Communism”). Monolithism abhors supple mediations and leads to despotic suppression of contradictions, and simultaneously to ad hoc compromises trampling on principles.

Thus all revolutionary situations of the half century after Lenin’s death have been caught in what I have analysed in *Splendour* chapter 6 as the central communist contradiction of emancipative disalienation and power alienation. Examples of this abound in the Japanese 1968 moment, where the youth factions’ refusal of Stalinism and of the very partial Leninism in the Comintern tradition was organisationally constitutive but ideologically only partial. As Stalin liked to recall, his type of party was in some ways an army (see Suvin, *Splendour* 306); as he did not say but practiced, it was also a Church. This salvational monolithism was bequeathed to the Third International and all of its parties. Problems of a group intervening into politics as if it were an army with a Church core, and a double mystique of mil-

itancy and triumphalism, were to return with a vengeance in most 20<sup>th</sup>-century revolutionary situations and movements.

Yet any such self-proclaimed vanguard party aiming to conquer State power faces at least two initial problems. First, knowledge of the real contradictions in and around it cannot be arrived at without free debate with all groups of people working to clarify them, which debate the clerical pretence of party omniscience tends to stifle. To the contrary, it is essential to dismantle the trinitarian monster State-Party-Ideology (cf. Althusser 122), especially pernicious when official theory is supposed to be identical to reality, as in Borges's story "On Exactitude in Science," where map becomes territory. This would include expunging from any vanguard party all traces of a monotheist Church as guardian of a static Truth and inquisitor into heresies. Knowledge and learning wilt under authoritarian methods, but quicken and thrive in a polyphony of voices, a comradely competition. Second, the militarism within "the [Party] organising structures, copying those of the [bourgeois] State" (Althusser 123), led to very costly mistakes, and to a souring and haemorrhage of often the best activists. To paraphrase Marx's *Thesis* 3, the educators have to be educated.

Satoh and his group's nucleus knew most of this well: all shades of the then current youth movement abhorred Stalinism, many sympathised with a spread between existentialism and Trotsky.. It is this syndrome in the youth movement, and especially its activist factions, that *Dance of Angels* aims to articulate and unfold as to its possibilities and costs. It does so more in lyrical suggestions and a not fully clear allegory about revolt and power than in what Satoh called "to make straightforward statements about those things to which straightforward statements are inappropriate" ("Comment" 21). This is why he refused what he—I think not quite rightly—saw as Peter Weiss's progressivist pseudo-dialectics of an upward march of history, within which problems such as the personal vs. the political, or indeed killing in the service of higher aims, can be justified. Symmetrically opposed, in Satoh's play not only do all of Weiss's protagonists, exemplifying the varying shades of revolution (Marat, Sade,



and Corday), fail and meet a nonsensical death, but all these figures become faceless Grey or Red Winds. At the first culmination of their debate, in Scene Two of *Dance of Angels*, Sade seduces Marat into a homosexual anal penetration during the latter's frenzied revolutionary speech: the violent mockery of the gap between saying and doing is what Satoh somewhat defensively called a "physicalisation" that devalued both ideology and all surface realism. As he put it to me,

"The words 'history,' 'revolution': such concepts do not fit the [Japanese protest] events. The New Left is in this respect identical to the Old Left, their action was different but they use the same words; the New Left does not have its own, new words."  
("Interview")

Thus he had a problem of scenic *écriture*, and invented his whole new grunge outlook based on strange and estranged dramaturgic agents.

Refusing the importance of Weiss's opposition between political and sexual revolutionary, the very notion of revolution—its character and components—is being unpacked for behavioural inspection: perhaps sex and revolution can fuse, but only in sterile frenzy that is nonetheless a kind of suicidal self-affirmation? It would then be a collective cousin of, say, Ōshima's *Ai no korīda* (*Empire of Senses*) movie, within a frequent Japanese equation of eroticism with death, and Satoh wrote in 1973 a play on this famous story, *Abe Sada: A Comedy*. This equation seems also to have been a dark undercurrent of the New Left structure of feeling at least in France, from Sade to Bataille, Genet, and the very Parisian Weiss, collapsing Eros and Thanatos (on that tradition in theatre and France, cf. Gritzner ed.).

### 3.2. The Audience, Japanese Passive Dreaming

In Satoh's ideological debate with Weiss, he opposed his central vision or macro-metaphor of *dream* to the German's *madhouse*. If the play was not only for the necessary personal and group self-understanding, who was the play ideally for and who really interacted with it as audience? The play was being written in 1969, at the height of

the protest movement in the universities, and it toured, being constantly adjusted by Satoh, from October 1970 to January 1971, immediately after this highest wave. It was written mainly for the potential young audience, generally under 30 years old (see Yamamoto, "Interview," and Yoshida), many of whom were still engaged at Sanrizuka or in violent city and university conflicts. In places, it adopted some of the protest modes, such as yelling slogans through a microphone. Tsuno and Yamamoto believed the number of *Dance of Angels* performances was around 45 in 1970 and around 20 in 1971; in 1970 the play was in repertoire for about four months, with two major stretches of playing every day and two major intervals of pause. The number of spectators at a performance varied between 20 and 400 with an average of around 200, or perhaps a total of 13,000 spectators. The young audience consisted of: 1) those who enjoyed the rock-music atmosphere, sometimes joined by famous jazz or rock singers; 2) a better informed and more intellectual group with a very strong interest in all kinds of cultural novelty (music, theatre, movies); 3) finally, those interested in politics, except that at the time this included a cultural revolution (Tsuno, "Interview"). To the rebels the play said *tua res agitur*: What is the sense of your struggles? Can you win? Are they really pure as the activist factions believe? What time-horizon of the population as a whole are you acting within, favourable or unfavourable to our project of radical change?

David Goodman puts it precisely:

"Instead of Peter Weiss's question, "Marat or Sade?" the question raised by Satoh and his coauthors is, "If not Marat-Sade, then what?" If revolution conceived along the lines of the French model cannot be accepted, then how is revolution to be conceived? Is it really a possibility? [...] One of the things that made *The Dance of Angels* an intense theatrical experience, bringing thousands of people out into the bitter cold of winter nights to sit for nearly four hours in an unheated tent, was the way this general philosophical theme was taken up as an urgent issue for the theatre." ("Dance" 293)

A most revealing event occurred when the Chûkaku faction invited the BTT to participate in a rally-meeting of theirs at Hibiya Park, as recounted to me:

“There the first song of *Dance of the Angels*,” “The Ballad of Fallen Birds,” was sung. Also, the Kuro Tento joined with “Brain Police,” a radical anarchist rock-group who sang the “Song of the Red Army Soldier” (derived from the young, anarchist Brecht and meant there for [quite a different] Red Army of the 20s but in Japan applicable to the faction just developing then). The songs were severely criticized by the Chûkaku students (in fact fist-fights broke out at the meeting) on two levels: 1) we are fighting by putting our bodies on the line, while you (the Kuro Tento) are only singing and dancing (this mainly about the *Dance of the Angels* song); 2) you are being ironical about the revolution (about both songs).

The Kuro Tento felt that a revolution should be new, they were simultaneously denying and renewing the concept of revolution. The denial was what angered the Chûkaku faction.” (Tsuno, “Interview”)

“I should add this is one retrospective and incomplete account. Another eyewitness wrote me he saw no fistfights but vigorous and invigorating plebeian arguing on important matters between stage and audience” (Lummis, e-mail to DS of Aug. 30, 2021).

The play’s moment of intervention was well chosen. In retrospect it seems clear, just as the Satoh group suspected, that by roughly 1970 the Japanese New Left, because of “repression, fatigue and disillusionment” (McCormack 133), ceased animating a broadly based militant movement and became navel-gazing. The activist factions decayed to isolated *groupuscules*, not rarely to proactive violence including mutual murders; its eventual culmination in the so-called Japanese Red Army internal murders and the Antijapanese Front turn to terrorism, which fully internalised the murderous tennōist and Stalinist time horizon, came to confirm Satoh’s doubts in spades. They marked the sorry end of this youth movement, dovetailing with

the consumerist “thoroughgoing depoliticizing effect” of anticipating the benefits of prosperity, however limited (Marotti, *Money* 312) after the first Anpo protest wave.

Thus, Satoh’s creativity was extremely sensitive, indeed clairvoyant, about nuances in his generation’s structure of feeling and imagination; but he was not much interested in a cause-and-effect story with identifiable real existents. Since in his experience events in the phenomenal world did not lead to significant changes, it is ontologically and moreover ethically devalued: only the corrupt *shingeki* and other commercialised enterprises delve into such ‘realistic’ nuances. Individual dreams or nightmares of groups within the collective stupor of the Japanese national imagination or subconscious provide two circles in this descending vortex. They can be seen as corresponding to the Angels under the Birds. It only remains for some Angels—deputised by the BTT—to stage a ‘thought experiment’ using Weiss’s play, as one dissects a corpse’s organs to find the cause of its demise, in order to envisage and perhaps exorcise a similar fate for oneself, and we have the three agential levels of *Dance of Angels*. Adding to this an ironic self-reflection in the lyric mode (rock songs) and epic mode (slogans projected on the screen) completes the whole Chinese-box structure of this play.

### 3.3. Final Questions for Satoh’s Play

Before the tour, the BTT “Prospectus 1970” (see Theatre) noted bitterly: “...we have crumpled, dusty plans for revolutions of varying proportions stuffed away in the secret corners of our minds. But we have been atomic-bombed and nothing changed. We have been occupied by a foreign army and nothing changed. We have organized demonstrations of literally millions of our citizens and nothing changed” (10). Japanese history after 1945 looked to them shipwrecked on the rock of a hugely inert popular imagination. Thence the central macro-metaphor of *dream*. In the interview with me, Satoh concluded:

"If one wanted to catch, if one could translate, the Japanese youth movement at the time, it would be a dream and not madness. Dream has no linear time, only a present: everything is simultaneous. As for me, when I directed the play, I found the Red Angel dreams most deeply. Weiss asks "Who is right?"; we ask "Who dreams most deeply?" At the time, we felt that dream and consciousness are not opposed concepts."

This thumbnail sketch of Japanese history 1945-70 in terms of an overwhelmingly stagnant popular imagination underlying any seemingly significant surface changes is confirmed in a scene of Satoh's *Nezumi Kozō* play, the predecessor to *Dance of the Angels*, alluding to Hiroshima with the ironical title of "Dream." All the major BTT ideologues agreed with this notion (cf. Tsuno, "Of Baths" 142-43, or Yamamoto, "World" 218). The dead end is conveyed by Fujimoto, when she notes that neither two atomic bombs nor "modernisation" have changed

"the dreaming habits of the Japanese people. It is for this reason that [BTT] drove so relentlessly through the 'causeway of dreams' toward an answer to the question of just exactly who we are [...] [Today], the fact that there was a war and the fact that it ended with the dropping of the atomic bomb have all but been forgotten. [...] For us, history is neither repetitive nor evolutionary [...] [It] only represents a bad dream soon to be forgotten. [...] [We] remain in eternal pursuit of our own, individual dreams. Then those dreams called nightmares are really dreams within a dream, and nothing has ever happened. But really?" (140-41)

Satoh's overarching metaphor of dream seems to me here to be oscillating between a characterisation of Japanese political ontology as such, and of the youth movement's general failure to awaken the people. It is thus a fairly loose epistemological metaphor—similar to Joyce's Stephen Dedalus exclaiming that history is a nightmare, but now without a possibility of waking up—rather than a rigid ontological denominator (for its tradition cf. Righter). Not by chance "dream" is also by far the most popular and abused word in Japanese popu-

lar sentimental songs (Minami 119), and probably also in the theatre, from Nō plays to *angura*.

The final question for Satoh was, then, whether the *kairos* or messianic time of a Revolution now sick unto death (the Red Angel) could be reconciled to the dreaming Japanese time of eternal return, the “*tennō* time [that] can organize both the depths and the surface of history” (Tsuno, “Interview”).

The vision of Weiss’s *Marat/Sade* (see Suvin, “Weiss’s”) is one of an arrested and at that epoch defeated revolution—though still supremely necessary and never quite given up for lost. The nihilist Sade directs the play in an asylum and the activist Marat sits in a bloody bathtub with skin disease; the bourgeoisie is in power and reason has failed to change reality. The revolution has failed because it was happening in a madhouse-cum-prison world, and we are left with a blend where a post-mortem psychodrama dominates over tenuous, if still existing, expectations of future revolt. Satoh took over Weiss’s thematics, expanded his syntactics of circles within a circle, but everted his semantics. As he put it: “our emotion for the Red Angel provides the main energy of the play; it is also a goodbye to the Red Angel” (Satoh, “Interview”). And further: “We tried to join the European concept of revolution as linear break to the concept of the circle from which they [the Angels] strive to be released; but nobody can be released.” Half a dozen years later, amid the failing of a greater political upheaval in a country of stronger ‘dreaminess’ than Germany or England, Satoh had even fewer certainties and lower hope than Weiss, but perhaps more experience and patience for a long analysis of such a waning. His summation was: “1970 was the year when the traditional Old Left in Japan expired. It was also [Satoh says he understands this now, in retrospect from 1987] the beginning of the end of the New Left” (ibid.).

#### 4. IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION: A FINAL QUESTION FOR US

To conclude this survey, leaving it open for further discussion: the old Hegelian and Marxist problem of how to reconcile the arrow and the circle into the contradictory but not arrested spiral of historical

advancement towards humanisation remained before the Black Tent Theatre. The problem was inherent in this group's very constitution and whole development, in the form of the tension between the furthest horizon of Marxian self-government and the role of a charismatic leader.<sup>7</sup> It remained with Peter Weiss too, from *The Investigation* through *Hölderlin* to his final *Aesthetics of Resistance*. And the problem remains for all of us between the violence and the performance of words: not as archive, but as assignment and horizon of work towards a self-production of embodied and efficacious subjecthood, personal and collective. In which, as Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach has it, there would be "a coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity."

This analysis thus needs arrives at the crucial problem of "Words and Violence" (the well-chosen title of the Leiden workshop on 1968 for which this essay was redone): the ruling Powers-that-Be, pivoting on the State apparatus, imply a huge and repetitive use of word formulae *insofar as the Word guides latent or patent Violence* (cf. Lefebvre 72 and *passim*). It is characteristic of such apparatuses in all of the many States in which revolts happened during the 1968 moment, that none has so far even attempted to publicly draw a fair and respectful account of them. Whoever wishes to contest them, must find new, liberating formulae in the wake of 1968 to spark the dissident imagination. At its best, the art of a Peter Weiss, Satoh Mākoto, or Akasegawa Genpei (as explained in the brilliant book by Marotti), is here a portable *exemplum* of how to avoid both brutality for its own sake—which would mean capitulating to the rulers' stance and dogmatism—and 'weak thought' words bereft of political force and power. The first avoidance seems to me best formulated in the slogan of the Chūkaku and Kakumaru factions: *hanteikokushugi, hansutārinshugi* (against imperialism and against Stalinism), which we should try to actualise for our times. Here the concept of counter-violence as legitimate self-defence might be the key one.

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## IMAGE NOTES

Cover Image: Kôga Hirano. *The Dance of Angels who Burn Their Wings*. Poster (offset lithograph on paper), 1970. Image available at [https://www.si.edu/object/dance-angels-who-burn-their-wings%3Aachndm\\_1995-104-2](https://www.si.edu/object/dance-angels-who-burn-their-wings%3Aachndm_1995-104-2).

Figure 1: Kuro Tendo (BTT) Stage image from 黒テント. Image available at <https://btt-tokyo.amebaownd.com/>.

Figure 2: Drawing of the relations of Satoh's play (D. Suvin).

Figure 3: The Dance of Angels who burn Their Own Wings: The Black Tent Theatre as it was arranged for the 1970 production in Goodman, David G. *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods*. Sharpe, 1988, 290.

Figure 4: "The Birds dance before their King." Photo by Mikoshiha Shigeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiha Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*. Photograph n.d.

Figure 5: "Scene Six: Red Wind embraces Red Wind 6" Photo by Mikoshiha Shingeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiha Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*.

Figure 6: "Scene Seven: Angel Red is restrained by the Birds" Photo by Mikoshiha Shigeru in David G. Goodman. *The Return of the Gods: Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*. Cornell, 2010. Cover image credit: Mikoshiha Shigeru, *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings*.

## NOTES

1. The play as written and performed is hereafter cited as *Dance of Angels* from the second translation by David G. Goodman in his 1988 book. It was written by four of the Center's playwrights, Satoh Makoto, Yamamoto Kiyokazu, Katō Tadashi, and Saitō Ren, but with an overall plan by the first two and with the lion's share of writing, final integration, performance direction, and a large number of rewritings by Satoh. The Kuro Tendo 68/71 theatre group is further referred to as BTT.

I do not propose here to enter into a discussion of the very frequent uses of prior texts in writing the play. They range from Lewis Carroll, Dostoevsky, and *Maldoror* to modern activist and rebellious writings, dramatic and other (LeRoi Jones's novel *Dante's Hell*, Brecht, Trotsky, etc.), as well as to Sartrean existentialism (well known in Japan and to Satoh's group—cf. Goodman, "Post-Shingeki") and contemporary poetry.

I mentioned in a prior essay (see note 2 below) the excellent knowledge the Satoh group had of *Marat/Sade* (cf. the Yamamoto interview). However, I believe they much underrated that play's complexities and ambiguities, which I discuss at length in Suvin, "Weiss's." They mentioned Weiss's uncertainties, but for their own legitimate purposes they made out of him a strawman believing in predetermined Hegelian dialectics within linear history and "forc[ing] bourgeois consciousness and proletarian consciousness off to opposite extremities of history" (see section 1.1), which Weiss's agonising confrontation between Marat and Sade in my opinion cannot be made to bear. In other words, Satoh and his collaborators were political dissidents against the ruling culture and power but rather on the youth anarchist side within the spectrum of salvational politics.↵

2. It can be found in Suvin, "Satoh's." However, this essay was edited without consulting me: in particular, the whole system of notes and reference has been changed, with many mistakes in names and titles. Outside of this aspect, that publication should now be considered superseded.↵
3. Senda, in whose school Satoh trained, went between the wars through the Proletarian Theatre movement and its repression; he became a not uncritical supporter of BTT. I had the privilege to meet and discuss with him often those years in Tokyo, cf. Suvin "Brief."↵

4. Cf. Yamamoto, "Letter." On music in the European youth protest movement (heavily influenced by US products) see Detlef Siegfried in Klimke-Scharloth eds. 57-70. It was consubstantial with independent spending money of a young generation with extended education years, and in a permanent quandary between 'authenticity' and culture-industry consumerism.

Brandon makes an interesting claim for the Japanese avant-garde theatre's use of imagery and techniques from *nō*, *kyōgen*, *bunraku*, and *kabuki*, but I would say these were strictly subordinated to their purposes.←

5. It seems Satoh himself had not read Benjamin until 1971 (Goodman, "Satoh" 355-56), when he recognised the kinship. However, at least two of Satoh's most intimate collaborators, Yamamoto Kiyokazu and Tsuno Kaitarō, had read Benjamin by 1969; the authors' collective had used for *Dance of Angels* Benjamin's reflections in "On the Critique of Violence" which Yamamoto had read ("Interview"). No doubt, Satoh's early exposure to Christianity (Goodman, "Satoh" 92-95) had also thoroughly familiarised him with the concept of angels, known to the Japanese primarily through the commercial adoption of Christmas, and Benjamin as source remains somewhat hypothetical and of dwindling importance in comparison to the undoubted Satoh-Benjamin convergence in salvational politics. However, the coincidence of an Angel/Wind link within an analogical, though not identical, preoccupation with history and catastrophe in Benjamin and Satoh seems too strong for chance.

As to the Hells Angels, in Satoh's play they had little in common with the historical US gang, one of whose favourite occupation was to beat up Blacks, except their motorcycles and a rebellion against the existing order; the rest is a fantasy derived from the Marlon Brando 1953 movie *The Wild One* and its cultural fallout in the 'outlaw biker' filiation of the 1950s-1960s (see "Outlaw").←

6. Everybody writing on *Dance of Angels* owes a central debt to David G. Goodman, who not only translated it but provided both permanently valid elucidations and a sophisticated interpretive hypothesis for it. I owe him a particular debt for generously supplying me with materials on and Japanese contacts for the play. In all matters concerning the BTT and the post-*shingeki* movement, Goodman is a *sine quo non*. Further, he was qualitatively better informed than I, being both a Japanol-

ogist and a member of the BTT collective at that time. I accept most of his interpretation, but differ from it in a few fundamental points, so that I allot a partly different final meaning to the play. However, it should be clear that a critical dialogue is not a repudiation.

In that vein, I cannot accept his encompassing horizon of Satoh as a Japanese variant of Judaic eschatology, which underlies also all of Goodman's interpretations of this play (for example "Satoh" 265-73 and 359-60). I do not fully share the major premise and I fully disbelieve the minor premise of his syllogism that, since the Birds are *kami* (deities), therefore their King is the Judeo-Christian God or Jehovah ("Notes" 44-45). This interpretation does not seem to follow either logically or historically, even were we to agree the Birds are *kami*: the King of the *kami* (itself a heterodox notion) could at least as well be the Sun Goddess, or indeed the *tennō* as her incarnation. In fact, if one accepts Benjamin's sharp opposition between God and Myth, in which mythical power sets laws and boundaries while divine power destroys them, in which mythical power functions as blood power for its own sake while divine power functions as "clean" power for the sake of that which is living (59-60)—then this play's universe is a mythical and not a divine one. What is more, the Birds' undoubted *kami* analogies (on that tradition cf. Raz 10-16 and passim) do not seem primary or even economical within the play: the metaphor of play as shamanic ritual has clear limits. Goodman's main argument is itself based on inserting this play into Satoh's complete oeuvre and biography, where however the immediate predecessor and seed of *Dance of Angels*, *Nezumi Kozō the Rat* would clearly speak against it, since the play develops as an opposition between the people (sewer-rats) below and tennoism hoodwinking them to return above ground: the metaphor of play as shamanic ritual has clear limits. Satoh's and Tsuno's notion of a deep "tennō time" dominating Japanese masses is almost certainly based on Yoshimoto Taka'aki's writing from 1966 about postwar political "illusions" (*gisei*), such as rationalism, individualism, or democracy, and in particular that the masses' original form of existence (*taishū no genzō*) was symbolised by the Emperor.↵

7. Cf. the rather scathing memories described by Yoshida Hideko (she played Corday), who was traumatised by the directing. I have no way of knowing what the majority of BTT members thought. The self-government idea was well known to the youth revolt—if not through Marx, then at least through the work of Hani Gorō on territorial units (see Tsurumi 151). In fact, if we do not count 'roof organisations' di-

rected from above, such as the Rōen (Workers' Theatre), the Kuro Ten-to tour of this play was the first self-governing theatre tour in Japanese history. ↴