

Death of a little butohmermaid

essay written by Pé Vermeersch (dancer, choreographer)

translated by Stefan Maenen

appeared in Etcetera april 2001, partly in Kyoto Art Journal 2002, nr 56

When writing this article, I am in Kyoto, Japan. They call me gajin-san, stranger. I love to be a stranger in daily life but not when it comes to theatre. For the duration of my fourth stay, I have again decided not to study Japanese. Although I am missing out on essential matters, I love to understand nothing and to be dependent on non-linguistic impressions. Now and then I meet my butoh dance heroes, Akira Kasai and Min Tanaka, who initially enticed me to come to this country. This time, I have also had the opportunity to study noh theatre, to examine it in a real traditional way. I have already been found guilty of stealing elements from traditions in eastern theatre, such as the Indian kathakali (in Salomé saw Iokanaan) I have transposed some Oscar Wilde into this narrative dance, and this time I am also planning on stealing one thing and another, like a wig, or a melody, or the structure of a choreography.

Once, someone observed that I had made a beautiful production, but said it was a pity that the actors were wearing a kimono. Are we still afraid of exotism? Maybe because we simply cannot recognize the beauty in other cultures' elements, or because 'the other' is best pigeon-holed as folklore, next to but not with what's 'ours' (However, in Japan they are good at this. It is not because they look Occidental that their Japanese specificity has suddenly ceased to exist.). To me, using similar elements is not so different from using a phrase from an aria by Händl, or from jotting down a bird's early morning song. These elements are merely giving a structure to the dance, they are framing it, they are a point of departure. Anyhow, they are never the dance itself.

My fascination for the East evidently began with me questioning what kind of theatre I wanted to make and especially how I wanted to present myself. Aren't we always starting from the idea that something 'strange' is appealing to us when we are migrating to another culture, when we are looking for something other than ourselves? But what is 'strange'? Can it not be that sometimes one's own culture might not leave enough room, and might be, at a certain moment for someone not be enough? How many times have I run, from sheer relief, towards non-Western, traditional or folkloric theatre, such as kathakali: a theatre full of fantastic gods and monstrous goddesses, a theatre lacking psychology, a dance based on metamorphosis and intensity, uncoloured theatre, the natural link of singer/narrator/dancer, a body control that also uses the body's edges, its periphery. Noh theatre is also a very appealing entity at which I can only nibble. Recently, a sweet Japanese lady asked me why a gajin-san would want to deal with this kind of art (she had never seen noh theatre before). The only thing I could say with my hand on my heart was: "Because I like it." She laughed, it was a satisfactory answer. I gave it some further thought: because I love the stylized poetry in which people become ghosts and always seem to go astray, because I love the leading part nature always plays, the hypnotic nature of the performance (half of the public invariably falls asleep), because I love the profound blend of language and dance, the melancholy of intangible melodies. What I love in particular is the range of aesthetic concepts that the Japanese theatre tradition offers the noh actor/singer/dancer (he combines all of them). I nourish our own tradition in which the human psyche forms the basis of many plays and dance performances, I love their realism, their concreteness, their necessary personality, but I want to examine them for other possibilities myself. That is precisely one of the reasons why I find being a dancer or an actress defiant, this is how I can play with myself, what kind of creature I can offer the audience, how I can go from subjectivity to objectivity, from realism to abstraction. Like a painter who sometimes paints figurative self-portraits, and sometimes abstract ones. Since 'the art of performing' is the point of departure in the theatre I make, I want to examine for all possibilities for myself. "Because the noh theatre has always seen the actor as a creative artist, it has laid down very clear aesthetic principles, the result of which is the creation of an open body, giving the audience enough time to project its own imagination. Isn't this typically eastern? Can Westerners understand this? The concepts subject/object are very strongly rooted in a culture's way of thinking, feeling. But what belongs to theatre, belongs to human possibilities and can be examined. Moreover, we are lucky to have left modernism behind us. The 'Post-' might be able to help us understand a few things.

It is absolutely wonderful to cycle through the old city with its many temples to the house of my teacher, early in the morning, to lose myself in concentrating on imitation for an hour and a half. I cannot ask anything, he cannot explain anything. Feeling is all there is. I repeat the established

melodies and dance steps until I begin to understand what Zeami, who breathed life into noh in the 15th Century, meant by “ten is what is in the heart, seven is in the movement,” I repeat them until the underlying cyclic jo-ha-kju finally shows itself. I am also enlarging my dance vocabulary, I am also dancing without moving my torso, I am also sliding my feet, my spine straight as an arrow. The point is to study more movements than I have done in Belgium, to file more spots in my body’s memory -spots that I sometimes forget- and, most of all, to be able to work with a natural body, a body that is not based on technical virtuosity. All I can do is lose myself in it, one way or the other, not ‘requiring’ anything, and hope that the noh theatre will sink its teeth into me, that it will leave marks.

Dream

At first, I had clearly defined reasons for going to the East, i.e. to learn about specific things, to see what there is. But somewhere along the road, little by little I became a genuine traveller, a nomad. I have a dream: to represent a creature that is as impalpable, as complex as it can get, of an intangible style, with undefinable emotions, always changing. Thus, I would have to travel more, travel a lot, see many continents and leave behind traces of dancing, singing and playing in my body and voice. Flamenco, kathakali, noh, belly dance, ballet, African dance, songs from Mongolia, from Latin America. Specific styles, specific ways to use and get acquainted with the body and voice. Since I am a dancer (and not a photographer nor a writer) and a child of my time, a time where cultures are physically more easily accessible, and most likely easier to understand than before, I want multiculturalism to become visible in the body. People are familiar with fusion theatre by now, e.g. play Shakespeare ‘à la noh’, or casting a flamenco dancer, a kathakali actor and a Stanislavski actor. However, the fusion theatre I am aspiring has to take place ‘within’ the performer. Because there are more and more ‘fusion people’. I could expand the list of styles. It is a dream, impossible to realize of course, a declaration of intent of how, technically speaking, I could realize this complex creature. Yet, there is one dance movement that does not belong here. Butoh is the substructure, as a result of which I can most probably avoid becoming an encyclopedia of styles.

Ghost

Butoh, butoh, butoh. The word keeps on droning through my head until, in a wave of despondency, it becomes taboo. Since one is immediately identified with a style that apparently has shown itself about everywhere, in the West, in the South, in Japan, it is extremely delicate to call oneself a butoh dancer these days. A few years ago, I too was captivated by it and became what you could call a typical butoh dancie: my nudity was painted white and clothed with a minimal tanga and I danced the positions of vultures and tigers. Someone scornfully called me a butoh dancie. For the staging of a piece, some kind of artistic freedom can still be tolerated. But when it comes to the dance in itself, the misconception about what butoh is, is big: was butoh the moment where the foot was turned inward, or was it the slower part? It is not so that these movements do not have a ‘raison d’être’, but the concepts of butoh cannot be reduced to specific movements. As far as butoh is concerned, there are no ‘musts’, only ‘can’s’. Furthermore, you cannot say: “Show me some butoh.” Something which can however be said of noh. However, this can be said of noh. It can also be said that one tries to make oneself familiar with it, that one tries to inhabit these forms or wants to steal elements from them that will be transformed in a current context later on. It is impossible to talk about butoh this way. The way to learn butoh is opposed to the way to learn noh, where the form is the key to find inner nature. Moreover, butoh is contemporary and not typically Japanese. Most of the time, people assume that the dancer has to be in a state of deep loss or blankness, often giving evidence of tendencies of intense suffering. Isn’t butoh the dance of darkness? There is probably no turning back, because butoh as a style seems to exist, and what is even worse: butoh stems from imitation. A stubborn ghost comes to visit me in order to free butoh of a few prejudices and, because it has specific features, to restore it. If that is still possible. ‘Experiential dance,’ it is called in the texts of one of the founding fathers, Tatsumi Hijikata, recently translated into English. Because butoh starts from experience, it has to be ‘personal’ from the very beginning, thus it is impossible to steal anything from it whatsoever. This is especially what I want to stress here. There are a lot of important thoughts that I will not deal with. Butoh is a complex network and there are as many forms of butoh as there are good butoh dancers. In any case, it is a word on which I want to focus here (and again, there are a lot of things I will not mention), because it points to a very current meaning of butoh.

Heroes

I must briefly introduce my two dance heroes, Akira Kasai and Min Tanaka, because I have been strongly influenced by them throughout the years. Kasai danced with Hijikata in the early years. Shortly before the death of the latter, Tanaka cooperated closely with him. Tanaka calls himself an actual pupil of Hijikata's. He uses a lot of Hijikata's range of ideas in his compositions for the Tokason Butoh Company and in this way touches from the inside on what has become the classic form of butoh. Kasai and Tanaka differ in what they want to realize with their dance as well as in their pedagogical approach, they lay the stress on different things. But both are equally provocative, both always try to throw their 'pupil-dancers' off balance. What intrigues me most is that, building on the challenges that butoh confronts them with, they have both developed very different dances (although I have to add immediately that their dances keep on changing all the time). Let me present their dance in a black-and-white and contradictory way: Kasai whirlingly dances the standstills in a multitude of movements in rest, Tanaka dances a lot of movements in standstill. Butoh is not based on one philosophy, Kasai's and Tanaka's are certainly very different, but the power of a butoh dancer, as Goda the critic calls it, is "to make dance into a personal philosophy."

The jumble called butoh would be easy to disentangle if a difference were made between ankoku-butoh and butoh. Easier still if we would speak of the Hijikata-style as we speak of the Graham-style. Would, because it was not Hijikata's intention. After Hijikata had thrown his provocative solo dance pieces (Forbidden Colours, Revolt of the Flesh) out to the Japanese dance world at the end of the fifties, beginning of the sixties, and had named his dance ankoku-butoh, the dance of darkness, he retreated to his native region Tohoku in pursuit of his roots, the memories of his childhood. At that time, equally obstinate dancers as the other legendary founding father Kazuo Ohno, or Akira Kasai, had developed their own butoh that was not called ankoku-butoh. In contrast with Hijikata's Asbestoskan studio, Akira Kasai called his studio Tench-kan (house of the angels). In the seventies, Hijikata returned not as a dancer, but as a choreographer, craving to introduce specific folkloric elements in his dance language. Only Hijikata worked choreographically in those days. Proving to be a gifted choreographer, he assembled a large group of young dancers lending themselves to Hijikata's exceptional work rather than investigating the dance itself. One dancer, Yoko Ashikawa, had the unique position of solo dancer. Obviously, solo dances are radically different from group compositions. Furthermore, a sort of weakening occurs, especially when an exuberant solo dancer such as Hijikata imposes his found dance on others. However, the concepts leading to the dance (the so-called image work), the intensity he desired and even the technique of the deeply bowed legs (ganimata) were original and renovating, and marked a real revolution in the contemporary dance scene. But then butoh is more than ankoku-butoh and Hijikata's ankoku-butoh is more than the style he has set down in his choreographies. It seems that most butoh as seen on stage nowadays is not only based on Hijikata's group compositions, but that also his personal artistic choices are used to produce his work. Moreover, not much butoh is still exuberant, 'hysterical', as Hijikata described his work. Hijikata died in 1986, and it remains to be seen whether or not he would turn in his grave should he notice to what aesthetic tours de force butoh can lead nowadays.

Protest

Tatsumi Hijikata: "For a society in which production prevails, the useless usage of the body, what I call dance, is taboo. I can say that my dance has the same basis as crime, male homosexuality, festivals and rituals. Because it explicitly hurls its uselessness in the face of society."

It is troubling that butoh has become a genre, not because it is impossible to realize sparkling representational art with it, but because it almost looks like an attack on its first declarations of intent. Tanaka: "In the beginning, we did not want, were not able to imagine that butoh would become a style. One of its elements was precisely the breaking of style, the established form." Butoh was born out of protest, especially *against* a lot. Amongst others against the cold rationality of modern dance, at that moment very present in Japan. Against the elitist, traditional Japanese forms of art like noh. Also against morality and against the imported capitalist society and with that the easy consumption of art. Butoh has a very rebellious nature, wants to bring down what rules. If that disappears, butoh dies a little. When I first saw Kasai's dance, at the time when I was still hopping about in my butoh tanga, I was literally speechless for half an hour, I was shivering in every pore. No white, no baldness, no slowness, no bent legs, nothing typically Eastern. But many things were there: it splashed 'too much', it shimmered 'too much'. At an insane speed he sped through the space, which seemed to be filled with invisible points, a tremendous chaos, yet he danced in an extremely controlled and especially in a very light way. The intensity was enormous. The performance was not aesthetic at all, was in a certain sense

beyond good taste. That is not what he has in mind: "If the audience appreciates my dance, I am finished." Or: "I am not interested in what has already gone cold, in what is ready-made." The butoh dancer always distinctively determines his position towards the audience, he wants the audience to make an effort towards the dance, not to "have a nice night out meeting some friends." The audience has to be complementary. The audience has to take up a position. That is what is important, not appreciation.

It is in the idea of anti ready-made art, which is very present in butoh, that the idea of the inward dance is rooted, because a dance technique is also seen as ready-made. In this context, Tanaka defines butoh as a spirit, the spirit of someone "who questions dance time and again and will never establish his dance." Tanaka: "If you produce dance in this way, it is as if the dance already exists before you dance it, aside from you, and the creation of a dance thus becomes an object that you can sell. It is easy to create a dance in this way. Finding dance is something completely different. We are searching for techniques that reside in the body. The order is reversed: first, dance must exist in your body, then the form can be created." One of these typical inward techniques is introducing time and space in the body. Not only the use of an outward technique, a figure of speech, is considered as ready-made, but also emotions are treated that way. Emotions can be prepared, can be the goal that has to be expressed by the dance, can be the dancer's clear intention. However, the butoh dancer will never be ruled by a feeling, just like forms they can come into being as the dance progresses. Thus, butoh is not an expressionist dance. If there is an unambiguous feeling at all, for instance grief, the dancer will not express it, but his body itself must be all grief. The question which movement is to be made is not important, but rather which body is represented. Everything must be literally reduced to the status of the physical happening. Because there must be an innerprocess, movements very often show some sort of 'resistance'. This is also an inner technique, a technique that prevents a movement from being thrown into the space too fast, without relation to corporality.

Metamorphosis

Tatsumi Hijikata: "When I tried to reach for something, another hand grabbed this reaching hand. A hand chased by another one eventually becomes a senile hand that is unable to grab anything at all. It does not go straight for its goal. This is how the body works. In mine, a battle with invisible matter arose."

Dance is radically set free here, it becomes an independent art discipline because it no longer is an instrument of the language, of human emotions, because it does not come into existence through music and because it never looks for a narrative relation with another figure on stage. Training, increasing one's imagination as much as presenting the body always starts from one single body and only from there. Besides, butoh as a representation of this 'useless' body is the pioneer of the pure body work as seen on stage nowadays. Butoh is basically a solo dance, because it begins with experience. It is not a matter of once trying a solo. It is always a solo, of which the dancer is the creator in the first place. Let us jump back to the origins of our philosophy for a moment, a story that has always intrigued me. A long time ago, but not that long either, Plato banned the actor from his Ideal State because, I cite freely, "if one imitates a horse, one actually becomes a horse, the soul is contaminated with it, something changes and danger sets in". Metamorphosis obviously belongs to corporality. The actor who is too corporal is sent away, only the narrator, the speaker, he who moreover uses language as monotonously as possible, is allowed to live in the Western theatre. This beautiful human possibility to transform oneself, or at least to have the intention to do so, was consequently deleted from the actors' vocabulary.

It almost goes without saying that a dance movement of which the point of departure is the physical, personal experience cannot be linked to one culture or another. Yet I do not believe that butoh could have come into being in a Western country. There has to be a strong bond with nature, not rationally neither sentimentally, but physically. There has to be faith in the actor's inward, creative possibilities. There may be no fear of metamorphosis (not only for metamorphosis, but also for every possible change). One has to be willing to inspect the possibilities of the self for objectivity. Here, we come to the important theme of anonymity, in other words: how to allow the body to be a medium, how to let it become transparent. This is an attitude (an inward technique) which one can also find in traditional noh, and which is of vital importance to all butoh dancers, because the creation of the specific body, the physical happening has to be nestling in a bigger whole at all times: the dance of nature. Kasai: "It does not matter how hard dancers train if they do not care about the bigger body of nature; the dancer's body they develop does not mean that much." Or, in Tanaka's words: "It is essential to at least once experience that one is an object." Because of its blend of extreme subjectivity and objectivity, among

other things, butoh stands at the crossroad of Eastern and Western culture, of objectivity and subjectivity. As opposed to traditional noh theatre, butoh radically starts with personal experience. Kasai: "What is important for the ego is to destroy it. But that cannot be done without showing it." The idea of dancing is to create a union, but it is impossible not to start from individuality. One has often forgotten this entrance to the personality, one has too often called on anonymity too fast. This is one of the reasons why butoh is often robbed of the danger it represents. This is not only just a concept. It is again something that is realized with the body. The body in all its details is so often used, shown and tasted in an exhibitionistic way that it becomes anonymous. Butoh is big not because of one particular thing, but because of the paradoxes it contains.

Weak body

In 1993 I produced my first solo, *Speech on the Myth of Youth's Purity*. The protagonist was the young girl Harelip as described by Agota Kristof, very ugly and very perverted, who did it with the neighbours' dog, and was later on 'blissfully' raped to death by fourteen soldiers. I tried to find a dance for her. My arms began to jerk, my legs 'turned inward', my face contorted. Someone asked me if I 'was doing butoh', possibly because of these spasmodic movements. I had to answer in the negative. What is butoh? If one wants to portray the erotic as a form of human marginality, if one wants to show another kind of beauty, ailing movements will characterize the dance that arises. This does not seem so special to me. One does not have to know about butoh's existence. In a certain way I maybe was what Tatsumi Hijikata would call a butoh person: "Only when you have a strong itch to show your deficiency, you take the first step in butoh." But that did not make me a butoh dancer, even if my dance looked like it. For that I should undo the dance from all meaning, work in a non-demonstrative, non-emotional way, and rather discover the 'weakly used body'. That means not the superficial muscles of the body, but the bones, the organs, the skin, the blood.

When I watch archive films of the late Hijikata, his body *really* is a complex and hard-to-define darkness. His dance can be both fast and slow (butoh is not determined by rhythm), but his body itself has the constitution of a rice cracker that has gone soft: "I have come to trust a body that has a smooth and soft condition, like the melancholic folk song Sado Okesa. A spineless animal, the people of Tohoku called me. Well, I may be spineless, but that is because nothing around me has sharp outlines. That is why I am wallowing in the mud and why I love wet rice crackers." Once this body has been found, one could really dance anything at all in every conceivable way. Imagine yourself as, for example, a wooden shelf full of ceramics. The so-called image work is an important instrument to find this body, although it can also be discovered at every moment of everyday life. Climbing the stairs? Taking a bath? Always and again thinking and using the body differently, which means: not to use it as a bundle of hard muscles.

When I was making my first little pieces of work, I often used literature as a point of departure. I loved writers such as Artaud, because of his plea for a total submission; such as Bataille, because the erotic was examined for danger, for where it disturbs, where it touches the core of man, where the subject turns into object, where the discontinuity of life ceases to exist; such as Nietzsche, because of his daring to integrate toughness and harshness in life in a positive way; such as Mishima, because of the importance of beauty and especially because of the flaw in it. Writers who were also read by the Japanese avant-gardist dance scene in the fifties. Imagination is an indispensable instrument for the butoh dancer. A butoh dancer is an easy target if he lacks the sort of imagination that is preferably pushing back frontiers -something like 'when you dance you can imagine doing everything you don't do in everyday life' (Kasai)- because the soft body itself is not sufficient either. The process between imagination -or rather: all cognitive processes- and body is very profound in butoh. One does not exist without the other. This is another challenge. The first workshops I took part in especially meant relief, precisely because we danced starting from imagination.

The concepts of butoh are rationally not incomprehensible to the modern Western man. Bataille also described the 'inner experience' in a wonderful way, but it especially comes down to physically understanding it. Tanaka: "We are no philosophers, we are dancers." There were a lot of fantastic images, a lot of beautiful image work, but more often than not did I only take on forms, somewhere from the outside, only rationally, only imaginatively, or at worst emotionally. "Even if you imagine a very beautiful theme, it cannot be art if it cannot be materialized, especially when it comes to dance. You dance with your body, thus for a dancer it is essential to connect with subject matter." Not all butoh dancers want to create a different aesthetic ideal. But it particularly comes down to bring this, or another imagination, in the body. This takes a lot of time, because it means: to push back the body's

frontiers and finding out how one can really surrender oneself to that body, how one can be in that body. To be or not to be, ...erm..., yes, but that's the question.

Absolute joy

"Butoh is not a style, it defines complete presence; in my opinion, Nijinski, Wigman and Duncan are all butoh." A provocative statement of Kasai. Finding physical intensity seems to be one of the biggest tasks. Because of the softly used body, this intensity is never equal to tension. The soft body is actually a very sensitive body, a body that keeps on evoking memories and pushing back frontiers. Thus, everything that is broadening the senses is dance training. That is one of the reasons why Min Tanaka's Body Weather Workshops (that are being spread throughout the world by his ex-dancers) are so powerful, because the body is given the time to pass into a broadening of the senses. Dance training can never be reduced to a 'technical hour'. For hours have I walked backwards through the woods, have I stayed behind on a dunghill, have I been floating blindfolded in a river, has my skin been pricked with sticks. Only when one really allows this to happen, (and is not just contemplating it), can one discover the deep wisdom of the body and is one able to deliver oneself to it. Finding absolute joy in it, this calm and delightful drifting and the simple bond with nature that arises from it, is of course a first 'must'. If this causes restlessness, one is not ready to take a next step. Akira Kasai: "The most important technique in dance is experience, really entering into experience. This means that if you want to remember what has been written in your lungs, you will have to stop breathing. Training dance is contemplating the experience of your senses as much as possible. Feeling your senses and especially being conscious of the experience. This double experience is the dancer's real experience. Experiencing the experience is the most important dance technique of all. If you are not able to discover this, it does not matter how hard you train."

Herein lies the very important distinction between the dance of experience with a therapeutical value and the dance of experience with an artistic goal, i.e. a dance that wants to show itself to an audience. Although experience is the most important element, the dancer has to add objectivity to prevent himself from staying in some sort of blissful trance. Butoh dance is a continuous interaction between corporal and cognitive processes and here also a stream of consciousness must be added. Tanaka: "A lot of 'pupils butoh dancers' mistake the inward floating in their experiences for dance. Maybe they do understand a few things, but they don't understand the spectator's body. This is very important. If you are only tripping on the inside, why do you need an audience? A dancer must really tell us what he is doing, because if he doesn't, it is a very cheap form of abstraction." On the one hand, an idea has to be realized, a mental state has to be given a physical time, and yet a dancer may never forget reality. This is the very cherished now-moment in butoh dance. Your body (not the dance) has to be prepared, and with this body you have to dare to take the risk to be totally present, be with the spectator, with a shimmering vitality, in a condensation of reality, understanding that I live now but at the same time am already dying. Butoh is not the little hidden body, the body that can only be in a state of suffering. Even in the smallest movement one always finds the submission, the greatest pleasure of giving birth to dance.

THE STAMPING OF THE FEET

Hijikata: "A condemned criminal walks up to the guillotine. He is like a dead man, even if he holds on to life until the end. A person who does not walk anymore, but who is guided walking, a person who does not live anymore, but who is guided living. It may seem a paradox, but in spite of the total passivity, this person has to display a radical vitality. This condition is what dance might be like, it is my task to create such a condition on stage."

It may seem a lot, and difficult, but butoh cannot be less than that. If I ask Tanaka how I can train this even more, he answers: "By thinking, thinking the dance, thinking again and again why you dance and what kind of dancer you want to be, and by starting an extremely individual and personal investigation." And Kasai in his lovely German: "Pé, du kannst nicht die Wahrheit tanzen (Pé, you cannot dance the truth, translator). The intention to realize something is more important than the realization itself; bring the will into the body, the soft body."

And so I travel around the world, collecting material in my body. People still ask me what kind of dancer I am, in which 'style' I am dancing. I am jealous of writers, because for them it is enough to say: "I write." Anyhow, I have finally learned not to answer 'butoh' to that question. After all, butoh 'only' means dance, although the 'toh' refers to little stamping feet.

HYPERLINK "<http://www.vlinderboom.com>" <http://www.vlinderboom.com>

(Teksten bij foto's)

Min Tanaka: "Dancing is a real pleasure when there are a lot of things going on in your head."

Border I

"Various people rework the European meta-culture in their own way, wrongly. That is why they de-Eurocentralize this meta-culture in a plural way. These processes cause enormous dynamics between the various identities, with complex displacements and mutual assimilation. All boundaries are mutating: the border becomes the critical space of our time."

[Gerardo Mosquera]

Akira Kasai: "When I dance, I see a melting furnace. A furnace of words: different words are burning in it and are dazzling me. I dive in. You would expect my body to burn in the fire, but it doesn't. Words that are hurling themselves at me, burning images on my skin. I am speaking metaphorically, of course. But I lose if I get caught in the images. And so I dig a hole in the furnace and dive into it at full blast. Either I burn or I get to the other side."

Min Tanaka: "A lot of rivers run through you when you are dancing. I pay attention to both my body and what is outside of it."

Border II

"Instead of imagining that we are crossing borders, we should ask ourselves: 'How are borders established? Why are they there? How are they being preserved?'" Everywhere around us the number of borders grows very rapidly, not only political and economic borders, but also social, linguistic and sexual borders. There can be borders within borders, borders outside of borders, borders without borders. We can meet at some levels, but not at others. A border will intervene without our knowledge. There are different borders, different differences which we have to learn to cope with in different situations."

[Rustom Bharucha]

Tatsumi Hijikata: "In the continuous stream that looks like anger, I restore the legs and the arms that go askew again and again in this organic body. I forget the source of the legs and even that of the arms. I am a body shop: my job is the 'business' of human rehabilitation. Today, this is called a dancer."