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# t d r a n c e e

King River Press

*trance dance*

暗黒舞踊

*Ankoku Butoh*

Jodie Hawthorne

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## Introduction and Disclaimer

Ankoku Butoh or *Dance of Darkness* is loosely described as a combination of spiritual dance and movement theatre performance. Personal, free and fluid in nature, Butoh is therefore, and perhaps deliberately, not easy to describe.

Initial founder-practitioners, Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno pioneered this radical and unorthodox practice in Japan's vulnerable post Second World War environment. Straying away from tradition, they pushed against the boundaries of convention with the intention of reinventing the arts.

In the 1950s and 60s, Butoh performances were oftentimes met with shock, outrage and rejection – sometimes deemed so extreme they were stopped or banned. Conservative Japanese culture observers and commentators saw Butoh as a protestive rebellion – a subversive and deliberate assault upon tradition.

Butoh and imitations of it are still practiced today by dancers in Japan and internationally. The modern experience has produced mixed results and consequences ranging from positive to tragic. This work is therefore not a promotion or celebration of Butoh, but an outsider's creative response to researching and viewing it.

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## *The Nursery*

*wry smile  
a hand's playful wave*

*bubble-gum being  
cries no sound*

*do not distract  
from a head*

*filled with crazy*

*reason*

*screams wisdom  
to nobody*





# *The Afterlife*

*Gruidae figure*

*screaming*

*to be*

*understood*

*timeless serpents*

*possess*

*this dreamtime*

*no space*

*for emotion*

*layers of*

*the searching self*



## The Wave Within

pulsating

trance born

of chaos

rebellion

grim

strained

manoeuvres

nature

twisted

stretched

against itself

## The Hot Springs

unnerving

sensuality

confusion

fragility

the strength to

expose darkness

sculptured limbs

worn faces

an infant

seeking answers

# The Ladies Night

peeling back  
layers

of the feminine

realisation  
of body

senseless  
crouching

combing the heavens

the fixated gaze

of madness



## The New Beginning

prohibited  
the house of pain

gloom smears  
the land of the rising sun

internal darkness  
on display

hideous traits of  
humankind

unstoppable  
corruption  
is born

## About the Author

Jodie Hawthorne grew up on Tasmania's North West Coast. When not writing, she's a part-time English teacher and transcriber. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, a Graduate Diploma in Australian Folklife Studies and a Diploma of Family History.

Her poetry has been published in *Bloo* Outlier, Eucalypt, Echidna Tracks, Eureka Street, Famous Reporter, Femku Mag, Koori Mail, paper wasp, Rattled, Ribbons, Simply Haiku, Wales Haiku Journal, Yellow Moon and in various other paper and online journals.

She came to know of Butoh through her interest in Japanese traditional culture, particularly Zen Buddhism and the writing of haiku and related verse. This influence may be apparent in the poems of this collection.

A list of references that loosely informed *trance dance* are available on the King River Press website: [www.kingriverpress.com](http://www.kingriverpress.com)

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