DANCENOISE DECLARES OPEN SEASON ON THE DOCILE BODY: DANCE STUDIES
AND FEMINIST THEORY

A Thesis Presented to the Honors Tutorial College
Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Graduation from the Honors Tutorial College with the degree of
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“This audience, they came to see something phenomenally decadent,” exclaims one nude woman behind a microphone. “Disgustingly degrading,” replies a second nude woman. Behind them, a person dressed in a long, outrageously teased blonde wig is dismantling a television packing box. Only wearing heels, they continue their provocative introduction, declaring that the audience wants to see something “stunningly revolting,” and “undeniably deviant.” They both proclaim, “let’s do it!” and are handed hula-hoops as they begin a duet. This describes one scene from *Open Season* by the dance based performance duo, Dancenoise. Whether it be fake blood covering their bodies, a giant grizzly-bear costume, giant banners pulled across the stage, trash strewn on the stage, or giant boxing gloves banging on a piano, Lucy Sexton and Anne Iobst crafted intelligent and vibrant shows that audiences came to recognize as Dancenoise. Through a fast-paced structure, Dancenoise takes the audience on a dynamic, transgressive journey that challenges hegemonic ideas and attitudes.

In the 1980s and 1900s, Dancenoise was known in downtown New York for their energetic performances with assaultive imagery, aggressive political messages, and comedic wit. Dancenoise was created by Lucy Sexton and Anne Iobst after graduating from Ohio University in 1983. They worked as an active part of the downtown dance scene—a group of avant-garde dance artists—where they established themselves as prominent members with a fusion of performance art and dance. Their work is politically charged as evidenced by their use of props, costumes, and dialogue. The issues addressed in their work included women’s rights, presidential politics, the Gulf War, HIV/AIDS in the Ronald Reagan administration, and women’s representation. Reviewing a 2015 performance by Dancenoise, Gia Kourlas, writer for the *New York Times*, recalled that “Dancenoise’s performances skewered, even eviscerated popular and
media culture, with feminist fury, wicked humor and a good measure of gore” (Kourlas, “The Whitney”). Sexton and Iobst blend an unapologetic commentary on American culture with comedic wit, and visual spectacle.

Dancenoise employs a fast-paced structure in their work. This structure resembles that of Vaudeville—a popular form of performance in the early twentieth century—in that their shows are comprised of scenes, or acts that have an eclectic mix of acting, song, dance, and comedy. Dancenoise’s particular structure rapidly cycles through scenes or acts while constantly changing props, costumes, sounds, and dialogue. The chaotic maneuvering of elements in their performances may appear, at first, unstructured; however, closer examination reveals a staunch feminist commentary on American culture and society. The feminist commentary is also seen in their use of props and costumes that are elaborate and include giant baby bottles, fake blood, nudity, and black and white striped prison outfits. They use these props and costumes in ways that work against their original meanings.

My interest in Dancenoise is twofold, comprised of my interests in dance and feminist theory. Initially, my attraction to Dancenoise connected to my general interests in exploring the meanings of gender and sexuality. As part of the Honors Tutorial College, I have been able to blend my study of dance with inquiries pertaining to gender, sexuality, and the body. I found their clever and multifarious use of gender in their performances to be intriguing, enjoyable, and meaningful. As a dance student, their work is intriguing because it pushes the boundaries of what is considered dance, encompassing a range of content that is funny, entertaining, serious, aggressive, and deviant. The history coursework I have taken engaged with a multiplicity of dance forms from all around the world. In particular, I became interested in postmodern dance history and what defines postmodern dance. These interests made me question how Dancenoise
fits into dance history. Their work stands out to me as outrageous, funny, and exceptionally structured. How they use a multiplicity of props, costumes, and themes in a single performance made me question how they fit into postmodern dance. To answer this question, I discuss the historical shifts in postmodern dance and situate Dancenoise as part of the downtown dance scene in Chapter 3. Furthermore, I will discuss their work in relation to postmodern figure Yvonne Rainer in Chapter 4.

This project also reflects my inquiry into dance and feminist studies. My training has led me to a project that utilizes the blend of dance and feminist theory. In a tutorial on feminist theory related to the body, Dr. Julie White in the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department introduced me to authors such as Michel Foucault, Susan Bordo, Raewyn Connell, and Jack Halberstam. This informed my understanding of the body in Western culture as it is socially, discursively constructed. Foucault was of interest to me because of his description of power in Western society and culture. I found Butler’s discussion of gender and sex—in her abstract writing style—to be accessible and applicable to dance. To further explore feminist studies relationship to dance, I worked on a tutorial with Dr. Tresa Randall. Here, I was exposed to the continuously growing field of dance and feminist studies. This included authors such as Ann Cooper Albright, Jane C. Desmond, Janett Wolff, Sally Banes, and Ann Daly. Many scholars writing about dance and feminism have found Foucault’s and Butler’s theories to be appealing because they focus on the body. These tutorials guided my personal interests in questioning and studying the construction of gender and sexuality. My approach to studying Dancenoise comes from this theoretical framework.

Due to the explicit feminist perspective embedded in their work and their prominence in the downtown dance scene, it is curious that they have not been the focus of a dance and feminist
studies project. Dancenoise articulates an openly feminist perspective throughout their work. Whether it be taking a stance against American involvement in the Gulf War, using props or taking a firm stance for women’s rights, Iobst and Sexton constantly bring up political and cultural issues while putting their comedic, satirical, and assertive spin on it. This makes their work—that comes from a dance background—enticing for a blend of dance and feminist studies.

To analyze Dancenoise, I use a blend of dance and feminist studies. I focus on two their works, *Open Season* and *Half a Brain*. Iobst and Sexton most frequently worked from 1983 to 1999—when Iobst moved to California. I chose to study these two works because together they cover a range in time, from 1988 and 1996. In the following chapters, I argue that Dancenoise disrupts and subverts Western culture’s heterosexist attitudes towards the body in their works *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*. I use three theoretical paradigms to analyze how Sexton and Iobst transgress hegemonic culture. Through gaze theory, particularly male gaze theory, I assert that Sexton and Iobst challenge patriarchal representations of women through their fast-paced scene structure and use of nudity in tandem with dialogue. To further argue that they transgress hegemony, I assert that they disrupt the subjugation and docility of the body in the West by utilizing Michel Foucault’s theorizing on “docile bodies”. Furthermore, I use Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity to argue that they challenge and subvert bodily norms of behavior, refuting traditional, sexist ways of using the body. To conclude, I assert that Dancenoise adheres to a poststructuralist decentered subjectivity. This is at the heart of their subversive tendencies.

This thesis is structured into four chapters divided by sections. Chapter 2 begins by overviewing the theoretical framework for my work and how it connects to the historical development of dance and feminist studies as an interdisciplinary field. In Chapter 3, I briefly
review the history of postmodern dance to historically situate Dancenoise as part of the 1980’s avant-garde dance scene. Through descriptions of *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*, I connect Dancenoise to broader interests of 1980’s postmodern dance. In Chapter 4, I begin my critical analysis of the two Dancenoise works through discussing how Dancenoise subverts the male gaze. To further my analysis, I include more gazes that uncover subversive audience perspectives. I then argue that Dancenoise works against the Foucauldian docile body. I conclude with a discussion of Dancenoise and the poststructuralist decentered subject.
Chapter 2: Dance and Feminist Theory

Dancenoise began working in the early 1980’s. During this period, fashion magazines, advertising, and media were filled with sexist representations of women. Feminist theory formed critiques of these sexist depictions in culture. Also, in the early 1980’s, dance scholars were beginning to use feminist theory to critique dance. Dancenoise was similarly addressing issues of women’s representation and depictions of themselves on stage, while dance scholars began writing about it. In this chapter, I explain the theoretical framework that I follow to analyze Dancenoise. This chapter begins with a discussion of the body in Western culture. Then, I discuss how dance studies contributes to our understanding of the body in culture. Furthermore, I discuss how feminist theory has been influential for dance scholars. Next, I outline the theoretical paradigms that I use for analyzing Dancenoise. I begin with male gaze theory and gaze theory. I then discuss Michel Foucault’s docile body and end with a discussion of Judith Butler’s theorizing about gender performativity.

THE BODY, DANCE, AND FEMINISM

Dance, as an art of the body, can never escape cultural associations with the body. Sociologist Janet Wolff, in her article “Reinstating Corporeality,” writes that “the body operates as a symbol of society across cultures, and the rituals, rules, and boundaries concerning bodily behavior can be understood as the functioning of social rules and hierarchies” (83). Sociocultural discourses define how a body should act. As a result, dominant ideologies in the West are sustained through strict corporeal rules and regulations. These codes force individual bodies to conform to what is deemed permissible, acceptable, and normal—including ideals of gender and sexuality. In the West, these ideas are formed through a series of dualisms: mind-body, male-female, culture-nature. Wolff proposes that the body is constantly denied and marginalized by
separating the *mind* from the *body*. This dualism positions the body as a material “other” in opposition to the mind. While these ideals change historically, geographically, and culturally, they are nonetheless implied in how we collectively understand the body in contemporary contexts.

Women in particular are equated with the body and therefore with sex, making subversive feminist performance difficult. According to Wolff, “[t]he body has been systematically repressed and marginalized in Western culture, with specific practices, ideologies, and discourses controlling and defining the female body” (Wolff 82). The binary ideology that positions the mind in favor of the body, associates women with the body. With this context in mind, Wolff identifies two issues with subversive use of the female body. First, the female body “can be reappropriated by the dominant culture and read against the grain of their intended meaning” (Wolff 96). Wolff also identifies that even in explicitly feminist work, the presentation of the body “may collude with a kind of sexist thinking which identifies woman with the body and assumes an unchanging, pre-given essence of female” (Wolff 96). The intentions of a performance or political protest are irrelevant to a patriarchal culture that aggressively “codes and defines women’s bodies as subordinate and passive” (Wolff 82). Often feminist projects that have subversive intentions correlate with binary ideologies. The context of the West makes subversive use of the body difficult, but not impossible.

Wolff argues that subverting cultural associations with the body is possible, but it must come with an understanding of Western culture’s construction of the body. She utilizes theories by Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, and Francis Barker, whose work identifies the body as a locus of control in Western culture despite its constant ideological denial. In other words, the West theoretically despises the body in favor of the mind; however, practically, it is the body that
imparts these ideas. In particular, Wolff asserts the importance of deconstructing binary, patriarchal conceptions of the female body in Western culture. Wolff identifies dance as a potential area for subversive feminist politics because of its focus on the body. For dance to work against sexist ideas, Wolff theorizes that feminist performance “must speak about the body, stressing its materiality and its social and discursive construction, at the same time as disrupting and subverting existing regimes of representation” (Wolff 96). To Wolff, subverting women’s association with body requires a presentation of the body that challenges the dominance of cultural ideology. Women in dance performance can rebel against the corporeal codes that resign women to a passive, subordinate position. This presents a new kind of representation in which women are active subjects—not passive objects of desire.

Dance’s attention to movement makes it ideal for investigating the body in culture because of the West’s emphasis on controlling the body. Anthropologist Jane C. Desmond, in her essay, “Embodying Difference,” writes, “Movement serves as a marker for the production of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and national identities” (30). Movement itself contains sociocultural messages that form individual identities. Dance, an art form of movement, inherently engages with these coded movements in performance. Desmond explains that dance studies’ focus on movement is an aspect that is often overlooked by other disciplines. “Even the now popular subfield of critical work on ‘the body’ is focused more on representations of the body and/or its discursive policing than with its actions/movements as ‘text’” (Desmond, “Embodying” 30). Academic discourse frequently views the body as a site of social and cultural knowledge, but the body being studied is often a still image. The movement of the body is important for understanding how the body works as a symbol for society, but is often overlooked. A close attention to movement enhances our understanding of how the body produces or resists
normalized identities.

Feminist theory has been an influential model for dance scholars to investigate the cultural significance of the body in dance. Reflecting on the 1980’s, feminist dance scholar Ann Daly explains in her 2000 essay, “Feminist Theory Across the Millennial Divide,” that “Feminist theory infused dance studies with a fresh, compelling set of questions that were quickly taken up, especially by younger scholars, critics, and artists” (Daly 335). By the 1980s, dance scholars and artists began to use developments in feminist theory for performance, literature, and critique. Feminist studies revealed how patriarchal culture affects daily life in the West. It focused on deconstructing the male-female binary to expose sexist representations of women in American culture. Feminist critique examined the construction of gender, the sociocultural effects on identity, the dynamics of power, the meaning of gazes, and the position of the subject among a litany of other questions. Dance performers, choreographers, and scholars applied feminist models to their own work. Feminism’s interrogation of the gendered qualities of Western culture helped dance scholars uncover how dance reaffirms or resists patriarchal culture. Through applying a feminist approach, dance scholars could critique dance with a new set of skills; choreographers could create works with a consciousness that further resisted heterosexist representation. To argue that Dancenoise performs against patriarchal culture, I employ a feminist perspective. This framework exposes how Dancenoise performed against patriarchal culture, or with it.

DANCENOISE AND THEORY

Feminist studies provides a theoretical framework to uncover how Dancenoise performances resists hegemonic ways of using the body. Iobst and Sexton’s openly feminist perspective makes them ideal to frame around dance and feminist studies. They address issues of
the body and representation in performance that resemble developments in dance and feminist studies in the 1980’s and 90’s—Dancenoise’s most active years. Furthermore, as graduates of Ohio University in 1983, Sexton and Iobst approach their work from a dance perspective. Discussing a 2015 retrospective of Dancenoise at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Iobst explains that “Dance is at the core of it, but whether they see us as dance is questionable” (Battaglia). A blend of dance and feminist studies offers an ideal framework to understand Dancenoise’s subversive use of the body.

To assess Dancenoise, I specifically use three theoretical paradigms: Laura Mulvey’s male gaze theory, the Michel Foucault’s theory of the docile body, and Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity. I use Laura Mulvey’s male gaze theory that examines oppressive representational structures that are embedded within cinema. This was important for the emergence of feminist critique of media, but applies to other forms such as dance. My analysis employs Mulvey’s theory to argue that Dancenoise resists these structures. To further uncover how Dancenoise subverts hegemonic power I use the work of Michel Foucault. He identifies the body as it relates to the structure and function of power. I use his theorizing of the “docile body” to argue that Dancenoise resists hegemonic use of the body. His theorizing has been useful for feminist studies investigation of gender and sexuality. For instance, feminist theorist Judith Butler’s theory of performativity uses a Foucauldian approach to explicate gender. Butler explains how gender is performed and sustained through reiterative disciplinary practices. I use Butler’s theory in my own argument that Dancenoise further resists the “docile body” by resisting normalized ideas of gender.

The most influential theory for early feminist dance studies came from a 1975 essay by Laura Mulvey entitled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” that posited the male gaze.
Mulvey identified how patriarchal power dynamics are infused into visual arts and literature by depicting the world from a heterosexist, masculine point of view. This gendered representational structure positions women as the objects of desire for a man’s viewing “where the female (or feminized) body is set up on a stage as a spectacle to be viewed by an implicitly male audience member” (Albright 14). The relationship between spectator and performer positions the spectator as the “subject” and the performer as the “object” on display for the spectator’s male gaze. The spectator is in a position of power; the performer who puts themselves on display “is in a passive, traditionally female position” (Daly 306). Dance artists inspired by feminist theory recognized this power dynamic and used it for their own creative and academic endeavors.

Dance scholars readily applied male gaze theory to classical ballet. Ann Daly’s 1987 essay “The Balanchine Woman” utilizes Mulvey’s male gaze to analyze the pas de deux by ballet choreographer George Balanchine. Applying male gaze theory, Daly finds that in the man and woman pairing, the woman is passive, being controlled and manipulated by her partner. The ballerina is on display and “is not represented as a subject; rather, she is woman as object of male desire” (Daly 286). Mulvey pointed out that women are positioned as passive and are the viewed, put on display for the active male viewer. This power dynamic, embedded within the structure of a pas de deux, intends to objectify and display a woman’s body. “Though the ballerina displays her beauty, power is associated with the masculine values of authority, strength, and independence that her partner, the manipulator, demonstrates” (Daly 286). The Balanchine pas de deux exemplifies the male gaze.

The male gaze is a productive way to ask whether Dancenoise resists the structural dynamics of subject and object, however, the male gaze can easily co-opt feminist dance performance. According to Wolff, the body’s “preexisting meanings, as sex object, as object of
the male gaze, can always prevail and reappropriate the body, despite the intentions” of the performer (82). Feminist performance happens within a patriarchal context that relies on binary ideologies to sustain women’s oppression. There is an ability to co-opt subversive feminist performance that disregards the intentions of the performer. The intention of the work is disregarded. Because of this limitation, dance and feminist scholars had to expand their models of critique beyond the male gaze.

While feminist dance scholars found male gaze theory to be a valuable approach to analyzing dance, they soon expanded their range to consider multiple gazes. The totality of the male gaze became an increasingly problematic idea: how can one work against the male gaze when its effects are totalizing? In any performance, there are multiple gazes present that vary based on audience members. Albright explains, “[o]bviously who you are and what you are looking at will determine a great deal about how you will look” (Albright 14). Bodies in performance have the potential to be seen by spectators in multiple ways; the individuals themselves bring multiple gazes based on who they are, their identity, and a multiplicity of factors. Multiple gazes opens the possibility of gazes that contradict, or fall outside of the monolithic spectator-performer relationship of subject/object, viewer/viewed. The male gaze was important in forming feminist critiques of culture. Daly explains that “[f]eminist theory proved so successful that it was superseded—by race theory, queer theory, and postcolonial/transnational theory” (Daly 336). Feminist dance scholars—following developments in feminist theory—expanded the range of critique to take an intersectional approach. Uncovering the subversive potential of multiple gazes, required a broader framework.

Dance’s use of the body makes it a good arena for challenging hegemonic culture. In the essay “Mining the Dancefield,” Ann Cooper Albright theorizes dance’s possibility to work
against established ideas. She argues that a performer’s presence is essential, which she describes as “a word that covers (and sometimes covers over) the interrelationship of bodies and gazes in dance” (Albright 17). In performance, a dancer’s body is being viewed by multiple spectators. The dancer’s “presence” is their ability to control what the audience sees during a performance—as opposed to film’s predetermined images. It is a relationship between the audience and performer that lasts within the ephemeral moments of performance. In this context, Albright sees a “fascinating double moment in which performing bodies are both objects of representation and subjects of their own experience” (13). The body in dance performance lies at the intersection of the personal and social; how dancers individually identify themselves is continuously in conversation with how audience identifies them. The audience sees the performer as “objects of representation,” where hegemonic ideals can be upheld or dismantled. Dancers, as “subjects of their own experience,” can elicit different ways of being seen through the movement of their bodies. They impact the audience’s perception and ideals through the movement of their body.

When a dancer resisting the stipulated codes and norms associated with the body in performance they are presenting their own experiences—they are asserting their own subjectivity. They expose to the audience a dynamic, human subject—rather than a passive object. This challenges toe audience to see the body from a new perspective. I will further argue that Dancenoise intentionally uses an aggressive style of speaking back to the audience to assert their subjectivity.

While gaze theory is important for analyzing representational structures and audience reception, feminist dance scholars also investigated the ways in which the body is used to impart ideas about gender. Attached to the body are sociocultural understandings of gender that are embodied through everyday posture, gesture, and movement. Dance scholars expanded our “understanding of the ways in which the body serves both as a ground for the inscription of
meaning, a tool for its enactment, and a medium for its continual creation and recreation (Desmond 51). The body is a medium that learns movement—actively or passively—that is attached to sociocultural understandings of the body. Certain actions of the body are associated with specific cultural meanings; David Gere explains in his essay “29 Effeminate Gestures” that fingers that flutter symbolize a feminine expression in relation masculine expression that has stiff fingers” (351). It is through the movement of the body that hegemonic ideas are normalized or disrupted. The implications of the body in dance, then, is how the body engages with these corporeal systems that produce gender, sexuality, race, and class. The body is implicated in complex systems that produce and signify meaning, although predominant ways of using the body may be disrupted.

To understand how Dancenoise challenges hegemonic perceptions of the body in society, Michel Foucault’s work is influential. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault identifies developments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that “discovered the body as object and target of power: (Foucault 136). This control manifests on the “docile body,” a body that accepts control or is subjugated. The primary objective of this discipline of docile bodies is to dominate and produce a desired effect on individuals—whether it be labor, or social control. Foucault writes, “What was then being formed was a policy of coercion that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior” (Foucault 138). The intention of discipline is to produce bodies that conform to the will of others, culture, and society. Furthermore, Docile bodies undergo constant discipline that “implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion supervising the process of activity, rather than its result” (Foucault 137). These processes take time and continual scrutiny of how individuals complete numerous tasks and actions. The constant scrutiny and discipline from external factors creates the effect of self-
policing one’s behavior for fear of being caught disobeying the rules. Who we are and how we relate to others is immersed in a complex network of relationships, institutions, and regulations that “produces subjected and practiced bodies, docile bodies” that affect how one views themselves and others (Foucault 137). Dancenoise, through their works *Open Season* and *Half a Brain*, challenges the “docile body” and hegemonic depictions of the body.

Judith Butler, an influential feminist theorist, uses a Foucauldian model to investigate gender. I utilize Butler’s theory of performativity to investigate how Dancenoise subverts a heteronormative gender identity. This is done by working against the cultural codes that sustain gender. Butler’s theory of performativity is first explained in her work *Gender Trouble*. Gender is a construction that uses the body itself. Repeated actions communicate gender, but it happens within strict codes, rules and guidelines. Over time, the repetition of such actions makes it appear as though the gendered movements are natural—a means to propagate patriarchal ideology. An individual “performs” their gender through the use of their body. This performance manifests through a variety of ways such as how one holds themselves, or through arm gestures. These movements are coded with meaning that construct what we think of as male and female. It is through consistent reiteration of bodily habits that signify gender, that the categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ appear to be innate and stable. Feminist dance scholars such as Albright utilize Butler to examine various avenues of gender and dance. From this theory, I argue that Dancenoise presents the body apart from the regulatory laws of gender.

In Butler’s later work, *Bodies that Matter*, she clarifies her work in *Gender Trouble*. She further explains how the processes that produce a gendered body also produce sexed bodies. Butler explains that “‘sex’ is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time” (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 1). The social construction of gender comes from a body that has
been continually subjected to rigorous policing of its movements, gestures, and posture. These processes also sustain hegemonic ideas about “sex.” She detaches the idea of “sex” from a stable category because it takes time to materialize. A given body is never able to fully materialize every aspect of Western ideals on sex or gender. These social constructs require mechanisms of control to produce these categories, meaning that they are not innate, or natural. I will argue that Dancenoise upsets the reiterative aspects of gender and sex, rendering their identities as unfixed, or unstable.

Dance and feminist studies is a good arena for discovering how Dancenoise challenges hegemonic associations with the body. From the associations of the body in Western culture, we begin to understand the environment in which Sexton and Iobst created their work. The West strictly monitors how individuals move their bodies. Dance studies’ emphasis on movement helps uncover how Dancenoise subverts patriarchal depictions of women. The theoretical paradigms I have explained will be used to analyze Dancenoise and argue that they resist hegemonic, sexist depictions of the body and normative bodily behaviors. I specifically use gaze theory, Foucault’s docile body, and Butler’s writing on performativity to analyze the subversive aspects of their works Half a Brain and Open Season. In the following chapter, I will discuss how Dancenoise fits into postmodern dance history before analyzing their two works.
Chapter 3: History

The history of postmodern dance is one of rebellion against established ways of dance making. This chapter discusses three distinct movements in postmodern dance history and situates Dancenoise as part of the 1980’s avant-garde community in New York City. Their works *Half a Brain* and *Open Season* exemplify an approach to dance that began to emerge at the end of the 1970’s. I begin with an overview of historic shifts within postmodern dance in the 1960’s, 70’s, and 80’s. Then I discuss Dancenoise and how they fit into the downtown dance scene. Here, I overview *Half a Brain* and *Open Season* and connect Dancenoise to the interests of other avant-garde artists.

POSTMODERN DANCE

Dancenoise was an active part of the New York City downtown dance scene in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Commonly described as a group of avant-garde artists that lived and worked south of Fourteenth Street in Manhattan, “[d]owntown dance doesn’t describe a place as much as it describes an approach to making dances” (Sommer 10). Downtown New York City has been home to historical paradigms of avant-garde dance making, with groups such as the leftist Workers Dance League of the 1930’s political work and the Judson Dance Theatre of the 1960’s and 70’s – both centered in Greenwich Village – challenging choreographic structures and redefining what constitutes dance. Around the time that Dancenoise was founded in the early 1980’s, another shift was happening among avant-garde dance artists in the downtown scene. Dance historian Sally Banes, writing about the history of important downtown dance institution, The Kitchen, explains that between 1976 and 1984, “significant shifts took place in postmodern dance; it changed from a purist, reductive, analytic style to a more theatrical, expressive, even flamboyant idiom” (“Choreographing” 144). Artists found a renewed interest in narrative content
after the more formalist, minimalist style of the 1970s.

What came to be known as downtown dance in the 1980’s was an outgrowth of sixties- and-seventies-era postmodern dance. Banes accounts for the history of postmodern dance in ways both historical and descriptive. Its historical aspects begin with the early 1960’s Judson Dance Theatre—a group of avant-garde postmodern dancers that experimented in the sixties and seventies in Greenwich Village when choreographers such as Yvonne Rainer used the term “post-modern” to differentiate their work from modern dance. The focus of these early postmodern dancers was on reexamining form and content; modern dance choreographers tended to use musical structures (ABA, Rondo, Canon, etc.) to structure their dances. The postmodern choreographers experimented with methods that “ranged from chance procedures, to improvisation to picture-scores, to rule-games and tasks, and from a minimalist interest in sustaining ‘one thing’ to a welter of multimedia” (Banes, Writing 303). The possibilities for creating dance proliferated with no singular mode of working, but there were similar interests in moving away from modern dance structures. Furthermore, movement vocabulary of the sixties utilized “ordinary activities” (such as child’s play and daily tasks) or the “specialized actions of athletics, ballet, and modern dance techniques” (Banes, Writing 303). The sixties expanded the dance field’s collective notions of what could be dance, what could be art.

By the 1970’s, a more unified style emerged. Choreographers such as Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, and Trisha Brown—also part of the sixties era—created works that were “abstract and shorn of excess theatrical trappings,” reducing dance down to the most essential parts: the body and its movement (Banes, Writing 303). The dance experiments of that era “shared methods and goals with the high modernist project of minimalism, which dominated visual art in the seventies” (Banes, Writing 303). As a result of this alignment with modernism in
the visual arts, some dance scholars like Susan Manning have questioned whether the self-proclaimed postmodern dance of the seventies was really postmodernist\(^1\). Manning argues that “our notions of postmodernism are confused because our notions of modernism are confused” (Manning, 37). Sally Banes, though, argues that the term “postmodern dance” recognizes the historic origin of the term in which dance artists differentiated their new approaches from modern dance; also, the term has a descriptive use that acknowledges modernist aspects within postmodern dance. Banes addresses the confusion about dance and postmodernism:

> This is partly because at various points its practices have meshed with aspects of postmodernism in the other arts. But, more importantly, it is because practices that are (compared to the visual arts, for instance) both modernist and postmodernist have already both been subsumed under the rubric ‘postmodern dance.’ (Banes, Writing 304).

Even within the minimalism of the seventies, there are aspects that exemplify a postmodernist approach to making art. They were questioning preconceived notions about dance and expanding the choreographic imagination.

The avant-garde artists that lived and worked south of Fourteenth Street in Manhattan in the 1980’s broke away from the postmodern dance of the 1960’s and 70’s, while continuing to experiment and broaden conceptions of dance. Dance scholars agree that the 1980’s postmodern dance fulfills a postmodernist approach. For example, this new era shifted away from a modernist minimalism and reduction of dance to the bare-essentials: “In the 1980’s, ‘postmodern is no longer a descriptive term, categorizing directions already in motion—but a prescriptive one—a commitment to a project that takes postmodernist, poststructuralist theory as set of directive guidelines” (Banes, Writing 309). Many choreographers’ approaches are tied to theory, while many work in a way that can be connected to theory. Dance artists in the 1980’s expanded the boundaries of dance. “That analytical, often austere research program, in a modernist key—
which dominated the seventies—gave way in the 1980’s to new interests in pluralism, in politics, in narrative, in ballet, and in collaborations between the disciplines” (Banes, Writing 309). There was no singular way to dance, make dance, view dance, or experience dance. The boundaries that defined dance meshed together as conceptions of dance expanded—as opposed to the seventies interest with minimalism and pure form. Performances were immersed in culture, incorporating pop-culture images, songs, critiques of culture, and political activism among other elements. The avant-garde movements in the 1980’s downtown dance scene asserted that anything could be considered or factored into dance.

DANCENOISE AND DOWNTOWN DANCE

In 2015, the Whitney Museum of Modern Art hosted a five-day retrospective titled “Dancenoise: Don’t Look Back.” These shows attracted audiences that Sexton and Iobst had garnered from their years of performances in New York City nightclubs, and other performance venues. Contemporary dance writer for the New York Times, Gia Kourlas, recalls how Dancenoise became “a staple of the East Village nightclub scene beginning in 1983” (Kourlas, 2015). Their works were covered by many different dance and art critics such as Jennifer Dunning, Jack Anderson, Dennis Cooper, R. Goldman, and Andy Battaglia with generally positive reviews—though some appear perplexed. While Sexton and Iobst stand out, the also reflect the interests of downtown dance artists. The downtown dance scene includes a multiplicity of forms, content, and approaches. Specifically, their use of narrative, reference to popular-culture, and the duet format of working connect them to the broader avant-garde dance scene that lived and worked south of Fourteenth street.

Dancenoise got their start performing in New York City night clubs, particularly in the East Village. Dancenoise frequently performed at nightclubs such as the Pyramid Cocktail
Lounge, 8BC, and King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut. Cynthia Carr, in her book On Edge, recalls walking into 8BC and seeing Dancenoise’s All the Rage. (Carr 171). Notably, they were established a regular performance at King Tut’s, “a space that informed their artistic development; as hosts of the Wednesday night series there, they learned how to talk” (Kourlas “The Whitney”). These early shows included small skits or acts. Sexton explains, “From there, little skits expanded out to larger vignettes and longer dances, and that started to become part of a Dancenoise show” (Kourlas “The Whitney”). These early nightclub performances gave opportunity to artists like Dancenoise who would continue to create longer works.

Performing in clubs was influential in the development of Dancenoise’s larger works. In “Once Upon a Time in Performance Art,” Lenora Champagne discusses artists that worked in East Village nightclubs. Those who “made their name in clubs, where audience expectations and performance conditions call for high shock value” (Champagne 189). Dancenoise exhibits this emphasis on shock value in their works. This could mean blaring rock music, covering their bodies in blood, yelling at the audience while nude, or wearing outlandish costumes among many others. Also, performance art in nightclubs incorporated “cartoon-like in gesture and timing, full of accumulated objects, and intentionally messy in execution” (Champagne 189). Dancenoise shows include outlandish spectacles with multiple props and costumes, reflecting their time spent working in nightclubs.

Sexton and Iobst also performed in spaces designed to support avant-garde and experimental dance. They frequently performed at Performance Space 122 “a space known for presenting works by artists who challenge and blur the lines of traditional art disciplines” (Radell 61). In 2000, Sexton even hosted the benefit concert for the venue (Lee 35). The Kitchen, an important institution of the downtown dance scene, also hosted Dancenoise shows, beginning in
1985 as the Kitchen began to present dancers with a ‘bad girl,’ punk-feminist edge” (Banes “Choreographing” 154). Sexton and Iobst gravitated towards experimental, avant-garde venues such as Danspace at St. Marks, LaMama Experimental Theatre Club, Franklin Furnace, and WOW Café Theatre festival. They also presented works at the Whitney Museum of American Art, such as their piece titled Dancenoise as part of the Whitney’s “Say What?: The 1993 Biennial Performance/Theatre Project” (Dunning, “Dance in Review”). Dancenoise’s array of venues reflects their avant-garde interests and tendencies in the 1980’s and 90’s.

Dancenoise initially stands out among their contemporaries because of their name. The name comes from a band aesthetic, rather than naming themselves in the title. Lucy Sexton explains,

It was a push-back […] against the idea that it felt very, still feels very insider that I’m going to see ‘Susan Marshall Dance Company.’ If you don’t know who Susan Marshall is, you do not have a clue about what the work might be. If you’re going to go see, you know, a band called Butthole Surfers, well you have an idea, sort of, where that band might be placed in the ecosystem. So, I thought that was a more open way of saying it, not such a dance insider way of saying it (Sexton 2016).

From their start in night clubs, Sexton and Iobst became known as Dancenoise. They design the stage with two microphones downstage center reflecting the band name and their time performing in nightclubs. The relationship with the audience developed like that of a band with audiences coming to see shows for the assertive, clever style of speaking to the audience and the aggressive, spectacular chaos that characterizes Dancenoise shows. Their audiences were initially attracted through performances at nightclubs, audiences who would follow them to their longer shows at institutions such as the Kitchen. Sexton and Iobst established themselves in downtown dance under the name Dancenoise.

Dancenoise quickly became prominent figures in the downtown dance scene with their
genre crossing performances. *New York Times* dance writer, Siobhan Burke, explains that “[t]his audacious duo […] rose to downtown fame in the 1980s with their smart, wild, routinely gruesome brew of dance, comedy and performance art” (Burke, “Dance Listings”). Their dynamic blend of dance and performance art is captured by Dennis Cooper’s review of their 1988 performance *Half a Brain*:

Sexton and Iobst’s work displays a promiscuous intelligence and vitality that ups the ante on most other performance art, which tends to use a veneer of ease to erase the pretenses of conventional theater or dance. Performance remains one of the most difficult arts to master, partly because the least compromise leads back to one of the older, deadlier entertainment forms, and partly because each construct must measure up to the sexy beauty of the medium’s immediacy. Dancenoise seems to have gotten the balance absolutely right, for the apparent chaos of *Half a Brain* felt perfect in a way that truly alive art rarely does (Dennis 147).

Dennis writes from a performance art perspective. In assessing Dancenoise’s performance, he recognizes Iobst and Sexton’s sophisticated understanding of performance. Dennis finds that their chaotic scene changing structure captivates audiences. As if to solidify their prominence, they were featured at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2015 in a five-day retrospective called “Dancenoise: Don’t Look Back.” From fans that first saw them at King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut to their recognition by institutions such as the Whitney, Sexton and Iobst became staples of the downtown dance scene.

Generally, reviews of Dancenoise’s shows were positive. Jennifer Dunning, a *New York Times* dance critic, reviews Dancenoise’s *It’s a Girl* (1991) where she identifies that this work is similar to their other shows in that “the viewer is pulled into a world of nightmare dreams and hilarious apocalyptic visions” (Dunning, “Travel Hints”). Given the experimental nature of their work, reviews were not always positive. Jack Anderson’s review of *All the Rage* (1989) mentions that Dancenoise was “too relentlessly manic” and argues that the commentary was “lost amid the farcical nonsense” (Anderson “2 Clowns”). Phyllis Goldman’s review of
Dancenoise’s *It’s a Girl* (1991) is less understanding. Goldman writes that “[t]he girls state their case that the U.S. is not a rosy place these days” and calls the audience “eager” (Goldman 8). Overall the critical reception to Dancenoise’s work is a combination of perplexed, annoyed, but mostly positive.

The downtown dance scene includes a multiplicity of forms, content, and approaches, but there are common elements in it that Dancenoise closely reflects. For instance, the duet pairing of Sexton and Iobst parallels the broader appeal of the duet in the 1980’s dance scene because of neoliberal economic policies. Sally Sommer, writing for *Dance Ink* in 1990, observes of the new dance scene: “One obvious change since the mid 1970’s is the collapse of the company and the blossoming of solos (think also the rise of the performance artists) and duets. Shrinkage, of course, is caused by economic restrictions.” (Sommer 10). It was more financially feasible to work with a smaller amount of people. In Tim Lawrence’s essay “Real Estate and New York Dance,” he discusses the short-term debt that the New York City government acquired in the 1970’s and its effects on New York citizens. The solution for the debt crisis began the neoliberal project of emphasizing the free market and business over social programs. In 1978, newly elected mayor Ed Koch enacted policies that included “65,000 redundancies, a wage freeze, welfare and services cuts, public transport price hikes, and the abolition of free tuition fees at the City University in return for a bailout” (Lawrence 291). This emphasis on business economic success over social programming and the welfare of the people gentrified the once affordable downtown Manhattan residences, an area that had attracted avant-garde dance artists. Writing for *Dance Magazine* in 1987, Elizabeth Zimmer explains that “The cost of living has placed ‘downtown’ out of reach of most young artists, not to mention thousands of others with nowhere to live but the streets” (Zimmer 66). Downtown artists were directly affected by the new political
paradigm that increased rent prices in the once affordable area.

The economic climate of the 1980’s did not hinder the avant-garde dance community from working. In the early 1980’s, downtown dance artists had an emphasis on narrative and theatricality, but with a particular twist. Sommer explains the new approach: “Moving away from abstraction, choreographers use themes and characters and texts in a nonlinear way. Emphatic and illogical fragments propel the dance. Stories are begun but never finished. The narrative progresses by piling one ambiguity on top of another” (10). Downtown dance artists moved away from the “pure form” of the preceding generation of postmodern dancers, and began to incorporate narrative. The narrative work of the 1980’s often did not follow a linear, chronological sense of time. Instead, the work took on a “neo-narrative” that could move between time, characters, and setting within a moment’s notice (Sommer 12). Banes identifies artists performing Kitchen in the 1980’s, Ishmael Huston Jones, Jim Self, Eric Barsness, and Hope Gillerman. Of these choreographers and dancers Banes explains that they “reveled in danced storytelling,” each with their own approaches to using narrative (Banes, “Choreographing” 154).

Many artists utilized characters in their narratives. Zimmer observes that “[y]ou know you’re downtown, though, because of the way these people use their bodies. They give themselves to character” (Zimmer 67). Downtown dance artists such as Jeffrey Essman and Mark Dendy utilized characters in their work. Zimmer notes that Essman “impersonates an inebriated Barbie doll” and Dendy “cast himself as a Southern fundamentalist preacher in Reel” (Zimmer 67). Artists such as Dancenoise and Mimi Goese who have followed nonlinear narratives, have a different use of characters. Without a consistent story to follow, characters were often taken on then discarded after serving their purpose. The characters informed the
narrative and could be cohesive, or disheveled.

The return to narrative also shows a particular theatricality that interested dance makers in the 1980’s and further fragmented narrative structures. Zimmer explains that “[t]he new scene is heavy on ornament, even clutter, though it also embraces nudity” (68). Costumes, props, and setting appeared illogical and could change as often as the narrative. This enhanced the ambiguity of the nonlinear narratives and expanded the possibilities of dancemaking. Artists such as Tom Murrin (Alien Comic)—an early influence on Iobst and Sexton—and Mimi Goese “have made an aesthetic of stages strewn with garbage” (Zimmer 67). While the narratives were fragmented, they also utilize excessive sets, props, and costumes to further confuse the narrative. This new approach to making dance gave downtown dance artists a new means of constructing their work. They were not tied to a traditional use of narrative, and could create their own realities on the stage.

With the new approach to narrative, pop-culture references proliferated in the 1980’s downtown dance scene. Sally Banes, writing about The Kitchen, a prominent downtown dance institution where Dancenoise performed, discusses how the audiences of the late 1970’s were seeing a new type of dance: “It was ‘post-avant-garde,’ postmodern art—music, video, photography, and performance (including dance) that forsook formalism and embraced content. It alluded to, even appropriated from, popular culture genres and styles” (Banes, “Choreographing” 150). Dance making moved away from the emphasis on pure form, and choreographers loaded their dances with popular culture references. Banes identifies several downtown artists that “presented high energy events that may have appropriated or commented on entertainment and popular culture” such as Pooh Kaye, Timothy Buckley, Bebe Miller, and Barbara Allen (Banes, “Choreographing” 154). Zimmer observed that the new dancers of the
1980’s “have the superabundance of ‘stuff’ that floats our consumer culture” (Zimmer 67). These new dances utilized the “stuff” around them in their work in ways that were as obscure as the use of narrative. What connotation a product had in culture could be reinterpreted during performance. They would decontextualize the products and create a new meaning specific to their performance.

Dancenoise stands out among downtown dance artists with their blend of dance and performance art. Their start in nightclubs informed the spectacular, shocking aspects of their work and emphasized the use of dialogue. As they performed in established, avant-garde institutions, their work grew longer, but maintained the fast-paced chaos they were known for. As Dancenoise stands out, they also reflect other downtown dance artists such as their duet pairing. The following section overviews how they reflect the interests in theatricality, narrative, and popular culture. Specifically, the works *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*, the focus of this thesis, exemplify how Dancenoise reflects these interests.

HALF A BRAIN AND OPEN SEASON

Dancenoise’s *Half a Brain* and *Open Season* exemplify the interests of the downtown dance community. For instance, their shows portray a new use of narrative and theatricality where a plot is not guaranteed to follow a chronological story. The use of popular-culture in their shows also relates to interests of the avant-garde. These works also utilize Dancenoise’s rapid-fire structure that Sexton and Iobst became known for. *Half a Brain* deals with issues of women’s representation and *Open Season* tackles popular culture. These works were chosen because of their chronological distance from each other; they were made during two different parts of Dancenoise’s history.

Dancenoise performed their aggressive and silly *Half a Brain* on March 5, 1988, at
Performance Space 122. This work included guest artists David Linton, John Hagan, Jennifer Monson, Amon Grimsted, Ishmael Houston-Jones, and Carmelita Tropicana. The barrage of dance, costumes, props, music, and dialogue make a piece that is energetic and striking. Cigarettes were lit in darkness, Tropicana leads a conga line, Hagan pounds on a piano with boxing gloves, and blood covers the stage as they slit their throats reflecting the fast-paced scene changing structure that is characteristic of Dancenoise’s work. Guest artists meandered on and off stage as the piece flowed between chaos, light-heartedness, aggression, and comedy. The title phrase, “half a brain,” refers to the sexist belief that women are not as intelligent as men and is referenced throughout the show. *Half a Brain* assaults patriarchal gender norms in American culture as it relates to women’s role in society and the passivity prescribed to women’s bodies.

Dancenoise makes a parody of the idea that a woman’s place in society is in the private sphere, the home. Dressed in short blonde wigs and a floral print dress holding a frying pan, Iobst and Sexton begin to pantomime the act of cooking. The depiction of cooking, already peculiarized by the fish-chopping bears on the sides of the stage, breaks into a dramatic exaggeration by crushing an egg on their foreheads, and stuffing the wig into the pan, and using extra-large salt and pepper shakers. The hyperbolic means through which they continue adding ingredients makes a parody of a 1950’s housewife stereotype to which women are expected to conform. This parody is light hearted and outlandish, but makes it clear that the societal rules that resign women to the private sphere are ridiculous.

Another patriarchal gender norm that Dancenoise tackles is the idea that women should be caretakers and should refrain from sex. Iobst and Sexton walk onstage with baby dolls and traditional nurse outfits with large curly-blond wigs. The prop and costume relate to the cultural idea that women are caretakers; they throw the baby dolls between one another and remove the
nurse outfits to reject the idea of women as innately mothers. They throw a fist at the audience as they exclaim “we’re not talking half a brain in this country, we’re talking no head.” to which they collapse into a plank over life-sized, headless blowup dolls and sharply pelvic thrust. This transgresses the idea that women cannot, or should not have sexual experiences, reflecting a common theme related to cultural ideas about women and how they use their bodies.

*Half a Brain* also displays the body in ways that subvert hegemonic representations. Ishmael Houston-Jones, a frequent collaborator, appears on stage in black heels, short white shorts, and a red long sleeve shirt and propels his body into a lunge and then swiftly into a squat. His movement and clothing are both masculine and feminine, resisting gender conformity. The clothing and movement are simultaneously masculine and feminine; Dancenoise also presents the body in opposition to sociocultural rules that dictate how men and women are to act. This is seen in the percussive dance they perform to Alice Cooper’s “Step on You,” which challenges appropriate, gendered means of moving. Their arms crease at the elbow and they show their bicep to the audience as if they were competing bodybuilders. The hard-hitting style of this segment counters the lightness and fluidity of the ballerina—a cultural symbol of femininity. Their costuming is all black with combat boots, strapped-shirts, and capes that say “Cher for President.”

Dancenoise exemplifies the ambiguous use of narrative and use of popular culture in their 1988 performance of *Half a Brain*. There is no clear narrative throughout the performance. Instead, scenes are set up with particular costumes and clothes, but quickly change into something else. In one scene, Iobst and Sexton are dressed in nurse outfits carrying baby dolls. The initial scenario of two nurses is disbanded as they continue with a dance in white bras and underwear. This eventually leads to a chaotic scene where the guest artists assist in throwing
trash around on stage. The way in which the scene unfolds is illogical with no reason to progress. These scenes used throughout the piece reflect the use of narrative in the 1980’s because there is no clear story that develops. Furthermore, they insert popular-culture references in these scenes. When wearing capes that support cultural icon “Cher for President,” they dance to Alice Cooper’s “Step on You.” These references happen within a scene that also has no clear narrative, eventually leading to a person with a bear head leading a dance and ending with Sexton and Iobst using a fish as a make-up brush. The way they used narrative and pop-culture in *Half a Brain* resembles the characteristics of the 1980’s avant-garde.

Dancenoise both satirizes and challenges repressive ideology about women in American culture and society. They make a parody of the idea that women should be in the home, mock the idea that women are natural caretakers, and transgress the notion that women should refrain from their sexuality. This is accented by the ways in which they and guest artists use their bodies in ways that do not conform to normal ideas. *Half a Brain* makes a clear critique of repressive ideology towards women amongst the chaos, visual spectacle, comedic wit, and outlandish costumes. By tackling a multiplicity of ideas, Dancenoise problematizes notions of normalcy and represents women against patriarchal oppression.

Later, Dancenoise’s *Open Season* premiered in December 1996 at P.S. 122, a popular venue for downtown dance performers, and featured guest artists Mike Iveson and Ishmael Huston Jones. The technical director Lori E. Seid is featured at the beginning, quickly setting up the stage and Laurie Weeks, Dancenoise’s dramaturge, makes a brief appearance. *Open Season* blends performance art and dance: the fast-paced structure that alternates between dialogue, dance, and visual spectacle. The dynamic energy integrates casual speech with chaotic movement. Their hard-hitting, aggressive style is set against soft and contained moments and
dance segments. Although the opening line sets up a narrative about “creatures” cloned from DNA found on a “sanitary napkin,” the story is disbanded as they continue to other scenarios. This piece includes a multiplicity of minor pop-culture references. *Open Season* is a satirical piece, that relentlessly satirizes popular culture.

*Open Season* also reflects the avant-garde approach that emerged in the 1980’s. *Open Season* begins with “Once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away.” The phrase is taken from the Star Wars film franchise as a clear pop-culture reference. As the story continues, they remove the phrase from its original context. In their imaginary scenario, scientists cloned an extinct species from DNA found on a “sanitary napkin.” This performance follows the “unique story of these creatures in their renewed reign of terror.” They never return to this initial narrative and instead move freely about. Sexton and Iobst are nude performing tricks with hula hoops in one segment and are parodying Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit*. Embedded within the performance are further pop-culture references such as Bob Dylan’s song “Early Morning Rain” and references to the Romantic era book *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. Popular-culture in *Open Season* may be the focus of the scene, or simply used in passing. *Open Season* reflects the new use of narrative that emerged in the 1980’s downtown dance scene.

*Open Season* makes a commentary on pop-culture’s tendency to mold art based on preconceived expectations of spectacle. Audiences are trained to see thoughtless entertainment with no inspiration to think about art. Interrupting the Iveson and Jones parody of *Frankenstein*, Sexton and Iobst burst out of the cardboard box at center stage wearing a loose button down crop tops paired with mini skater-skirts and plain black pumps, completed with a black shoulder-length wigs. The structure of this dance is simple—in tandem with the minimalist gesturing accented with Iobst and Sexton’s pantomime—that is best phrased by Iobst and Sexton after
concluding this section: “We emerged from the TV-box, we came down toward the audience. Perfect.” This is followed with Iobst enthusiastically saying, “Almost like she said, we came out of the box in perfect synchronization to be propelled forward in a double meter to arrive here in front of you.” By explaining to the preceding dance, it gives the audience all they need to know; pop-culture is void of content and it is just about the spectacle, the entertainment. The simplicity of this scene’s structure is a parody of the homogenized structuring of art that is void of content that conforms to redundant structures.

Furthermore, *Open Season* emphasizes a parody of spectacle within pop-culture. In the same scene, Iveson pops out of the box in a long, messy blonde wig and white dress and begins to convulse while he mimics eating out of a bag of packing peanuts. This throws Iobst and Sexton into sporadic, off-balanced, meandered, unmetered movement that escalates into spinning and ripping off the entire costume except the heels and they end at the microphone stands downstage. The minimalist movement is disrupted and the stage is thrown into chaos. Iobst comments on the spectacle that their audiences have become accustomed to in their shows. They describe the sensationalized quality of their work with phrases like “Phenomenally decadent,” Through the outrageous spectacle of their work, Sexton and Iobst make a parody out of the simplistic structures, lack of content, and meaningless spectacle that fills pop culture.

Dancenoise occupies a place in the history of postmodern dance. From their beginning in 1983, their chaotic and hysterical mix of performance art and dance became prominent downtown dance figures. With their prominence, they still reflected the interests of 1980’s choreographers in terms of narrative, theatricality, the duet format. *Half a Brain* employs a fast-paced structure to dismantle sexist representations of women. In *Open Season*, Dancenoise’s commentary on pop-culture criticizes its lack of content. Dancenoise satirizes pop-culture
explicitly with dialogue and implicitly with their fast-paced scene structure. *Open Season* goes through a litany of material among the fast-paced structure that is characteristic of its performances. Sexton and Iobst continue to critique the normality of popular culture and Western ideology in these works. The following chapter focuses on *Half a Brain* and *Open Season* and analyzes them based on three theoretical paradigms.
Chapter 4: Analysis

Dancenoise adamantly works against the normalized ideas attached to the body in Western culture. Cynthia Carr, discussing *All the Rage*, explains that “Anne Iobst and Lucy Sexton flaunt the aggression women learn to hide” (Carr 171). The passivity prescribed to female bodies means nothing to Sexton and Iobst. In *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*, Dancenoise continues to challenge the authority of dominant ideology in society and culture. This chapter follows the theoretical paradigm discussed in chapter two and concludes with a discussion about postmodernism. I begin my analysis by examining how Dancenoise uses a fast-paced structure and nudity to resist hegemonic, sexist depictions of the body. I then broaden my argument by incorporating multiple gazes. Then I connect their use of popular culture to Foucault’s writing on the docile body. I further argue that Dancenoise resists the docility of the body in terms of gender. Using Butler’s theory of performativity, I argue that the corporeal codes that designate gender are disrupted. To conclude, I connect Dancenoise’s work to postmodernism and the poststructuralist decentered subject.

DANCENOISE AND GAZES

Dancenoise challenges the power structures of the male gaze. As discussed in Chapter two, sexist representational structures are embedded into Western art. These structures predetermine a power relationship between the audience and performer in which women are objectified and viewed as the object of desire. In *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*, Sexton and Iobst resist the power of a male gaze. Specifically, I discuss two ways in which Dancenoise subverts the male gaze: firstly, Dancenoise uses a fast-paced structure to resist objectification by constantly cycling through short bits of material, or acts; secondly, Sexton’s and Iobst’s nudity, in tandem with dialogue, resists the prescribed power relationship of the male gaze. In using this
theoretical paradigm, the intention is not to dissect how the male gaze impacts their work; rather, it helps us to better understand how Dancenoise challenges hegemonic gazes.

Sexton and Iobst utilize a fast-paced structure to subvert the power dynamics of the male gaze. Judy Burns, in her essay “Sexist Images and Women’s Performance,” writes about a performance and panel discussion held at Movement Research in 1988 that included Jerri Allyn, Ellen Fisher, and Dancenoise with the discussion moderated by Janet Shaw. Burns documents that Iobst and Sexton discussed “the safeguards and barriers” they implemented in their work: “The speed and shortness of their scenes is a big factor; their performances have a hit-and-run quality, constantly catching the audience off guard” (Burns 170). The structure of Dancenoise’s work challenges conventional spectorial gazes; they explicitly, actively work against being seen as the passive object of desire in how they arrange short scenes. Through “a series of images like a burst of machine gun fire, they are less vulnerable to being objectified, more in control of the relationship with the audience, more able to modify that relationship at a moment’s notice” (Burns 170). The effect of this structure prevents the spectator from clinging to a stable image—as with classical ballet’s positioning of the ballerina as the object of desire. By rapidly changing scenes, the audience must constantly reassess what’s happening on stage; the audience does not have any stable sexist depictions of women. There is no object configured for heterosexist viewership. Dancenoise uses this structure in Half a Brain and Open Season.

The subversive effects of the fast-paced scene structure are seen in Half a Brain. Iobst and Sexton take on the characters of traditional, stereotypical concepts of femininity. For instance, they portray women as homemakers in one scene. They begin with a skillet and an egg and mimic shifting the pan over a stove. As the scene progresses, they quickly parody the image of a woman cooking in a comical, outlandish fashion. They repetitively chop up the contents of the
skillet, throw in their wigs, and mindlessly use the contents of a picnic basket. Giant salt and pepper shakers are thrown onto the stage as they finish the meal, taste their dish, and make their exit. Their eccentric cooking makes a parody of the traditional association of women with housework by failing to do so correctly. As soon as they have made the dish, they discard the homemaker characters and are soon chased on and across the stage by two people pointing guns at them. This gives the two people standing on the sides of the stage the chance to remove their grizzly bear heads. One states that “every morning my wife calls me a bear,” to which an onstage voice replies “Goddamn it, bears are women, too”. Here, the fast-paced structure allows Dancenoise to set up and dismantle a typical scenario of women doing housework. They satirize the recognizable image of housewife and then thrown away as the scene progresses. Where they were once the traditional homemaker, they become new characters. They subvert an audience member’s male gaze because the stable image of femininity is discarded, causing the audience view Sexton and Iobst apart from the stereotype. This specific scene shows how Half a Brain uses recognizable imagery of stereotypical womanhood and disassociates them from their original meanings to subvert the male gaze.

The larger structure of the work further exemplifies the lack of a stable subject for the male gaze. Half a Brain disassociates other stereotypical costuming from traditional ideals. The nun costumes invoke ideas of morality and submission, but Sexton and Iobst smoke cigars, talk to the audience, and remove their costumes, revealing a bra and panties pair. This is quickly interrupted by the bears who take over the scene. Stereotypical characters such as this are dismantled in the individual scenes and force the audience to see Dancenoise outside of the cultural connotations of women as passive and submissive. Furthermore, among the costuming that invokes traditional concepts of femininity, Sexton and Iobst also wear costuming that is
nontraditional. One example is when they are wearing black combat boots, red spandex shorts, a tank top with handcuffs around the breasts, and a shiny black hat. The audience sees Dancenoise in multiple costumes as they take on different characters, or personas. In the context of a rapid-fire structure, a spectator has no passive object of desire to for the active male gaze. A patriarchal gaze is unable to identify Sexton and Iobst because their multiple characters do not align with sexist depictions of women. Without the stable, heteronormative image of a woman, the audience must see Sexton and Iobst as complex human subjects. Overall, the succession of costumes in a complex scene structure, subverts the male gaze by never conforming to be a passive object of display.

Dancenoise also implements the fast-paced structure to subvert hegemonic gazes in the later work, *Open Season*. In their rendition of the French play *No Exit*, they position Iveson, Iobst, and Sexton in a short black dress and black heels: through this costuming, the spectator sees feminine clothing on both men and women, obfuscating the gender binary on which the male gaze is based. At another point the full cast is dressed in sweaters and khaki pants. Again, this presents men and women in the same attire, but with different clothing. As soon as the audience sees Sexton and Iobst in a costume, or as a certain “character,” the next scene comes in with new imagery, “characters,” and themes. A spectator’s male gaze is not allowed to view them as the object of desire because there is no single means through which to categorize their gender and consistently view them as an object of desire.

Furthermore, Dancenoise subverts the male gaze using dialogue while nude. In my interview with Sexton, while discussing how she counters objectification in her work, she explains that “the thing which I found really, really changed that power relationship of being naked is when we started talking naked” (Sexton 2016). The power relations of the male gaze
position the viewer as active subject that desires and the viewed as the passive object of desire. Albright explains how dance, in the context of live performance, has potential to change this dynamic. “The physical presence of the dancer—the aliveness of her body—radically challenges the implicit power dynamic of any gaze, for there is always the very real possibility that she will look back!” (Albright 15). The structure of Dancenoise shows incorporate dialogue and nudity as aspects of the performances. In Open Season, not only does Dancenoise look back at the audience, they address the audience in full nude. They talk to the audience as they would have clothed, forcing the audience to see them not as objects of desire, but as complex human subjects.

Being nude causes the audience to see them in a way that challenges the audience’s perceptions. Sexton further elaborates on the use of nudity in her work:

[Talking nude] takes the control away as opposed to a stripper or somebody who’s going to do something for you, or even dancers that are naked within the context of a dance. It allows you that distance of, like, I can just be the observer here and I can look at their body as I want. Whether I’m seeing it in some respectful way or in some objectified way, whatever, I’m not being challenged. When that person comes forward to a microphone naked and starts talking to you in your face. You know, then that’s a different relationship (Sexton, 2016).

Sexton demonstrates a conscious subversion of hegemonic ways of viewing performance. They challenge traditional gazes using the nude body in tandem with dialogue. When the decontextualized performance of Open Season is on pornography sites, the dialogue that challenges the gazes is removed. In context of the performance, however, the preceding dialogue while in the nude confronts audience and causes them to listen rather than simply see. The male gaze’s power to position them as objects of display for viewing, is disrupted when they speak back and demand the audience’s attention. Spectators are challenged to listen to Sexton and Iobst and to interpret the work based on the information given to them, rather than the prescribed
power dynamic of the male gaze.

As feminist scholars have detailed, the male gaze is totalizing in its effects and feminist projects can easily be coopted by patriarchal culture. Male gaze theory’s limits exist in the inability of any individual to escape their totalizing power; Daly explains that a performer is “part of a dense thicket of completely familiar codes and conventions that conspire to position her/him as the willing object of desire” (Daly 297). Dancenoise created and performed *Open Season* and *Half a Brain* within this patriarchal context. A digital video of the nude hula-hoop duet from *Open Season* can be seen on several pornography websites. While this segment is out of context of the whole work, it highlights patriarchal cultures tendency and ability to homogenize feminist art projects. The gaze applied to their bodies on the pornography sites (reflected in comments) positions them as the object of desire within the male gaze.

Male gaze theory is useful, but limiting when it stands alone. Daly explains that “the male gaze theory forces the feminist dance scholar into a no-win situation that turns on an exceedingly unproductive ‘succeed or fail’ criterion” (Daly 306). My analysis uses the male gaze as a means of analyzing Dancenoise, but does not stop there. As Albright discusses of live performance, there is an “interrelationship of bodies and gazes” that dancers navigate to control how the audience sees them. I will further asses how Dancenoise engages with multiple types of gazes in their performances of *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*.

BEYOND THE MALE GAZE

Feminist and dance scholars moved away from the male gaze to incorporate multiple gazes. The power structures of the male gaze “have been crucial in understanding how the present system works, are not terribly useful in advancing beyond the problem” (Daly 306). The notion of multiple gazes helps feminist critique to not get stuck within the binary ideology of the
male gaze. When applied to Dancenoise, their relationship with the audience is separate from the absolutist subject-object distinction of the male gaze. Furthermore, including multiple types of gazes opens the possibilities for different kinds of spectatorship in their work—the possibility to engage with their work in new ways. Jane C. Desmond, in the Introduction to Dancing Desires, explains that “no matter what spectator positioning are idealized on the stage, actual spectatorial practices can always go against the grain” (19). Considering the perspectives of multiple gazes uncovers more subversive material in Half a Brain and Open Season.

The gaze that I bring when watching Dancenoise performances stands apart from a typical male gaze. As a queer male interested in issues of gender and sexuality, when I first watched film footage of Half a Brain, I immediately recognized issues of gender being addressed. The costumes struck me as invoking stereotypical characters of femininity, but they did not adhere to typical ways of using the body. When Iveson in Open Season and Jones in Half a Brain appear on stage in feminine clothing and move their bodies in effeminate ways, I could identify with their particular expression. From my own perspective, Dancenoise shows exemplified a reality beyond the heterosexist male-female binary, an idea that registered with me. I could see Dancenoise challenging the dominant ways of using the body because of the personal history I brought to viewing the performance.

A woman’s perspective on Dancenoise comes from Cynthia Carr who writes of downtown performance in 1980’s New York City. She writes of Dancenoise: “Among the most groundbreaking were transgressive women performers who worked straight from the id to address issues of power and control, who made themselves monstrous on stage, acting out every definition of ‘filthy’ and ‘mad’” (Carr xviii). From Carr’s perspective, she finds that women’s performance worked against dominant power structures. By including Carr’s own description,
the meaning of Dancenoise’s work opens possibilities beyond the binary thinking of the male
gaze. As with Carr. The subversive content of Dancenoise shows appear in perspectives that
exist outside of cisgendered, heteronormative perspectives.

Jack Anderson’s review of *Half a Brain* exemplifies a gaze that is not attune to a
subversive use of gender in performance. Anderson entirely neglects significant aspects of this
show, particularly the commentary on women’s representation. Anderson writes, “Despite
passing references to political campaigns and the social role of women, ‘Half a Brain’ was not
primarily a topical or satirical revue, but an anarchic flight of fancy” (Anderson, “Mixing”). As
Anderson saw the piece, there is no satirical commentary of women’s representation. He
describes the opening scene “Wearing elegant gowns, Ms. Iobst and Ms. Sexton appeared ready
for cocktails in a penthouse” (Anderson, “Mixing”). Anderson concludes with “The show also
appealed to the sheer contrariness that may exist in even the gentlest of souls and which can
serve as a defense against pomposity and conformity” (Anderson, “Mixing”). While his
perspective negates the importance of gender and women’s issues, it does portray another gaze
brought to *Half a Brain*.

A performance art perspective comes from Dennis Cooper reviewing *Half a Brain* for
*ArtForum*. Cooper writes, “Sexton and Iobst brawled with media representations of women as
passive, commodity-obsessed halfwits” (Cooper 147). As opposed to Anderson’s review, Cooper
immediately recognizes that *Half a Brain* concerns with issues of women’s representation: “The
piece began with a ‘subservient’ gesture—the duo dressed as tacky sex objects tossing red plastic
flowers to the audience” (Cooper 147). Where Anderson saw “elegant gowns,” Cooper saw them
“dressed as tacky sex objects.” Cooper’s review reveals a perspective that exists beyond binary
ways of thinking and exposes the construction of gender.
Multiple gazes also opens the possibilities for other types of gazes beyond the male gaze. When considering other gazes exist outside of the confining power dynamics of the male gaze, the possibilities for subversive gazes are numerous. I consider two perspectives that unearth more subversive material in *Half a Brain*. A politically liberal gaze applied to this piece challenges the power of presidential politics. There is also an environmentalist gaze that works against hegemonic power.

Under a politically liberal gaze, it becomes clear that Dancenoise excoriates the presidential politics of President Reagan. Performed in 1988, *Half a Brain* premiered at the end of Reagan’s eight-year presidency. In the segment following the dramatic cooking, Sexton is tied at the wrist to Jennifer Monson dressed in black and Iobst is tied to John Hagan dressed in a suit and tie. Iobst falls to the ground and screams, then Monson does the same. Still tied to their partners, Sexton and Hagan engage in a quick dialogue:

SEXTON. What are you doing?
HAGAN. I’m running for the presidency.
SEXTON. What’s your platform?
HAGAN. Freedom
SEXTON. You know, eight years and I hear about freedom, still can’t afford to get my wisdom teeth pulled.
HAGAN. Freedom and annihilation. (Iobst tugs on rope connecting them) And for the annihilation of the land. (Tugs again) Of the ocean. (Tugs again) Of the fish.
FEMALE BEAR. Of the fish?!
SEXTON. And the people?
HAGAN. They can stay. They like to suffer.
SEXTON. Well what can I Say? It sounds like it would be a very popular presidency.

(Sexton and Hagan get pulled to the ground)

The analogy of the presidential character is to Reagan. When Hagan explains his platform as a political candidate, he is commenting on the underlying messages of political rhetoric. When the presidential candidate character says “Freedom” and adds “annihilation,” he is alluding to the
contemporary presidential politics of the day. The comedic timing of Iobst tugging on the string satirize the rhetoric of presidential politics during a time of Reagan; when Reagan says “freedom” he actually means “annihilation. Additionally, *Half a Brain* further exposes politics relating to the environment with the candidate’s platform including annihilating the land ocean and fish. Their criticism of Reagans approach to the environment is further taken up later in the performance.

An environmentalist gaze pays attention to how Sexton and Iobst critique the environmental policies of the Reagan administration. Philip Shabecoff, reporting for the *New York Times* on January 2, 1989, explains that environmentalists of the time claimed that “the Government deliberately delayed attacking long-term problems like global warming linked to pollution, acid rain, toxic waste, air pollution and the contamination of underground water supplies” (Shabecoff). Dancenoise similarly links environmental damage with politics. During the scene with the “Cher for president” capes, the music abruptly stops. Sexton and Iobst engage in a rapid-fire dialogue:

SEXTON. It’s like when you shit and your boyfriend pisses and you kiss
IOBST. No, it’s like when you eat shit and your boyfriend is eating chocolate
Hagen Das ice creme.
TOGETHER. And you can’t taste the difference!
SEXTON. No, it’s like when Koch is your mayor and Reagan is your president.
TOGETHER. And you feel like shit.
SEXTON. But hey, it’s like Cher says, if you don’t like what you see then change it.

They link grotesque, disgusting experiences to the politics of New York City Mayor Koch and President Reagan. This shows their clear disdain for the policies implemented under these political regimes. Sexton and Iobst expose that they are wearing plush, red lips under their jackets. They rub them on their crotches and pull out a banner that sarcastically announces,
“Positively no water,” promptly followed by a banner that asks, “Where’s the fish?” The first banner mocks the inaction of President Reagan on policies that had detrimental effects on the environment. It sarcastically exclaims that there will be no water as though it were a slogan of the administration. The second sign asks a poignant question about the long-term effects of global warming that affect fish populations. Through an environmentalist gaze, Dancenoise subverts the political norms to addressing the environment.

There is never a singular gaze during live performance. The male gaze is an effective knowledge base from which to analyze Dancenoise’s works in terms of representation. Incorporating multiple gazes exposes perspectives that are not limited to the binary power structures of the male gaze. To further argue that Dancenoise resists cultural hegemony, I turn my attention to how they use their bodies in performance. Recalling Albright’s writing on presence, Dancenoise engages with the multiplicity of gazes brought to live performance. How they use their body challenges the corporeal rules and norms for behavior.

THE DOCILE BODY AND GENDER

Analyzing Dancenoise’s work based on gazes and spectatorship illuminates how they navigate representational structures in their work. Ann Cooper Albright positions dancers as “both objects of the representation and subjects of their own experience” (Albright 13). Spectatorship and gaze theory focuses on representational structures and different spectatorial positions. Dancers must negotiate between how they individually define their body and how society defines their body. To navigate this territory, adding the layer of the dancer’s experience to my analysis—how the dancer uses their body in the ephemeral moment of performance—there is the potential to uncover how they radically affect the audience’s perception. Dancenoise alters the audience’s perception by engaging with the audience while nude. This removes the
audience from the voyeuristic gaze allowed by other types of performance. The audience is
challenged to listen and see Sexton and Iobst as subjects, people with a voice that are more than
the object of a gaze. I will assess how Dancenoise challenges dominant ways of using the body
through the work of Foucault. I specifically analyze their use of gender through Butler’s theory
of performativity. It is through this and other ways of using the body that Dancenoise further
challenges hegemonic culture.

Dancenoise challenges the docile body by utilizing the tools that act on a docile body—
mechanisms of control—to their own ends. Wolff explains how “new forms of discipline in
consumer society operate through advertising, fashion, popular culture, and the market” (85).
Cynthia Carr accounts for a Dancenoise performance of All the Rage in 1985 at 8BC—a popular
nightclub in New York City from 1983-1985—and describes how they use these tools. They
“attack power in its many disguises. Their shows are always teeming with pop culture junk, since
that’s where power hides and where it emanates from—the evening sound bites, the advertising
arias, the fashion forecasts, the top forty wool gatherers” (Carr 171). The images they use have
specific meanings and purposes within culture, but Dancenoise uses them outside of this context,
giving them new meanings. For instance, in Open Season Sexton states “When we say TV we
mean television, or transvestite” to which Iobst replies “Hmm, you’ve got me stumped, but you
know what? Chicken butt.” Dancenoise uses “television” and “transvestite,” placing them in a
context that radically confuses their meanings. Television is a medium for shows, movies, music
videos, advertisements, and more that reinforce the male gaze and heterosexist culture.
Transvestite is a term that bears a negative connotation in American society as being immoral, a
cross dresser, and a nonconforming person. The term, when used in society, is a means of
communicating that you are deviating from the prescribed norm. Dancenoise presents these
terms apart from these connotations. It is a play on words that disassociates TV from television and relates TV to transvestite, upsetting the definition of both television and transvestite. In doing so they present being transvestite as a valid identity that challenge notions in society. Throughout their work, Dancenoise confronts Foucauldian mechanisms of control by presenting them in ways that radically redefine what they are and what they mean.

In terms of gender, Dancenoise utilizes the tools that act on a docile body to produce gender in their own way. Dancenoise works against the power of pop culture tools by presenting them apart from their intended meanings; in a similar way, they also use the “tools” of gender and present them apart from their intended/hegemonic meanings. In sociologist Raewyn Connell’s “Difference and Bodies,” she explains that, in terms of gender, Foucault’s ideas are employed “by treating gendered bodies as the products of disciplinary practices” (Connell 37). The disciplinary mechanisms that are enacted upon the body to produce gender include how one talks, how one gestures, and how one postures their bodies that are enforced from birth through a multiplicity of methods. The result is supposed to create subjects who clearly adhere to movements, language, and actions that are coded male or female. Dancenoise refuses to present themselves in terms of this male-female binary. With their costumes in Open Season, for instance, they enter from a box mid-stage in black heels and a black “choir gown” that they quickly remove, revealing nude bodies. Guest artist, Iveson, soon explodes out of the same box in drag with a dress and cape and Jones first appears in a suit and tie. Through rapidly changing costumes such as these throughout the piece, they present themselves against the understanding of gender as a stable category, representing a range of expression on a single body. Furthermore, the movements, gestures, and dancing in Open Season varies between a hard-hitting aggressive style, soft and sensual movements, and a virtuosic presentational dance with hula hoops. The
movement—in relation to the dialogue and costume—refuses to be stable, to adhere to the category of female.

By refusing to participate in the disciplinary mechanisms that produce gender, Dancenoise further challenges the docile body. What are these disciplinary mechanisms? Judith Butler first theorizes gender as performative in her work *Gender Trouble*. Butler articulates that “[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (33). It is through consistent reiteration, or performance, of bodily habits over time that signify gender, that the categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ appear to be innate and stable; the social construction of gender comes from a body that has been continually subjected to rigorous policing of its movements, gestures, and posture. Butler clarifies in her later work that “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 2). “Acts” taken by individuals—repeated continuously over time—are produced through practices that are repetitions and constantly reference the male-female binary. Corporeal movements and positions are created through this discourse and categorized according to a male-female binary.

Dancenoise refuses to reproduce the bodily codes that signify gender. In their parody of women as homemakers, they briefly pantomime gestures of cooking. With the costuming, repeating these gestures and continuing to act as though they are cooking would reinforce sexist depictions of women. They challenge the repetition of bodily codes that would signify a stereotypical depiction of homemaker; instead of mimicking the shifting of a skillet over a stove, they move it around elsewhere and use it incorrectly. The egg appears to be used in a normal
capacity, but Iobst and Sexton quickly break the egg on their head. Salt and pepper shaker props are needlessly large, satirizing depictions of women in which that would be typical. Dancenoise energetically hyperbolizes these basic actions and creates their own characters. They resist reinforcing the gender binary because they do not bodily inhabit the binary.

It is from the repetitious acts that produce gender that have the possibility to disrupt normalized ideas and expose their instability: “Indeed it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law” (Butler, Bodies that Matter 2). Dancenoise turns the ‘regulatory law’ of gender—as complex and contradictory it may be—against itself. Their performances do not adhere to the repetitions that demarcate specific gendered subjects as with classical ballet; instead, Dancenoise performs a multiplicity of codes and norms that are unable to mesh with hegemonic constructions of gender.

Dancenoise works against the reiterative nature of gender, exposes its social construction, and presents a new identity for the audience. Butler sees potential in using the “regulatory law” that creates gender against itself. This associates with Wolff’s idea that feminist work must point to the body as a social construction “at the same time as disrupting and subverting existing regimes of representation” (Wolff 96). Dancenoise uses the culturally recognizable codes of gender in Half a Brain, but in ways that point to the instability of gender and create their own representation. Walking out holding baby dolls in nurse outfits, the association of women with nursing and specifically with child care is invoked. There is a caring persona that is typically attached, but they quickly work against this. A baby doll’s head flies off, and they rip off their costumes as if they are shedding the confines of a traditional persona. Dancenoise then dances in
white bras and underwear with black combat boots. After taking off the Nurse outfits, their performance is percussive. They determinedly walk up the stage revealing a red dot on their bottoms. Here, Dancenoise has given the a culturally ineligible identity of female nurses working with child labor. They physically rip this identity from their bodies, behead the baby dolls, and proceed to dance against the hegemonic constructions of gender. The aggressive, energetic quality of the movement is not stereotypically feminine. Instead, the dance is Sexton and Iobst disrupting the existing order, and performing a gender identity that is complex and nonconformist.

In their performance of identity, Dancenoise often performs in lingerie, fishnet stockings, high heels, and combat boots to further break up the stability of gender. Lingerie, fishnets, and high heels are socioculturally associated with highly sexualized, objectified depictions of women. Combat boots, in juxtaposition, signify an active, aggressive, and combative characteristic typically associated with masculine identities. In one sense, this continues to upset notions of a stable, gendered subject in their work. It disassociates Sexton and Iobst from hegemonic forms of representation. In the homemaker’s scene with cooking in pandemonium, their floral-print dresses and short blonde, curly wigs are completed with combat boots. This initial image begins to show the audience that there is more to the stereotypical image of a woman that meets the eye. They take this sexist representation and further dismantle it by breaking eggs on their heads and hyperbolizing the housewife effect. Dancenoise’s Half a Brain concludes with Dancenoise dressed in a bra and panties covering themselves in blood after a particularly chaotic scene. The costuming is paired with grotesque blood that upsets clean, objectified depictions of women. In Open Season, they frequently utilize nudity or lingerie with high heels. These images are disrupted with dialogue as discussed earlier. These costumes
indicate a clear, gendered identity when seen alone. Because they are paired with combat boots, dialogue, and other aspects of the show, Dancenoise disallows spectators to view them within the male-female binary. They are constantly disassociating from the identities established by their use of lingerie, fishnets, combat boots, and high heels.

Dancenoise further moves away from reiterations of gender in the movement, costumes, and dialogue. In *Open Season*, Iveson, for example, appears in several feminine costumes that are juxtaposed with Jones’s suits, a traditionally masculine clothing. It is not possible to attribute gender to Iveson because of the differences in his presence throughout *Open Season*. For audience members to unquestionably identify a gender of Iveson, they would be presented with clothing, dialogue, and movement that reaffirms the binary. Iveson is seen throughout the work in a multiplicity of costumes presenting a range of dialogue and movement that is not tied to a specific binary identity. For example, he pops out of the box on stage dressed in a light-pink dress, a black and white pinstripe cape, and a beret. He freely gestures for Sexton and Iobst to move towards the box. After he closes Sexton and Iobst into the box, he poses on the box with his legs crossed and arms extended. His attitude is slightly apathetic as he comedically implores the audience with a forced, breathy singing, “Where is my vagina now? Did it stumble off the cliff? Did it fall into a splash of Vodka?” Iveson portrays a figure that resembles a drag queen. In doing so, he is portraying to the audience that the gendered codes of moving the body, dressing, and speaking are not innate. Iveson confronts the audience with a character that does not conform to the idealized gender binary. This allows space for Iveson to challenge hegemonic perceptions of the body and portray an identity outside of the normal means of representation.

In a subsequent scene, Iveson further shows the instability of gender. As Sexton and Iobst are performing a duet on stage, Iveson bursts from the box with a large, teased blonde wig. His
clothing is still the light pink dress, but he presents a chaotic energy that juxtaposes the lazy, mediated energy he had in prior scene. He convulses and shakes his body wildly. He begins to attempt to eat packing-peanuts, but they fly everywhere as he continues to thrash himself in the box. For the audience, there are no stable corporeal codes that Iveson uses that could categorize him as male or female. The audience must watch Iveson’s performance to determine who he is, rather than on preconceived notions of male or female.

In *Half a Brain*, Dancenoise uses their bodies in an aggressive, masculine way that interrupts a stable feminine identity. The disciplinary mechanisms that act on docile bodies prescribe passive ways of using the body to women. Sexton and Iobst do not conform to this passivity. An example is when they don “Cher for President” capes and dance to Alice Cooper’s “Step on You” with chairs. The overall tone of this piece is aggressive and muscular. Facing upstage, they clench their fists and strenuously open their arms as though they were bodybuilders showing off their muscles. This image invokes a masculine expression of the body. They are not using their body in a feminine way. Dance scholar David Gere’s essay “29 Effeminate Gestures” looks at the use of effeminate gestures on male bodies through a discussion of choreographer Joe Goode’s *29 Effeminate Gestures*. Gere explains that in the West, masculine expression of the body demands that “[f]ingers are to be held inward, toward the body, concealed” (Gere 351). A clenched fist reads as masculine where extended fingers read as feminine. Sexton and Iobst disrupt a stable performance of femininity that audiences could expect from two performers who initially appear to be women. They disrupt the reiteration that produces a stable feminine expression because Sexton and Iobst present an aggressive physicality not attuned to the regulatory laws of gender.

Furthermore, the same scene utilizes the instability of gender to challenge the passive
corporeality prescribed to feminine ways of using the body. By using their bodies in ways that counter the passivity of hegemonic femininity, they portray a gender expression that cannot exist in binary thought. They sit in the fold up chairs facing each other as though they were about to have a standoff. With their arms bent and hands in fists they tense their entire body and strenuously gesture inward. This energy builds and they grab their legs throw them in the air in a ‘V’ shape. Their legs strike together and fly back open before they sharply contract inward. They end standing on the chairs proclaiming, “if you don’t like the way we cook, order out!” In this scene, Dancenoise consistently embodies an intense energy that counters the apathetic energy typically associated with women.

To further work against the docile body, *Open Season* challenges the hegemonic construction of masculinity. A subversive aspect in Iveson’s performance comes from the use of effeminate gestures. Gere argues that “Effeminacy has emerged as a bold strategy to resist arbitrary societal restrictions” (359). Effeminate gestures offer an “extroverted strategy of resistance” where the effeminate subject represents a reclaiming of the body and its movements (Gere 356). Gere adheres to a Foucauldian sense of gender in which gender only appears because of specific codes and practices. Many of the gestures that Iveson uses can be described as effeminate: In the parody of *No Exiting* by Jean-Paul Sartre, Iveson gestures with his right arm to the audience, circling his hand and rests an open hand on his hip. Gere writes that “Fists—not open hands, mind you—may be planted on the hips like the ultramasculine Mr. Clean” (351). Gere is explaining that open hands on the hips are not considered to be masculine. Similarly, Iveson has positioned his body in a traditionally feminine pose that resists homogenizing movement codes that would contain his expression and allow the audience to simply identify him as male.
The circular motion of his wrists is another subversive element. Gere explains that the broken wrist action of the scene described demonstrates “a movement largely coded in the west to mean gay” when performed by a man because of its association with women (357). When “female” ways of using the body are placed on a male subject, Gere argues that it destabilizes the gender binary and heteronormativity, working against the reiterative nature of gender that Butler identified: “The effeminate pose is a symbol of that unsteadiness. For to pose effeminately is to perform against the grain. And to perform against the grain is to exist in a state of radical self-consciousness. And to exist in a state of radical self-consciousness is to resist the determinism of gender naturalism.” (Gere 371). Iveson, through effeminate corporeality and costuming, exposes for the audience conscious subversive action on the body that destabilizes normative ideas of gender. On effeminate gestures, Gere states that “With such an action a man says, I am fully aware of the arbitrary nature of these codes and I resist their hold on my body” (Gere 360). Iveson in *Open Season* resists the hold of gendered codes on his body and communicates to the audience the instability of gender categories.

Ishmael Houston Jones also undermines the stability hegemonic masculinity. In *Half a Brain*, Jones enters the stage wearing short white shorts, a red shirt and black heels. Among the props being rearranged and a woman doing a duet with a table, Jones asserts himself with movement that has a strong, vibrant energy, but does not reiterate a gendered norm. Initially, his clothing does not conform to a stable identity because he is wearing black heels associated with women. His movement also breaks up a reiteration of gender norms. Facing upstage, he throws his body into a lunge. As he struggles to stand back up, his arms thrash around him. Jones’s strong presence and gender bending costume make it difficult to categorize him based on binary modes of thinking. Iveson stands and swiftly raises his arms before dropping into a squat. He
stands and walks in place as if he were on a runway. These positions of the body do not align with normative gender roles. Jones further disrupts the idea of a gender binary in *Half a Brain* by performing culturally intelligible feminine movements with a strong energy. In this instance, the audience views a man performing movement that does not conform to hegemonic gender categories.

Sexton and Iobst further obfuscate stable gender identities by invoking notions of a butch-lesbian identity, but not adhering to it. Sexton and Iobst both identify with a homosexual identity. For instance, in *Open Season*’s parody of *No Exit*, Iobst is stabbing herself with a knife and there is a brief exchange with Sexton who asks Iobst what she is doing. Iobst replies, “I’m gay” which prompts Sexton to inquire if she actually means dead which Iobst confirms. Furthermore, their work implicates a butch-lesbian identity. For instance, in the *Half a Brain* scene in which they are wearing “Cher for President” capes, they are also wearing combat boots. The combination of their short hair, their assertive style of speaking to the audience, the aggressive corporeality, and combat boots indicates a butch lesbian identity and are strewn throughout the performance. For the audience, their performance as butch-lesbians is never clear; is it a character or an identity? Dancenoise constantly disassociates from stereotypical depictions of women, not allowing spectators to witness a stable subject. Similarly, they also disassociate from being seen exclusively as butch-lesbians. Not only do they work against stable, sexist depictions of women, Dancenoise also detaches themselves from a stable butch-lesbian identity.

In subverting hegemonic gender identities, Dancenoise also works against heteronormativity. Butler explains how the binary ideology that produces gender and sex, corresponds with the presumption of heterosexual desire. “This conception of gender
presupposes not only a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire, but suggests as well that desire reflects or expresses gender and that gender reflects or expresses desire” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 22). For someone to be intelligibly male or female, man or woman, also means that their desire aligns with a heterosexual identity. Dancenoise disrupts the idea that gender is binary, opening the possibilities for performances of sexuality that exists apart from patriarchal ideology. The presumption of heterosexuality is not readily available because their gender identity is not able to be presumed. While Dancenoise challenges the reiterative aspects of gender, they are inherently subverting the heteronormativity attached to it. There is one specific piece of *Half a Brain* in which Dancenoise goes against heteronormative conceptions of desire.

In the scene that Dancenoise rips off their nurse costumes, there is a particular instance that works against normalized heterosexual desire. When they thrust their pelvis over the life-size dolls covered in plastic garbage bags, it brings up the idea of sexual desire. This instance transgresses the idea that women do not have sexual desires, or should not act on them. With the dolls being genderless, they disrupt the heteronormative correlation between sex, gender, and desire that Butler explains. Dancenoise disassociates themselves from the heteronormative gender binary. They expose the existence of other identities with their nonconforming gender expression. This also opens the possibilities for desire that exists outside of the binary.

Dancenoise performances create a space for a spectrum of genders and sexualities. Sexton and Iobst destabilize normative representations of women through a dynamic, rapid-fire scene structure and the use of nudity in tandem with dialogue. They resist the corporeal rules and codes that produce stable, gendered identities by refusing to participate. Instead of conforming, they constantly destabilize their own identities. Here, they expose to the audience that gender and sexuality are constructed concepts. This is done by inhabiting a range of identities (i.e. butch-
lesbians, talk show hosts, housewives, etc.) and constantly disassociating from them. This disallows the audience to view Sexton and artists among the categories of the male-female binary. Dancenoise, by taking on a multiplicity of characters and personas, create a space in which a multiplicity of genders and sexualities exist. In *Open Season*, they use “transvestite” to describe Iveson in a blonde wig and a dress. The term has since been updated to mean transgender, but this play on words recognizes a divergent gender identity as a valid identity when they identify Iveson as “transvestite.” Among the dismantled depictions of women in *Half a Brain*, Dancenoise combines an aggressive, confrontational persona with witty, clever, and comical personas. As the scenes progress, when they dismantle one gender identity, a new form of identity emerges. This new identity is also dismantled as they continue onto another. This process confronts audience members with a multiplicity of characters, images, and costumes that indicate a range of genders and sexualities. The possibilities are endless and inclusive in Dancenoise shows. Sexton and Iobst create a world in which hegemonic depictions of gender and sexuality are not reproduced, but disrupted.

POSTMODERNISM, THE DECENTERED SUBJECT, AND DANCENOISE

I argue that the way in which Dancenoise disrupts hegemonic culture aligns them with postmodernism. Dancenoise exhibits a postmodern approach to dance making seen in *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*. Feminist Philosopher Susan Bordo explains that “[p]ostmodern in the most general cultural sense, refers to the contemporary inclination toward the unstable, fluid, fragmented, interdeterminate, ironic, and heterogeneous, for that which resists definition, closure, and fixity (Bordo 38). Defining postmodernism is an elusive task; it recognizes the validity of numerous perspectives and resists normalized modes of working. Through *Half a Brain* and *Open Season*, Dancenoise exemplifies a postmodernist approach to dance making.
Particularly, the “decentered subject” arising from poststructuralist thought is relevant to their work. English Sociologist Helen Thomas explains that poststructuralist thought discards the idea of a fixed subject and favors an unfixed subject. “The idea of the individual as a self-reflecting, rational, unified, fixed subject is rejected in favour of a dislocated, contradictory, fragmented subjectivity which is not fixed” (Thomas 15). There is no stability in an individual because every person is innately attached to their own experiences; the limits of one’s knowledge is an unavoidable constant. Dancenoise’s work adheres to postmodernist ideas and the decentered subject. Their quick-time structure is constantly shifting perspectives, changing characters, and introducing new themes. Even within a single scene, there could be a multiplicity of changes. Their subjectivity is constantly being redefined in the moment causing the audience to see with a new perspective.

Through enacting a decentered subjectivity, Dancenoise asserts their subjectivity, confronting patriarchal hegemony. Sexton and Iobst disallow the audience to cling to a stable, gendered subject by refusing to participate in the corporeality attached to the male-female binary. Here, they are invoking their presence as Albright describes it. Dancenoise is in control of their bodies and control what the audience sees. In *Half a Brain*, they constantly disassociate from identifiable female stereotypes. Instead of reifying the fixed, singular feminine identities, they constantly deconstruct heterosexist images and illogically switch to different characters. There is no singular identity that can be applied to their bodies. They assert their subjectivity by forcing the audience to see them in a multiplicity of ways. Similarly, *Open Season* presents a range of gender identities on the stage. The fast-paced scene structure constantly redefines the characters of Dancenoise and the guest artists. They resist the fixity and stability of a stable subject. Dancenoise performances present a decentered subjectivity that resists being defined based on
normalized ideas and challenge the audience to see them as fully realized, complex human subjects, not objects.

The way in which Dancenoise asserts their subjectivity correlates with other figures within dance history. In Albright’s discussion of presence, she specifically discusses Yvonne Rainer’s Trio A from 1966. She argues that Rainer asserted her own subjectivity by eliminating spectacle and emphasizing nontheatrical movement. In this, Rainer could control what the audience saw. Dancenoise takes a different approach that embraces the spectacle of live performance, with their unique style. Despite the different historical contexts, there is a similar patriarchal culture that Rainer and Dancenoise both resisted. Albright explains the significance of Rainer’s presence in performance.

Rainer’s piece Trio A, choreographed in 1966 portraits a subjectivity different from Dancenoise. Trio A was presented as three solos that used a series of pedestrian movements arranged in different ways. Albright tells us that “[t]he choreography was to be executed in a neutral, task-like manner, thereby thwarting the audience’s expectation and desire to see a virtuosic dancer and forcing them to see, instead the body as a simple object in motion” (Albright 20). In reducing movement down, Rainer mediates her own representation with that of the spectatorial gazes. Rainer was concerned with the spectator-performer relationship of the male gaze. By placing emphasis on the body as object, she was working against the male gaze.

In other words, by emphasizing the earthy materiality of the physical body—its quality of thingness—Rainer was trying to demystify the female dancing body and refuse the traditional position of the dancer as an object of desire by making visible what was previously elided by showing the process of dancing, the effort, decision making, even its awkwardness (Albright 20).

By decontextualizing the body—eliminating excess props, costumes, virtuosity, and theatricality—Rainer resisted being seen as an object of desire (as opposed to the structure of
classical ballet that is designed to present a heterosexist spectacle of the body). In doing so, Rainer asserts her subjectivity. She causes the audience to see her as a subject in the process of forming, rather than witness a virtuosic display.

Dancenoise also causes the audience to see them as subjects in the process of forming. Although they used different approaches, Dancenoise and Rainer assert their subjectivity to similar effect. While Rainer rejected spectacle, Dancenoise embraced it. Rainer focused on presenting the body itself, reducing the movement to the bare essentials. Because of this, the audience witnesses her movement in its entirety, apart from sexist depictions of female bodies in dance. Conversely, Dancenoise uses spectacle and excess to create their own depictions of the body. Jobst and sexton have a decentered subjectivity that refutes the categories of the male-female binary. This is where they are constantly redefining who they are during performance, consciously disrupting any stability in their identity. The quick format allows them to constantly disassociate popular-culture ideas from their intended meaning. Without giving the audience any stable image to cling to, the audience must interpret Dancenoise based on what they witness. Similar to Rainer, they resist an objectifying gaze and cause the audience to look at what they are seeing, rather than rely on the male gaze’s predetermined, objectified positioning of the performer. They assert that they are complex human subjects and the audience must witness subjects in the process of forming in a Dancenoise style.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Lucy Sexton and Anne Iobst utilize the dynamic relationship between the performers and audience. Feminist dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright explains that a performer can affect what the audience sees with their presence during live performance. With this ability, the dancer must navigate between how the audience views them, and how they’re communicating with the audience. Dancenoise, through an energized blend of dance and performance art, uses their presence to affect spectatorial perspectives on their work. Feminist dance scholar Ann Daly explains that “[r]evolutionary art need not be overtly political in content; what is more important is that it demand a new means of perception on the part of its spectators” (Daly 308). A quick, constantly evolving scene structure confronts the audience with numerous situations, props, costumes, and scenarios. The whirlwind of chaos causes the audience to witness new forms of representation and identities. New costumes, props, characters, personas, and dialogue portray a range of gender and sexual identities. Iobst and Sexton diverge from the normalized codes and rules attached to the body. They resist hegemonic culture through their corporeal presence in live performance.

Dancenoise’s subversion of hegemonic culture correlates with developments in feminist dance studies. Feminist dance scholar Ann Daly used Mulvey’s male gaze theory to deconstruct the heterosexist structures of the ballet pas de deux in her 1987 essay, “The Balanchine Woman.” Concurrently, artists such as Sexton and Iobst were dismantling this homogenizing power relationship on stage. The forged their own forms of representation apart from patriarchal concepts of gender and sexuality. In Half a Brain, they constantly disassociate stereotypical female characters from their traditional, cultural meanings. They create scenarios in which the audience must interpret who they are, rather than rely on the predetermined images of the male
gaze. While Daly worked on critiquing the male gaze, Dancenoise was deconstructing the male gaze.

The male gaze was a starting point for feminist dance scholars. As Daly explains in her later 1992 essay, “Dance History and Feminist Theory,” the male gaze is too restrictive and totalizing because it depends on binary concepts towards gender; patriarchal culture has a powerful tendency to co-opt feminist performance. Daly was using a new set of theories—such as Julia Kristeva’s *Revolution in Poetic Language*—to examine how dance pioneer Isadora Duncan used her body to affect what the audience saw. The audience saw Duncan apart from the objectification of ballet and the male gaze and as “a subject in process,” not an object (Daly 317). Dancenoise, working in a different historical context than Duncan—was simultaneously using their bodies in performance to affect the audience’s perspective. As a genre crossing duo, Sexton and Iobst also utilize dialogue and theatricality to affect what the audience sees. To authors such as Albright, Judith Butler’s writing on gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* were especially enticing for scholars to uncover how the body was used in live performance because it theorized gender as a performative act. Feminist dance scholars began to incorporate a range of perspectives in their work to uncover subversive use of the body.

The ways in which Dancenoise resists patriarchal culture in their performances positions them within the history of postmodern dance. Lucy Sexton and Anne Iobst emerged out of the 1980’s as prominent figures of the downtown dance scene. Authors such as Ann Daly and Sally Banes identify a shift in the interest of 80’s postmodern dance artists. The duet format of Dancenoise reflects other artist who worked in duos. There were also renewed interests in using narrative and theatricality as well as an expansive use of popular-culture within the shows. Dancenoise is emblematic of this shift because narrative and theatricality is a part of their work.
They use it in nonlinear was that characterize many 80’s downtown dance artists. They also
frequently reference and critique popular culture in their work. These aspects are exemplified in
their works *Half a Brain* and *Open Season* that I use for my analysis.

I chose a theoretical framework to analyze Dancenoise’s *Half a Brain* and *Open Season.*
First, I chose the male gaze theory in part due to its historical connections to the field of feminist
dance scholarship. The male gaze provides a structure of hegemonic power relating to gender
that Dancenoise subverts in several ways. The fast-paced scene structure, as well as the quickly
changing individual scenarios, resist a structure that would refine them to be objects of desire.
Furthermore, they use dialogue in tandem with nudity to force the audience to listen and see
them as full human subjects. Bringing up multiple gazes begin to include other perspectives that
diverge from hegemonic ideals. To examine how Dancenoise further subverts hegemonic
culture, I utilized Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Dancenoise resists what Foucault identified
as docile bodies through their use of popular culture references. They dismantle the original
meanings of objects, words, products, and phrases to meet their own twisted meanings.
Dancenoise is particularly expansive with their performance of gender and sexuality. Butler’s
gender performativity identifies gender as a performative act. Dancenoise resists using their
bodies to portray heterosexist genders and sexualities and instead opens a range of possibilities.
Using these three theoretical paradigms exposes the ways in which Dancenoise subverts
hegemonic culture.

Dancenoise continues into the twenty-first century with their staunch take-down of
cultural hegemony. The feminist pandemonium that Dancenoise began in 1983 has not stopped.
Although the frequency of performances waned after lobst relocated to San Francisco in 1999,
Dancenoise continues to attach patriarchal culture. Siobhan Burke, a dance writer for the *New
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*York Times*, explains of their 2015 installation at the Whitney, “[w]ether dealing with global warming or racial violence, women apologizing or the crumbling American dream, Ms. Iobst and Ms. Sexton […] brewed up biting political commentary for our time” (Burke, “A Duo’s Biting” C5). Their shows are up to date with contemporary issues. Gia Kourlas, also a dance writer at the *Times*, reviews a November 17, 2016 performance of Dancenoise that was part of Danspace Project’s—a prominent downtown dance institution—“Platform 2016: Lost and Found” series. Of Dancenoise, Kourlas explains that “even though it was the oldest act on Thursday night’s program, it was easily the freshest” (Kourlas, “Review: Dancenoise”). In this performance, Iobst and Sexton poured the iconic fake blood over their bodies and “held up banners — one said “Silence,” the other “= Death” — and then used them to wipe each other clean” (Kourlas, “Review: Dancenoise”). On April 13th and 14th, 2017, Dancenoise presented a new work as part of the New York Live Arts studio series, showing that Dancenoise does not plan to quit anytime soon. Sexton and Iobst continue to offer their dynamic blend of dance and performance art to dismantle hegemonic culture. Thirty-four years after they began, their aggressive commentary and feminist perspective continues to produce fresh, invigorating work and eviscerates popular, patriarchal culture.
Endnotes

Chapter 1

1. As graduates of Ohio University, they danced under Gladys Bailin-Stern, an original Alwin Nikolais company member. This might reflect their use of props because Nikolais’ work often used props and props are a part of Bailin-Stern’s composition courses.
2. Susan Bordo was influential in developing my understanding of the body as a construction in the West.

Chapter 2

1. In Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1762 *Emile, or On Education* he positions women as the object of desire and separates them as less than men. In “Book V” he writes that “The woman’s mind exactly resembles her body; far from being ashamed of her weakness, she is proud of it” (324).
2. For further reading on Ballet, see Cynthia J. Novack’s essay “Ballet, Gender and Cultural Power” from Helen Thomas’s 1993 book *Dance Gender and Culture*.

Chapter 3

1. The discourse on how to define postmodern dance is exemplified in the “Terpsichore in Combat Boots” debate between dance historians and scholars Susan Manning and Sally Banes. This appeared in *The Dance Review* Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring, 1989).
Works Cited


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