

METAPHYSICAL CHOREOGRAPHY IN NORTH AMERICA

1984 to 1996

From 1984-1996, American choreographers Paula Josa-Jones and Marie Chouinard were in many ways very representative of their times. They produced a global vision born out of cross-pollination and international inspiration. They shared many values with the neo-expressionism of European Tanztheatre and Japanese Butoh. And they shared philosophical and aesthetic concerns with American feminist performance art, which reached its nader in the 80's. Yet when their intuitive, expressive work intersected with the dominant, conservative, post-modern formalism of American modern dance, it resulted in their work being radicalized and marginalized to the "fringes." They did not fit into the dominant critical view of what defined American modern dance. Despite the critical acclaim their work received, and the prominent venues that presented their work, they are often omitted from dance history surveys of this period or given only small mention.

The dances that we choose to remember in our historical canons say much about our national and communal identities. Yet it is often a select, powerful few who determine the relevance of a work of art, or who are privileged with interpretation of social significance. The 80's are rightly remembered as a time of materialism, ambition, gender bending, and anxiety. Many American choreographers who embraced virtuosity, spectacle and/or the politics of the body in their work reflected these social concerns. Yet I hope to bring to light how certain dance historical cliché do not reflect the diversity of artistic responses during this time period.

My focus is on the work of Josa-Jones and Chouinard, two American (meaning North American) avant-garde dance artists preoccupied with:

- Themes of life and death.
- Investigating the complexity of embodiment.
- The unconscious, pre-rational states or "dark realms."
- The feminine or feminism.
- The body as a special medium and a spiritual force.
- The sensuous experience of the body as the source for movement, image and voice.
- Performance as ritual and/or a sacred art.

These concerns in many ways reflect an alternative image of America in the 80's and early 90's— one that is often included in discussions of performance art of this period but seems all but

forgotten when the focus is on American dance. A fresh look at our national choreographic canon, and its places of omission, can give new insight into our cultural identity and history.

THE CANON

“Your body is a Battleground”

—Barbara Kruger¹ (1989)

If the 60’s are generally characterized by a desire for freedom—the free love, of a free body, liberated by everything from psychedelia to transcendental meditation—then the 80’s are characterized as the opposite. They were all about control. Ronald Regan was president, the cold war was on, the economy was in recession and the fitness craze was hitting North America. When times are tough, control and ambition become virtues. The anti-capitalism of the 70’s fell to the wayside as the glamour of *Dynasty* shared the mainstream with Michael Jackson’s sequins glove. And Madonna’s *Material Girl* took over the world with her *Blond Ambition Tour*.

Like many growing up in North America, I was not immune to this zeitgeist. In the mid-80’s my brother was an Olympic athlete in training while I attended an elite ballet school. We were officially government-sponsored subjects for improvement—voluntary guinea pigs for teachers, trainers, physiotherapists, nutritionists, and psychologist. The cold war was on. Countries built up their arsenals of athletes and artists.

In a world that many thought might dissolve with the push of a little red button in The White House or The Kremlin, the body—and by implication your destiny—felt like something you could master. Even if you weren’t trying to be a world-class athlete or professional dancer, being fit was a moral prerogative in the 80’s. Jane Fonda, by way of your local aerobics instructor, was out to convert you. Food was either “sinful” or “guilt-free”. Plastic surgery was increasingly available. Your college roommate might confess to a breast-reduction. Your best friend might return from summer vacation with a new ‘improved’ nose.

The market encouraged our anxieties. Female bodies became increasingly omnipresent in advertising, fashion and mass culture. But soon men were not immune. By 1991, New York’s Times’s Square, once the domain of street preachers and strippers, was dominated by the Dionysian image of Marky Mark in his Calvin Klein underwear. The cult of the body was culminating when Baudrillard wrote:

¹ A text/composition that was a poster designed for a massive pro-choice march on April 9, 1989 in Washington, D.C.

“The hygienic, dietetic, aerobic, therapeutic cult which surrounds it, the obsession with youth, elegance, virility/ femininity, treatments and regimes, and the sacrificial practices attached to it, all bear witness to the fact that the body has today become the object of salvation. It has literally taken over that moral and ideological function from the soul.”²

Yes, the ‘natural’ body of just a decade earlier seemed to be headed for the dustbin. In the 80’s bodies were pumped up, shaved, trimmed and molded. Even shoulder pads were in. In 1981, babies could be fertilized in vitro and the biochemistry of steroids could turn a dancer like Louise Lecavalier of the Montreal dance company La La La Human Steps into a muscle-bound dynamo.

Perhaps it shouldn’t be surprising then that in this body–obsessed age, American post-modern dancer Mollisa Fenley made the glossy pages of *People Magazine* as an example of the new body. Sleek, fit, and muscular she famously eschewed conventional dance classes for Nautilus machines, calisthenics, and running. Her dances, which focused on space and endurance, were noted for their intense durations and grueling athleticism. *People Magazine* also noted Fenley’s androgyny. In her solo “State of Darkness” (1988), set to Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps", she danced, with her signature short spiky hair, bare-chested in black tights reminiscent of a male Balanchine dancer.

Choreographer Elizabeth Streb also achieved substantial recognition for her physically “brutal”, androgynous equipment pieces. Her dancers, often muscle-bound former gymnasts, dressed in identical primary colored unitards, dove from great heights onto mats or threw themselves against walls. The sheer impact of the their bound bodies was amplified by microphones for visceral effect. This was not a dance of subtly or symbolism. It was pure physical risk and force.

The minimalist formalism and androgyny of Fenley and Streb was reminiscent of the generation before them--artists of the 70’s like Merce Cunningham or Lucinda Childs whose asexual dancers uniformly tilted, twisted and traveled through space in identical attire. If in the 70’s gender equality looked more like a unisex hair salon, by the mid-80’s mainstream gender-bending took a different turn. With politically charged vengeance, encouraged by Queer Culture and increasing consumerism, gender returned in all its glamorous glory. Masculine and feminine returned as clearly defined fashion statements--performances that could be tried on, combined or abandoned. Cross-dressing, transvestism, and transexualism became more mainstream. The new philosophy was that *everyone* was in drag.

² Baudrillard, J. *the Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, (London” Sage Publications,1998) 129

Judith Butler, in her influential book *Gender Trouble* (1990), captured this zeitgeist and gave it a new velocity with her famous concept of performativity: that our identities and genders are not innate but performed and socially created. According to Butler gender was something you ‘do’, ‘sense’, and ‘live’ intimately and actively. It was not natural or organic. It was fluid, variable, and could shift or change in different contexts. In the mid-80’s all aspects of appearance, including gender could now be fully constructed.

Downtown New York choreographers like Stephen Petronio (a former Trisha Brown dancer) and his sometime collaborator punk ballet-boy Michael Clarke (formerly of The Royal Ballet), not only blended ballet and modern dance aesthetics, but danced in matching Gaultier-esque corsets and bikini underwear. Meanwhile, Mark Morris updated his sometimes nostalgic choreography (full of Duncanesque leaps and Limon falls) by having male dancers play traditionally female roles in his dance-opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), and his Nutcracker adaptation *The Hard Nut* (1991). But perhaps it was former modern dancer turned cultural icon, Madonna, who best exemplified Butler’s theory of fluid gender identity. In her videos, live performances and book *SEX*, Madonna constantly changed her image –exploiting male and female stereotypes and sexual taboos at will.

In the 80’s and early 90’s, the body, long the site of cultural oppression, became a political battleground. Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane made a political statement simply by appearing on stage together as a black man, a white Jew who were lovers. Their company included performers of varying ages, sexual orientations and body-types. Perhaps in response to the culture’s emphasis on ideal bodies, other choreographers like Johanna Boyce, Liz Lerman and Mark Morris worked with dancers of varying shapes and sizes. Meanwhile, post-modern mavericks like Charles Moulton and David Gordon, famous a decade earlier for incorporating everyday movement and “non-dancers” into their work, moved uptown to work with highly trained, technical ballet dancers. They matched the new virtuosic bodies of their performers with elaborate collaborations with costume, music, set and lighting designers. Other Judson era minimalists such as Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown and Lucinda Childs matched this trend towards stylized spectacle.

So goes, the mainstream American dance history of the 80’s and 90’s.

American dance critics of the time heralded this return to politics and spectacle as a return to content, but it is worth noting that the majority of American dancemakers (and dance writers) were still very partial to formalist dance values and reticent towards extreme expressive displays.

In the 80's, as in other eras, the general perception of the American Modern dance was in many ways defined in relation to what it was *not*—the dramatic resurgence in expressive modern dance outside the United States: Tanztheatre in Germany, Butoh in Japan, and New Dance and Physical Theater in Britain and France.

In a 1985 symposium, “German and American Dance: Yesterday and Today” (co-sponsored by the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and the Goethe House, New York) it can be humorous in retrospect to hear the thinly veiled nationalistic banter going on between the German and American choreographers and critics. German dance critic Jochen Schmidt spoke of the new German Tanztheatre of Pina Baush as a “necessary corrective” to the “light”, “insubstantial”³ formalism of American choreographers; while the American critics (Anna Kisselhoff of *The New York Times* among them) insisted that the new German dance was a rehash of expressionism and suffered from “incompetent” form, poor dance values, and violent amorality.

“That kind of angst emotion is not something I want to participate in,”⁴ offered American choreographer Nina Weiner who preferred more “earthy concerns.” Philadelphia dance critic Nancy Goldner offered diplomatically, “There are certain emotions which Americans think are *proper* to have on the stage, and they are different from what Germans think,”⁵

At one point in the BAM symposium the German choreographer Reinhold Hoffman posed a question: “From what I hear and see when I walk through the streets of New York, there are a lot of problems here. When young choreographers who live here choose *mainly* (her emphasis) just to move and not to relate strongly to what they see daily, then I ask: why?”⁶

With nationalist lines drawn so clearly, is it no wonder that American choreographers who did not fit within these tidy definitions (even those who won wide critical acclaim) are often omitted from our historical record?

AN ALTERNATIVE

Silence = Death

--logo for AIDS activism (1987)

³ Daly, Ann. “Tanztheater: The Thrill of a Lynch Mob or the Rage of a Woman?”, *Critical gestures: writings on dance and culture*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.), 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ Daly. “Tanztheater”, 12.

Living and dancing in New York in 1990, I found myself asking the same question as Reinhold Hoffman. Where were the artists responding strongly to what I saw everyday on the streets of New York? Walking to dance classes at The Merce Cunningham Studios, or to the performances of Trisha Brown or Kenneth King, I passed a daily gauntlet of urban poverty. I watched a young boy no older than seven grow up living in my local subway station. In 1990, three friends of mine died of AIDS; another of a drug overdose, and a fifth was murdered by a cult in her East Village apartment. I lived in times that seemed chaotic, neurotic and bordering on hysterical.

"We have not seen anything of this magnitude that we can't control, except nuclear bombs,"⁸ so said Secretary of Health and Human Services Otis Bowen, in 1987 of the AIDS epidemic. But control it they tried—gay waiters were not allowed to touch food, people thought they could get AIDS from toilet seats, church goers stopped taking communion in fear of sharing the blood of Christ with strangers. Artists like Mapplethorpe and Karen Finely were branded obscene. And starting in 1980, there was a wave of panic in North America about the supposed threat of satanic cults. The mass media regularly reported everything from stories of ritual child-abuse, to the satanic dismemberment and sacrifice of humans and animals.

This hysteria was supported by the “culture wars” between the left and the right. The liberal left believed in these stories of repressed memories because they fitted into narratives of victimization, and new-age psychology. The right wing conservatives saw these accounts as the result of a new permissiveness in American culture—women going to work, divorce on the rise, the ‘gay epidemic.’

Living in America in 1990, attending dance classes and performances that coolly emphasized formal aesthetics, celebrated the joy of movement, or at best, expressed liberal politics within hip, attractive contexts—I began to feel that the world of modern dance was oddly detached from the living reality of the world we lived in. So I began to seek out alternatives.

I danced with Paula Josa-Jones from 1991-1998, as a soloist and as her rehearsal director. The first work we made together took place in an ‘imagined’ time of plague. We (two men and myself) were masked from head to foot in a long dresses, skullcaps and white paint. Our voices and bodies metamorphosized through wild images of loss, desperation and frozen grief. It was a ritual, a prayer and an exorcism. Meanwhile, I followed Chouinard’s career with admiration. Dancers who worked with Paula sometimes went on to work with Chouinard as well. I first heard

⁸ <http://www.thenagain.info/WebChron/World/Aids.html>

of her in 1987 when she was igniting controversy in Canada by peeing artfully onstage into a bucket. The debate was the age old, “Is it dance?” But regardless, everyone agreed she was a genius.

Raised by the Cunningham-Nickolai generation with its emphasis on “motion not emotion” Josa-Jones and Chouinard created formally rigorous, politically provocative work, but they were also intensely emotional and theatrical. They were both acutely aware of the politics of the body, but often evoked it with both the external distortions of neo-expressionism and the metaphysical belief in the lived body found in Butoh. Like many revolutionary feminist performance artists of the era, their work was pro-sex, and often graphically disclosing of personal experiences. As artists they attempted to subvert the foundations of western cultural values, beliefs and linguistic conventions that they believed oppressed our behavior and imagination. They represented the shadow side of American culture. Perhaps a side some would like us to forget.

CULTIVATION

I lived 100's and 100's of years as a mineral
And died as a mineral and became a plant
I lived 100's and 100's of years as a plant
And died as a plant and became an animal
I lived 100's and 100's of years as an animal
And died as an animal and became a human
What did I loose by dying?
—RUMI

Paula Josa-Jones trained in New York City and Boston. She received her Master's Degree in Theater, but voraciously devoured many movement and somatic practices. She studied with Irmgard Bartenieff, Judson Theater legend Robert Dunn, the founders of Body Mind Centering and Authentic Movement, as well as Butoh artists Eiko and Koma. Canadian Marie Chouinard studied in the United States, Canada, Nepal, Bali and Berlin.¹⁰ Through her travels, she followed her immense curiosity through eclectic anthropological studies into the intelligence of the body. What these women also had in common were years of solo research—time spent alone or with select collaborators investigating the complexities of embodiment. This was the unique foundation of their art. They sought not to control the body but to cultivate it. Rather than censor its impulses, they sought to release them physically and vocally.

¹⁰ The use of the word American by dance historians to only refer to those of the United States is also exclusionary. I use the term American to include all peoples of the Americas.

Chouinard still describes her research as “an organic and organized inquiry into the foundational wavelength.”¹¹ Her movement evolves not from ‘doing’ but from receptively listening: “*Each time, I start afresh from zero. Each time, I focus and re-direct my ‘antennae’. I seek out a new ‘state’. I track this wavelength until everything is in line (and) hope the viewer’s own ‘mystery’ will be revealed to her*”.¹³

Paula Josa- Jones called her movement practice *Sourcework*. Rehearsals with Paula were a continuum of movement and vocal techniques for expanding the range and depth of physical sensing—to invite deep states of being and non-habitual movement. The sensuous experience of the body and trust in its poetic intelligence was her source for movement, images and voice.

*Begin listening, eyes closed
Listen to the movement of the breath
Don't try to change it
Just listen to it rising and falling*

*Listen to the movement of the body
Bringing your attention to the movement of the cells
The body is a democracy
All the cells of the body are living, moving, breathing.*

*Let one part of the body come to your attention
A hand
A place on your foot
Let it's “voice” emerge in movement
Allow the rest of the body to follow.*

*Listen to the voice and where it wants to go.
Now find a second voice in the body
Allow this point to have some voice too.*

*Enjoy a conversation between these two voices
Sometimes they may agree, sometimes they may disagree.
Now allow your breath to become sound.
Release the voice of these places in your body.
Continue to sound and move.*

*Allow the body to lead.*¹⁵

For both Chouinard and Josa-Jones the body and voice were inseparable. The voice was the essential self spilling over, unable to be contained by the culture that sought to control it. For both women, the belief that usual speech limited expression inspired them to seek out new ways to

¹¹ www.mariechouinard.org

¹³ Daly, *Incalculable Choreographies*. 102

¹⁵ Notes and memory from a class with Paula Josa-Jones.

give sound to their inner experience. In *S.T.A.B.* (1986) Chouinard attached a microphone to aviator's headgear and amplified her breathing and the screeches, gulps and growls that emerged from her torso. Her sounds exploded into the space and then sent shock waves back into her body. Chouinard said her desire was to make her somatic experience palpable kinesthetically for the audience.

For Josa-Jones, somatic experience and emotional experience were intertwined. Sometimes she began with images or found text but then asked dancers to *conceal* the words and *reveal* instead the felt experience behind them. Words were shredded, spit out, and swallowed. A vocal passage I performed and collaborated on for Paula's *Wonderland* (1992) began when she gave me twenty-four postcards with images that ranged from a crowd of protesting Nigerians, to the graphic depiction of a rape. Sitting blindfolded in a chair, it became an incantation. "Lockyer, like the head sibyl of an alien planet, emits a phenomenal vocalize of deep song, growls, and shrieks", wrote Deborah Jowitt in *The Village Voice*. A woman in the audience insisted I spoke in tongues.

Chouinard and Josa-Jones shared a belief in performance as a sacred art of transformation. For them the body was a spiritual medium through which forces—social, emotional, animal, mythical and erotic could be veshelled or tuned-in. They, and their dancers, moved fluidly not only between genders, but states many described as beyond human.

MASKS

*"What was to be done? The only way out, the only possible banishment, was and became:
the mask."*

--Mary Wigman

They gained their greatest successes for masked solo performances that blurred the body's social/cultural boundaries. In *The Messenger* (1990) Josa-Jones appeared as a bearded, umbrella-totting figure who nervously stripped down to his/her underwear, put on stilettos and performed an awkward striptease. A transvestite in the tradition of the ancient shaman, her performance was not so much a portrayal as a possession. Chouinard's metamorphosis in *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1987) involved the appropriation of Nijinsky's body, both literally (through an elaborate costume with a padded calf and thigh) and physically through her interpretation of his famous dance. At the end of the work she attached a ram's horn to her body as a penis, sheathed it in a red condom and plunged it into a beam of light. The ambiguity of her

object of desire shifted the viewer's awareness to the powerful sexual desire of Chouinard herself. However, Chouinard stated in an interview that she was not so much interested in Nijinsky's eroticism as she was inspired by "Nijinsky's ability to transform himself, become totally unrecognizable."¹⁶ Indeed her performance crossed the boundaries of male, female, animal and dream.

It would be easy to also explain the gender bending of these choreographers with Judith Butler's theory of performativity. However, their approach to the malleability of identity does not fit into Judith Butler's theories. Butler's idea of the body as a social construct without an essential spirit is at odds with the metaphysical nature of what Josa-Jones and Chouinard created in their performances. Josa-Jones and Chouinard believed in an essential self, beneath these malleable social constructions. And this essential self, this spirit, was the lived body itself. For Josa-Jones and Chouinard the body cannot be separated from spirit because the lived body IS spirit. Unlike many of their contemporaries, the cultivation of this essential force was the foundation of their art.

CONCLUSION

In the conservative 80's to proclaim an unabashed love of the body, to expose genuine female sexuality, or to transgress social rules about the "proper" emotions to present on the American stage was to inspire controversy. But through out dance history, bold expressions of female rage or desire have consistently been described as disturbing, violent, grotesque or hysterical. Critics and dance historians used these words to describe the work of Mary Wigman and Pina Bausch. And they used these words to describe Josa-Jones and Chouinard.

But perhaps such descriptions are more a reflection of the repressed fears and obsessions of the viewer and the times, than the experience or intentions of the choreographers. When a dancer for Chouinard or Paula Josa-Jones repeats falling and getting up again, over and over, with complete commitment and abandon, is she beating herself up or is she awakening the body—giving it blood, energy, release? Is she embodying feminist oppression, dissatisfaction or resistance? Or all three? The fact that Chouinard or a dancer in Josa-Jones's company can move easily out of these agitated states into luscious, flowing, lyrical dancing should be an indication that far from hysterical, she is seizing the power of her experience rather than being undone by it. What these

¹⁶ Albright, Ann Cooper, "Incalculable Choreographies," In *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, (Hanover: Published by the University Press of New England [for] Wesleyan University Press, 1997.) 115

women are presenting is their experience free from censorships, accommodations and toning down.

Throughout her career Chouinard was patronizingly referred to as a “bad girl.” Her reputation grew out of solos, like *Marie Chien Noir* (1982) where she calmly slid her hand down her throat until she reflexively gagged, and quietly transformed masturbation into a spine tingling chant. But Chouinard’s intention was never to shock, but to shatter classical expectations of female beauty with the reality of her body. Her masturbation is not presented in a way that might illicit desire. Instead, Chouinard is suggesting that the audience recognize what it might wish to ignore. As a woman, Chouinard defines herself through her own felt experiences, and she is insisting that the audience recognize these experiences. The intense reality of her body, and its most fundamental functions, fills the performance space with a tangible density.

In a performance of Josa-Jones, the experience of the audience was often similarly intense. Face to face with the performers emotional-physical states of loss, fear, desire and obsession some members of the audience looked away, others shivered in recognition, while some experienced catharsis. Wrote dance critic Marcia Siegel after lamenting the lack of dancing in a Josa-Jones work: “I guess the audience identified with this typology. It watched with somber attention; during one piece there was loud weeping.”¹⁷

Perhaps it was their alignment with the aesthetic values of performance art that served to alienate them the most, from the American dance history canon. The history of performance art in many ways runs parallel to the history of avant-garde dance and theater. It can be difficult, and some might argue arbitrary, to separate them. Even today’s American modern dance establishment often relegates to the realm of performance art the same artists who are concurrently promoted as choreographers in Europe or Canada. Even a prominent choreographer of the Judson Theater, Carolee Schnemann, is now almost predominately recognized in history as a “feminist performance artists.” Recently I found a video of the work of Paula Josa-Jones in a scholarly video catalogue under the “performance art” category. In the 80’s, Paula Josa-Jones and Marie Chouinard were choreographers, but not all American dance audiences or critics considered what they did dance.

Like many of the performance avant-garde of their generation, Paula Josa-Jones and Marie Chouinard had a kinship with Antonin Artaud. Artaud believed in a ritual, metaphysical theater

¹⁷ Siegel, Marcia. *The Boston Globe* (1996)

that dispensed with words in favor of “gestures, worlds, screams, light, darkness.”¹⁹ The metaphysical implies a place where nature and culture, spirit and reason meet. It is a philosophy of convergence. In the mid-1980’s and early 90’s, Marie Chouinard and Paula Josa-Jones, extended the metaphysical study of the body, actively investigating the science and spirit of what the body knows. They asked: Why do we move and what moves us? What is the foundational impulse or wave of all motion? And what is the mystery beneath this malleable social identity?

Artaud also believed that performance could reveal the metaphysical aspects of life by exposing to the audience its hidden fears, obsessions and unconscious. By returning the work of Paula Josa-Jones and Marie Chouinard to our historical narrative, we can also reveal influential aspects of our cultural identity that may otherwise remain hidden or ignored.

In 1990, with the funding and support of the Canadian government, Marie Chouinard shifted her focus from solo work to founding Compagnie Marie Chouinard. Her company currently tours the world; and has its own dance centre in Montreal. Meanwhile, in The U.S. the NEA stopped funding individual artists, and support for new dance became increasingly tenuous. Paula Josa-Jones stopped making work in 2001.

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The author, a performer of dance and feminist scholar at Oberlin College, considers the work of Canadian performer Marie Chouinard. The author’s research is informed by Chouinard’s solo performances (*S.T.A.B*, *La Faune*, and *Marie Chien Noir*), interviews with the artist, and her own experiential understanding from dancing with Chouinard in a movement workshop. Albright focuses on *La Faune* (a work in which Chouinard literally appropriates Nijinsky’s male body) to illuminate how the artist registers, creates and subverts categories of sexuality and gender. Through *S.T.A.B* she considers Chouinard’s use of voice and her deconstruction of the idea of the ‘unified body’. And through the lens of *Marie Chien Noir*, she illustrates how Chouinard shatters ideas of the beautiful to reveal the body as sometimes ‘messy’, uncontrollable and terrifying. This chapter supports my research by illuminating how Chouinard and Paula Josa-Jones used similar strategies to resist the oppressive ideologies and cultural conventions of their times. In this chapter, the author also engages issues of writing, desire and the body by pairing Chouinard’s dances with the published work of Helen Cixous and Jacques Derrida, and her own personal journal entries inspired by dancing. This stylistic choice, may influence the structure of my final paper.

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Angry Women is #13 of RE/Search Publications series of books exploring the fringes of alternative culture in the 1980's and 90's. In this publication the editors Andrea Juno and V. Vale have compiled interviews with sixteen cutting-edge women performance artists. With passionate forthrightness, the artists discuss their "revolutionary feminism" with an immediacy unmediated by academic analysis. Their work is pro-sex, vehemently critical of social and political inequities, and often graphically disclosing of painful personal experiences. As artists they attempt to subvert the foundations of western cultural values, beliefs and linguistic conventions that they believe oppress the behavior, theories, and imagination of women and minorities. Published in 1991, to include only artists "delving deeply into issues which concern us *now*" *Angry Women* offers a reflection of a particular time in American history from the perspective of a subculture of American artist and activists—a subculture to which Paula Josa-Jones considered herself a member. This publication also illuminates my research by contextualizing the work of Paula Josa-Jones (a choreographer who preferred to be called a performance maker) and Marie Chouinard (who preferred to be called a body artist), with other artists who shared their concerns. In particular it offers insight into two artists Paula Josa-Jones admired as was influenced by—Diamanda Galas, and Karen Finley.

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