"One Who Hears Their Cries": The Buddhist Ethic of Compassion in Japanese Butoh

Juliette T. Crump

Kazuo Ohno: "On these mountains where no grass grows, searching for my thoughts in all the suffering, I myself become a ghost, I take his form, and stretch out my hand to reach him. It doesn't matter what ghost; what matters is to reach him."

Manuscript notes from performance of *The Dead Sea*

Tatsumi Hijikata: "Through dance, we must depict the human posture in crisis . . . When I begin to wish I were crippled—even though I am perfectly healthy—or rather that I would have been better off crippled, that is the first step forward towards butoh."

Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 75

In the *San Francisco Weekly* in 2002, reviewer Bernice Yeung referred to butoh as a "bizarre and mysterious art." Although it has become a leading postmodern and international art form in the last thirty years and is familiar to contemporary arts festival viewers around the globe, butoh is still referred to as bizarre, tortured, disturbing. As a butoh practitioner who has seen many butoh performances in Tokyo, the United States, Canada, and Sweden from 1981 to 2006, I have come to believe that its grotesque elements, though important, do not constitute the core of butoh. Rather, it is the basic Buddhist value of

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compassion that inspires butoh's content and powerful expression. In the above remarks by Ohno and Hijikata, the founders of this esoteric art form, stretching out a hand or stepping a crippled step forward in crisis are acts of compassion, and it may be this compassionate aspect of butoh that engenders its appeal. While butoh has evolved from the violent and harsh form prevalent in Japan in the 1960s to its more eclectic, diverse, and postmodern form of today, the compassionate aspect is a remarkable constant. I use the term postmodern in reference not to dance of the 1980s, nor to the hybrid forms of late postmodern choreographers, but rather in its more general application to arts that attempt to reach audiences viscerally, to avoid representation, to block critical interpretation, and to refute a comfortable individualism. The constant metamorphosis of dancers into various creatures, and the pastiche effect of butoh, signal the disappearance of a unified self.

Japan has its own Goddess of Compassion, Kannon, one of the most popular Buddhist deities, often depicted with eleven faces or with a thousand arms to deliver mercy in all directions. There are many incarnations of Kannon who save suffering souls (for Tibetans the Dalai Lama is an incarnation of Kannon). The Buddhist concept of compassion embodied by Kannon and the Japanese art form of butoh have similar goals: to transform the world. Buddhists would rid the world of desire and suffering, and butoh rejects the world surrounding our suffering, a postwar industrial Japan of fragmentation and chaos. Both would transform the world through changes of consciousness.

Against the background of the modern, Western world, butoh values the irrational, the marginal, the dispossessed (the butoh pioneers knew and admired the Surrealists). By becoming a ghost in the performance of *The Dead Sea,* Ohno encounters the illogical, which he believes is liberating. He says, "The impossible opens new paths" (1988, 55). Akira Yamamoto, in the introduction to the catalog for an exhibition, *Japanese Ghosts and Demons,* at the University of Kansas Spencer Museum of Art, wrote, "Ghosts—their hair unkempt, clothes disheveled, souls impassioned—offered an expression of frustration, maybe a way mentally to free oneself from constrictions" (Bretz 1985, 12). By dancing crippled to depict the human posture in crisis, Hijikata explores a new architecture of the body where hidden levels are revealed. (Only recently in Japan have the disabled been accommodated in civic spaces; formerly they were kept hidden in their homes.) Ohno's and Hijikata's liberated and exposed artistic expressions in the 1960s created butoh, an archaic Japanese word for dance, and a new performance art that combines elements of folk tradition, Japanese mythology, theater, and dance. More important, butoh offers a compassionate yet anguished alternative to modern culture presented in a postmodern art form. The form has been adopted and modified in different settings throughout the world, but it retains its essential purpose and meaning: butoh dancers still engage in a process of transformation in performance that connects them compassionately to their own universe in its most bizarre, perhaps, but also in its most subtle or marginal or seemingly insignificant aspects.

In January 2003 the SU-EN Butoh Company in Sweden presented *The Chicken Project*, in which humans lived as chickens in a five-hour event. A video showed SU-EN living with actual chickens at the Küller Bird Farm and, in the lobby of the theater, the animal

rights group Forbündet Djürens Ratt provided "information concerning the chicken's problematic situation." Paradoxically, butoh embraces such activist material and intent with a Buddhist detachment. Detachment or distance from the subject of chickens jammed into a cage for life takes the aesthetic forms of elongation of time (*The Chicken Project* lasted five hours), repetition, a ritualistic progression, purity, and emptiness, and these values are balanced in performance with distortions, broken body movements, and intense scenarios. Although the second (2004) *Chicken Project* was shortened, when I performed with seven others in a cage constructed in the Stockholm state theater, the time periods portrayed in each three-hour performance were three twenty-four hour days in the life of a chicken doing its repetitive chicken actions and chicken rituals.

Just as political engagement and Buddhist detachment are paradoxically linked in butoh, the serenity of Buddhism and the anguish of butoh would seem to be opposite styles, but in fact the two are complexly intertwined. For the Buddhist, nirvana, the final enlightenment and release, is not an escape but is found in the midst of life, suffering, and death (Yu 2001, 7). In the Buddhist ideal there should be "grand dramas of universal salvation" and the figure who plays the dominant role is the celestial Bodhisattva, who is both immersed in suffering and also helping others through his or her compassion, "for the purpose of setting free the entire world of beings from their states of woe" (Vajradhaja Sutra). Similarly, the butoh performer's role is to set free his or her body, to transform it to a new body in all its old pain, authenticity, and vulnerability, to eliminate conventional habits and to expose the unconscious inner world of pain, doubt, and joy. The dancer in a sense becomes a modern Bodhisattva, ridding himself or herself of ego and compassionately embracing through performance other beings who are fragile, vulnerable, and identified with a marginal position. The dancer makes a connection to parts of himself that have been lost, and to a world of lost beings. Although, typically, images of the celestial Bodhisattva are different from those in butoh, they both have compassion at their core. Images of the celestial Bodhisattva are Madonna-like, depicting a sweet, peaceful beneficence (the "saving" aspect of compassion), whereas images found in butoh are agonized, disturbing, and grotesque (the "suffering" aspect of compassion). One could say that in butoh the images are agonized, but the slow-motion style is sweet, peaceful.

The Buddhist ideal of compassion encourages an active sympathy that extends to all sentient beings. Prominent in this notion of "active" is physical experience. The Bodhisattva vows to save everyone and must therefore remain in the world where he is accessible to all, taking their pain and evil karma into his own body. In this practice, physical experience takes precedence over discourse, and a kinetic compassion—body and soul—becomes the dynamic aspect of enlightenment. Similarly, in many butoh performances compassion is felt moment to moment, with improvised movements responding to an internal monologue or imaginary journey, and reflecting shifting feelings. In butoh, movements are shaped precisely from a dancer's immediate experience as beach sand is shaped by a foot. Of course, the form will not remain in a butoh dance, in a raked Zen garden, or in Tibetan sand painting. Compassion occurs within a fleeting world.

However private the individual experience of that imaginary journey, there is a social aspect to the butoh project as there is a social aspect to Buddhist compassion. Although

Buddhists do not have a single textual source (such as a Bible), in hundreds of sutras, discussions of compassion echo off each other endlessly. Stories, incarnations, discussions, and images in the Buddhist literature convey the compassion of Kuan Yin (or Kannon in Japan) as she takes on the suffering of others and attempts to relieve it. Butoh dancers avoid facile answers to political problems, but become social by taking on the suffering of all people, animals, and things. Butoh embraces an individual empathy or feeling but it also compassionately wishes to relieve suffering by changing the world. Hijikata did not acquiesce to the rural poverty that sent his sister into prostitution. By taking her into his body in performances, he wanted to effect change. Compassion, not just empathy, is the social aspect of butoh.

The Bodhisattva of Compassion, originally Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit and later Kannon in Japan, becomes Kuan Yin in China, and in this manifestation he also became feminized. She is the personification of perfect compassion or "the one who hears their cries." The Bodhisattva can transform herself into many forms; Buddhist scholar John Blofeld (1988) recounted his vision of her in a whirl of manifestations like a child's kaleidoscope. The butoh dancer often uses her body as a kaleidoscope where different images are contained in different parts of the body and may dissolve into one like a photograph coming into focus. As a "goddess of Mercy," Kuan Yin "hearkens to the cries" and in so doing accepts all cries, even from the most demonic and grotesque of creatures. These grotesque creatures are changed and put on the path to the divine. Although butoh evolved recently, there is a rich tradition in Japan of this notion: the divine grotesque. It is claimed that "there are eight million gods who reside both in heaven and on earth, in mountains and in waters, in trees and rocks, in homes and barns, and even in cooking hearths and toilets" (Bretz 1985, 11). In butoh performance pieces, many of which emphasize that the life cycle starts with death, performers embody the spirits of the dead as well as rocks, swamps, tigers, chickens, and cockroaches.

Interestingly, postmodernism, butoh, and Buddhism all profess esteem for the profane. The butoh aesthetic shares common ground with the Buddhist valuing of common or even vulgar experience, and the acceptance of all creatures as worthy of salvation no matter how ridiculous. One butoh group, Dairakudakan (Great Camel Battleship), is noted for its carnivalesque and surreal creations. Butoh critic Bonnie Sue Stein, writing in the *Stagebill* for a performance of *The Sea-dappled Horse* in February 2001 at the Kennedy Center, said, "The company appears to be a circus spectacle gone haywire, with acrobatic, daredevil clowns aimlessly tossing themselves, carrying objects much heavier than their own body weight. . . . Each performer from 'the Great Camel Battleship' seems to be a part of a dying decaying era—ghosts reborn to tell the tale of their violent destruction."

The Buddha delivered sutras, prescriptions for enlightenment, when he foresaw the onset of the decadent age in 500 BCE; in the 1960s butoh artists perceived as decadent the Western premise of individuality, rejected it, and espoused instead the anti-modern sympathies of revolutionaries in Japan who resented Western cultural and political dominance. Although a postmodern aesthetic of fragmentation and agony is kept in performance, in life butoh artists also practice a Buddhist withdrawal, often to idealistic and closely knit communities. Hijikata moved his butoh company to his village in northern Japan so he could reconnect with his rural experiences as well as practice and

evolve his artistic theories. His dances investigated violence and dark, sexual passions but ultimately found solace in the values of his rural, premodern background. Buddhists make their practice a way of life and "these symbols of world rejection and negation are not pessimistic or nihilistic. . . . They place the broken and disrupted forms of the external world in critical perspective, and undercut the old institutional dependencies" (Pardue 1971, 10).

Butoh companies today also commit to the butoh way of life, living together in communes in the countryside similar to Monte Verita in Switzerland (1913–19), where German dancers Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman collaborated. Ohno's dance teacher, Eguchi, studied in Germany in 1931 and promoted Wigman and Kreutzberg when he worked with Ohno and Hijikata in Japan (Crump 2001, 95). In these communal retreats butoh dancers practice, grow vegetables, eat together, and create new work. Ohno's workshop/studio is at his home in Yokohama; Min Tanaka has his "Body Weather Laboratory" near Tokyo, where his company, Mai-Juku, works and where the semi-communal lifestyle reflects and nourishes the artistic experience; SU-EN company resides, creates, and performs in an old schoolhouse in the Swedish countryside.

In Buddhism, deconstructing one's own ego is the first step toward compassion, which allows oneself to become the "other," to become the one who suffers from worldly attachments. According to butoh scholar Susan Blakely Klein, butoh dancers recognized that the sense of individuality is a fragile delusion and began to explore the possibility of inner fragmentation: "If we can break through the bonds that have been embedded in our minds and conditioned deep into our bodies by our modern society, we may eventually gain access to our real self" (Klein 1988, 33). To eliminate the possibility of anyone finding an individual subject (another "ego") in their dances, butoh performers engage in constant metamorphoses, changing into various characters, animals, people, even inanimate objects. Nudity, shaved heads, and stark white body makeup reduce them at once to their "animal" basics, and to an impersonal purity.

Teru Goi, in a performance celebrating his fifty-second birthday in 1989, kept a large rock balanced on different parts of his nearly naked body as he moved along the floor without using his hands, becoming one with the weight of the rock by responding to its shifting pressures (Crump 1990, 12). Yoko Ashikawa, who danced with butoh founder Tatsumi Hijikata (he died young, at age fifty-seven in 1986), mastered techniques of metamorphosis as she attempted to traverse the landscape between being herself and "the other" (in the Buddhist sense this is the one who is being saved) and "to assume all its forms: wind, stone, cat and so on" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 88). In a solo choreographed for her by Hijikata for a 1977 Paris performance, a reviewer described how she changed substance: "Now flower, now stone, now water—endlessly creating a multiple and polymorphic body in a mysterious ceremony" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 88). Butoh dancer Min Tanaka's objective is to reveal the subconscious of his muscles, the memories of his cells: "I don't dance in the place, but I am the place" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 158). In a 1997 film, *Body on the Edge of Crisis*, dance critic Nario Goda describes Tanaka's outdoor production of *Rite of Spring* in tribute to Nijinsky, when Tanaka was surprised and gratified during performance by a springtime downpour that helped to make the experience even more authentic for the dancers and audience.

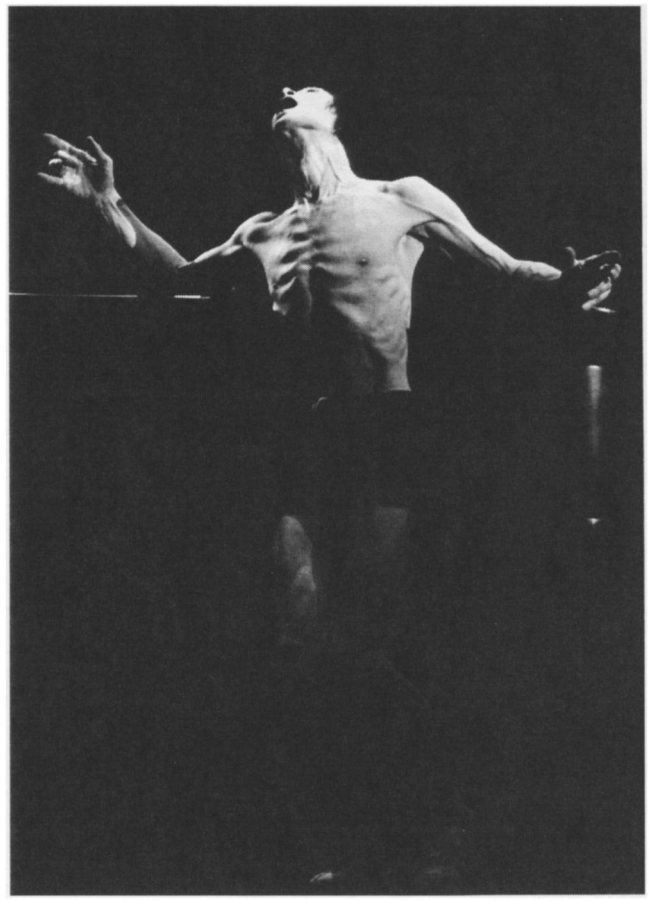
For butoh to be successful, audiences must sense and feel rather than interpret, although in some cases messages are very clear. Butoh dancers want to have the body itself contemplated as a small universe. The purpose is compassionate and typically Buddhist in the emphasis on practice versus theory: viewers should achieve the experience of release, rather than look for symbols and conventions to interpret. Isamu Ohsuka, the founder of the butoh company Byakko-sha, believes that the bodies of dancers are privileged, and although they may use images of decay, these are ultimately positive, like the lotus blooming in the fetid swamp. Foremost in the Buddhist ideal of compassion is the extreme action of self-sacrifice, and the Bodhisattva's gift of his body is a featured theme in the scriptures; he literally offers flesh and blood, body parts, as a gift to sentient beings. Both butoh performance and Buddhist scriptures emphasize the experience of body consciousness, even if crude or shocking, in movement or meditation, for the achievement of release and enlightenment. It is assumed that the performer's body consciousness in a butoh piece will be experienced kinesthetically by audiences who will feel different, "moved," released from the ordinary self.

Just as Buddhist sutras instruct the Bodhisattvas on the path to change through compassionate acceptance of all "cries" and self-sacrifice, so the butoh dancer's training encourages an inner "becoming." Carlotta Ikeda, founder of the butoh group Ariadone, explains her accomplishment as becoming aware of an inner world, of another "me"; her butoh is enriched by this new universe she discovered (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 127). Susanna Akerlund, trained by Yoko Ashikawa, founded SU-EN in Sweden. Her workshops around the world engage dancers to become twisted rubber materials, archaeological skeletons, masked demons, discarded metal in a junkyard, atoms, or chickens (Figure 1). She insists that all actions and postures must initiate deep inside the body. Denise Fujiwara was a disciple of famous butoh dancer Natsu Nakajima, who claims strong influence from Hijikata. Fujiwara's training process includes a beginning exercise to discover the progression of moving from the inside: dancers stand and imagine their bodies filled with water. They are told to feel a single fish swimming inside to all surfaces and enclosures. Gradually there are more and more fish, up to a hundred, and then the process reverses as the fish disappear. The movement resulting from this exercise is minimal and varies with individuals. It is an exercise in dancer awareness not of the body in space, but of space within the body (Seattle International Butoh Festival, 2000).

As in some meditative exercises, butoh philosophy claims that it is our muscles that retain memories, and that by creatively imagining the inside universe of the body we trigger those memories. Kazuo Ohno often guides dancers to feel that they are a fetus inside their mother's womb, to feel the pull between child and mother and to sense that immediate dependency necessary for life (Fig. 2). A Tokyo workshop in 1990 taught by Eiko and Koma, former pupils of Ohno, emphasized an even more minimal and slow process of selfless, compassionate imagination. Participants were led to become a tree lying in the rainforest, becoming one with the ground, and eventually decaying over a two-hour period. They felt gravity acting on the body and an integration of the body with the surface it was lying on. The slowness of the process helped them to become less who they were at the moment and more who they had become through time and evolution.

Figure 1: Choreography/Dance: SU-EN. Photo: Maja Sandberg. Used with permission.

Figure 2: Kazuo Ohno. Used with permission.



Butoh dancers use various methods to come to new body awareness. Some are concerned with detailed images and others enlarge their imaginary boundaries. Hijikata had formalized certain movements such as the "butoh walk" with a low center of gravity and bow legs, and he used archaic images from world art to choreograph his changing characters (a two-dimensional Mayan figure; a Cretan bull). In contrast, Ohno and others found improvisation a more fruitful creative process. Mitsutaku Ishii stresses improvisation over formalized structure. "The dancer must discover how to become one with his own forms . . . just as sound is born of silence, calm envelops all movement. The being within the total void allows the body to discover the new strings which will move it" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 152).

Though many of the processes and theories proposed by butoh artists seem Buddhist in origin, these artists typically deny that their dances are religious (we should remember that many Buddhists also regard their practice as a consciousness, not a religion, that is, the process of consciousness is more essential than any dogma). Hijikata said that his dance was not in the category of the performing arts related to religion: "Buddhism, Shintoism or whatever—I was born from the mud" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 71). Butoh, like the Chinese Bodhisattva of Compassion, Kuan Yin, is rooted in indigenous folk forms. Many Japanese folk festivals extol the unvirtuous, arcane, and frightening aspects of the culture. An ink print on scroll done by Shibata Zeshin depicts *Hannya Retrieving Her Arm.* Hannya, a type of female demon with horns and fangs, is shown "retrieving her arm which had been whacked off and hidden in a trunk by a warrior she had deceived" (Bretz 1985, 13). But the Japanese culture is also a Buddhist one, and many butoh artists have absorbed its Buddhist tenets as they reject a Westernized, technologically oriented, materialistic culture. The butoh artists strive to reach an inner reality that is beyond self and ego, that is passionately connected to all things. Ohno, a Christian who still danced at age ninety-four, describes his dance as being born out of the experience of drawing the threads of his past toward himself as he tries to carry in his body all the weight and mystery of life. Hijikata kept alive in his body his sister who had been sold into prostitution. He was motivated by her life to create his style of butoh, which he called "ankoku butoh," dance of darkness.

Ohno's most famous dance, *Admiring La Argentina,* was made in 1977. He wore a turn-of-the-century dress with hat and gloves which allowed him to bring her to life again, an expression of his profound memory of having seen her dance. He depicted her as a divine figure, a female deity of immense intensity, while at the same time his frail, white body and exaggerated gestures evoked something of the grotesque. Hijikata mentioned that in carrying the body of his dead sister in his own he often took on a feminine persona in his dances. Here, as with the Bodhisattva of Compassion, we see a gender change from the masculine Avalokitesvara to the feminine Kuan Yin. Cross-gender reincarnations and memories are typical of Buddhist and Hindu scriptures. As butoh often resisted the patriarchal, Western stance of Christianity (although Ohno is Christian, he often performs as a female), so the Chinese resisted Confucianist, patriarchal, and masculine influences when they perceived Kuan Yin as female.

Japanese Buddhists later had their own Kannon, who like Kuan Yin, Tara, Kali, or Durga is part of the goddess tradition. Buddhists experience the yin (female) as well

as the yang (male) in embracing this tradition. Chun-Fang Yu explains the tendency of Buddhism to balance out male and female deities: "If there had been powerful and popular goddesses in China, Avalokitesvara probably would not have become a goddess in China. . . . This might explain why Avalokitesvara did not undergo a sexual transformation in India and Tibet where powerful and popular goddesses, such as Durga and Tara, are present" (Yu 2001, 413). Butoh artists also found that, in order to move with life as Hijikata said, they had to show the energy of death, sex, and life consumed in joy or sorrow, and to free inhibitions they often had to become female. In the dance *Niwa,* female butoh dancer Natsu Nakajima performs a section, "Kannon," in which she reveals that an uncertain sex is an aspect of the Goddess of Mercy's power (Fraleigh 1999, 51). One of the poses often used by Hiroko Tamano (Fig. 3), another disciple of Hijikata, in which the dancer becomes half man and half woman, is called "swamp" (Yeung 2002, 18). The Buddha's nature places emotion and feeling, which are considered feminine traits, over intellectual and rational traits, which are considered masculine.

All over the world, the nudity and white-powdered body of butoh is seen as postmodern and distinctive, but that presentation also has its traditional and Buddhist components. In China the white-robed Kuan Yin became the giver of heirs, white being the symbol of the mind of enlightenment, which gives birth to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In texts, the term "white-clad one" is an epithet for the Bodhisattva himself. There are many examples of artistic representations of the white-robed Kuan Yin and there are instructions in Buddhist rituals to use a white cloth, or to make a white background for a painting or mandala. Butoh dancers also show a preference for white, beginning with Hijikata and Ohno, who painted their entire bodies with white makeup. While white make up neutralizes details of skin and distinctive human features, often it heightens the impression of newness or of old age. In *My Mother*, which Ohno calls a spiritual dance, he dressed in a white, tight tunic and briefs and covered himself with white body paint.

Figure 3: Hiroko Tamano. Photo by Paolo Vescia. Used with permission.

Sankai Juku, another famous butoh group, is known for its stark purity often enhanced by white costumes or makeup.

The pairing of the divine with the grotesque at the heart of butoh intensifies experience and emphasizes contrast and incompatibility. It tends to awake us from the trance of "ordinary consciousness," the trance of conventionality, of ego. In Buddhism, "unconventional and startling behavior" (Yu 2001, 196) is also a central value in deconstructing ordinary consciousness, suggesting an art of the divine grotesque. Many of the miracle stories about Kuan Yin are called kan-ying, which means "cosmic resonance." These stories are filled with pleas for help from people in all walks of life. People, animals, and ghosts are rescued from extraordinary situations and dilemmas in extraordinary ways. Bodhisattvas can be present anywhere, wherever people seek them, even in the gates of hell or a smoldering inferno. They can cut off parts of their bodies to cure the sick. Yu writes about the grotesque myth of the monk Pao-chih, a manifestation of Kuan Yin, who used urine to wash his hair and who tore off his face to reveal the Bodhisattva within. A sculptural representation of this "tearing face" event was given to Japanese pilgrims and it still resides in Kyoto Saio Temple. Butoh dancers regularly "tear off" their conventional faces and become masks for expressing inner experience. These Buddhist traditions often seem startlingly "surreal," just as Surrealists were very interested in using art to change one's state of consciousness.

Since Japan is a Buddhist culture with its own Bodhisattva, Kannon, and a rich tradition of demonic lore, it is not surprising that butoh is full of eccentric or grotesque scenarios and characters. Performers stick their red tongues out and drool for long intervals, roll their

Figure 4: Postcard of Joan Laage of Dappin' Butoh from Nothing Lasts But Memory. *Used with permission.*

eyes back in their heads, wear kimonos that are ripped and shredded, and carry all manner of props with evil connotations (gas masks, weapons, fire). In one performance piece in 2000 by Dappin' Butoh (Fig. 4) at the Seattle International Butoh Festival, I danced as one of the nine hungry ghosts (Kuan Yin's compassion extends to feeding hungry ghosts with her "sweet nectar"). Butoh does not intend to scandalize but rather to show compassion for these frightful sufferers and to connect with them as definitive parts of our universe. Ohno questions, "What could be the life of that which is dead?" He says he tries to create this impossibility in his dances.

Blofeld once asked a Tripitaka Master, "The celestial Bodhisattvas? Where and what are they?" The master replied, "To discover them, let your mind be still. In the stillness resides no particle of self or other" (Blofeld 1988, 126). This concept of stillness resonates with the "coolness and clarity" that Kuan Yin brought to the hungry ghosts when motivated by extreme compassion. The "cool" values of slowing down time and action in space can be seen in many Japanese Buddhist rituals, just as stillness and clarity characterize traditional Japanese art forms. Butoh is no different in this sense, although it usually disclaims influence from Japanese traditional arts. Probably the most recognizable feature of butoh, besides the distorted bodies and facial masks, is its extreme drawing out of action over a long time, a slowed motion that gives a strange grace to grotesque positions. Hijikata, one of the two butoh founders, stated clearly the compassion at the core of butoh: "Butoh plays with time; it also plays with perspective, if we humans learn to see things from the perspective of an animal, an insect, or even inanimate objects, the road trodden is alive . . . we should value everything" (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, 65).

Now butoh has spread all over the world, composed of first-, second-, third-, and even fourth-generation performers. As Bodhisattvas can be present anywhere, so can butoh. Each manifestation of butoh is different, however, following indigenous cultural influences in the same manner that Kuan Yin was continuously recreated in China. Butoh dances of compassion occur in major cities and butoh festivals around the globe: Shinichi Momo Koga's company, Inkboat, of San Francisco, recently performed *Cockroach* in which audiences are asked to "imagine Franz Kafka and Kurt Weill chopped and mixed into a bowl of German Butoh cake with black insects crawling up the sides" (performance program note) (Fig. 5). American dancer John Doyle (Fig. 6), a former performer with Koichi and Hiroko Tamano's group, Harupin Ha, recently premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*, a solo dance inspired by Native American legend. In Sweden, SU-EN group dances in site-specific performances, one set in a metal junkyard; in Seattle in 2002 Dappin' Butoh presented a dance called *Five Thousand Falling Souls*; a famous Mexican butoh dancer, Diego Piñón, recently created *Broken Nostalgy*, a dance searching for a "lost part of his being" (performance program note); and in Argentina Gustavo Collini Sartor has written about Ohno and performs his own butoh. Each group or performer connects with its Japanese butoh mentors but also sees increasing significance in individual and local concerns. These dances fill a void, replacing desire, greed, and consumption in a postmodern, virtual culture, with compassion for all beings in a suffering world. Artists exchange dances at international festivals and nourish each other's commitment to this new form and to its artistic relevance. Through performance

Figure 5: (left) Shinichi Momo Koga. Used with permission.

Figure 6: (below) John Michael Doyle. Photo by John-Paul Bourdier. Used with permission.

and practice they seek to promote responsibility and transformation in wasteful societies. As SU-EN says, "Through Butoh, life itself is recycled."

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