A Senior Honors Thesis

choreographed

and

directed by:

Kathleen A. Otterman

script compiled by:

Kathleen A. Otterman

scenic and lighting design by:

Brodie A. Steele
TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: WRITTEN WORK
--Abstract
--Artistic Statement
--Reaction Response
--Research
--References

SECTION II: TEXT
--script material

SECTION III: TECHNICAL ELEMENTS
--preliminary sketches
--final ground plan
--front elevations
--perspective sketch

SECTION IV: PUBLICITY/MANAGERIAL
--rehearsal schedule
--program
--posters/postcard invitations

SECTION V: FACULTY COMMENTS
ARTISTIC STATEMENT

I first developed the concept for this thesis nearly two years ago when I decided to choreograph a dance using funhouse mirrors and the resulting distorted body images as the basis of the choreography. This quickly developed into a broader concept which became the basis for my honors thesis. I decided to try to link all three of my majors (dance performance, theatre performance, and psychology) for my thesis, and I began fairly extensive research on eating disorders as a more specific component of the original idea of distorted body image.

The idea to add text to the piece actually grew out of the numerous first-hand accounts that I found in the course of my research. As I came across more and more conflicting theories as to the origins and causal factors of eating disorders, I realized that it would be impossible to construct a dance meant to communicate the "Why" of eating disorders. Instead, the personal narratives I continued to come across led me to believe that I should focus instead on constructing a performance piece that would communicate the "How" of such diseases. In other words, I decided it was more important to personalize the disorders for an audience in an attempt to make them react emotionally to the subject rather than throw a lot of intellectually based theories at them that might alienate them from the topic. I decided the best way to do this was to use the words of women who had suffered from these disorders first-hand and put those words
ABSTRACT

Eating disorders have long been a silent nemesis for women. While many different theories as to the causal factors of eating disorders exist, it is undeniable that women suffering from these problems experience uniform psychological ramifications. It was the purpose of this project to express those ramifications through theatre and dance mediums, as well as to awaken a curiosity and concern for eating disorders among those who may not have been previously exposed to the topic. A more thorough explanation of the project may be found in the artistic statement.
directly into the mouths of actors who would accompany the dance aspect of the performance.

I wanted to maintain some hint of the various etiological theories in the performance, and that was most easily accomplished by assigning the many lines and monologues I had collected from my readings according to some of the predominant theories my research had uncovered. I had five actors, so I was able to assign lines to those actors based on characterizations that would fulfill particular theories. For example, one actress represented the theory that eating disorders are encouraged by the media and societal pressures to be thin in order to be beautiful and successful. Another actress was very fearful of growing up and separating from parents and the comfort of childhood. A third was the group joiner--the one who begins eating disordered behavior because everyone else is doing it and she wants to fit in. Another represented a more feminist perspective. The fifth actress, in order to establish a particular setting in which the dialogue could take place, took on the role of the therapist, who could recite statistics and theories with some modicum of distance from the topic. She also became the character through whom the audience could better relate to the action onstage.

After the research and the text work was completed, the business of actually choreographing the dance was at hand. For the first time, I decided to choreograph before I chose the music, letting the movement come naturally out of the raw emotions evoked by the topic itself and the accompanying text
rather than letting it be dictated by the music. I actually found it very freeing to approach the creation of the dance this way, and the movement seemed to come forth much more easily. I tried to create movement that would adhere to a specific "storyline". The first dance section constituted a more upbeat, innocent mood. I wanted to create a "body love" before revealing the mirrors and beginning the obsession and downward spiral towards "body hate". The second section began after she revealed the first mirror, beginning with a kind of disbelief and horror and progressing to a more controlling, obsessive, frantic feeling. I tried to also reuse choreographic movements I had used in the first section, but using different dynamics and emphasis in an attempt to link the two sections. The third section began when Ellen revealed Dawn at the third "mirror", wherein Dawn began the more frustrated, pleading movement while Ellen ignored her "self". This section also incorporated movement intended to convey the physical and mental manipulation involved in suppressing the self during eating disorders.

Finally, the last section focused more on the pleading and struggle between the girl and her true self, as the self tried to convince the girl to care for her and accept her, and the girl struggled with whether or not to continue her disorder or make peace with her inner self. All of these sections coincided with dialogue that followed a similar progression.

As far as the technical elements went, my scenic and lighting designer and I had been discussing preliminary ideas for quite some time. I knew that I needed two actual mirrors that
would distort the dancers' bodies as well as one mirror frame from which the "self" could emerge. I also knew that I wanted various levels on which to place the five actresses. Finally, I knew that I wanted to use many of the magazine clippings and video segments I had regarding eating disorders as media projections, and would consequently need a projection screen somewhere on the set. Otherwise, I wanted the designer to have free reign as far as the set design went. Eventually, it was decided that the various levels would be connected to create another level for dancers to use; the projection screen would be designed to look like another mirror frame and would hang upstage center above the center platform; and the mirrors would be arranged in a triangle formation with the mirror frame from which the "self" emerges upstage center. The scenery began to take on a more stark, bonelike structure, with carved, protruding edges and very bare, sharp lines, including metal pipes on one section that resembled ribs. Some of the original ideas were a little more obvious than either one of us wanted it to be, but it was eventually scaled down to the more subtle, expressionistic form it took on for the final performance.

Lighting was much more pressed for time than we would have liked it to be, because of the Festival of Dance show the previous week. There was little time to completely rehang and refocus the entire light plot. Consequently, the lighting was a little rougher than intended. It was intentionally darker than most dance shows are, often highlighting the silhouette of the dancers' bodies rather than emphasizing their faces. We also
wanted the lighting to establish two separate worlds--the world of the "therapy session" with the actresses, and the world of innocence established in the first dance section. As the dancer discovered herself in the mirror, the two worlds began to merge into one.

The costumes chosen for the piece were simple. The actresses wore common street clothes--anything that would have communicated members in group therapy. The dancers wore nude colored unitards in an effort to neutralize the bodies and emphasize the universality of the topic.

The intention of the piece was to explore a difficult, complex topic on a personal level and to use that personal approach to spark intellectual reaction in the audience members. In addition, I wanted to combine all three of my majors in this culminating project. I will discuss the extent to which this was effective in the Reaction paper.
REACTION RESPONSE

Much of the theme of the dance and the evolution of the final project is discussed in the previous artistic statement. This particular response will be confined to more specific choreographic comments and reactions to the final performance.

The structure of my dance would probably be best described as an ABCC' approach. Though I did reuse movement in the second section of the dance, the intent was so different that the movement really constituted more of an ongoing theme in an entirely different dance segment than a repeat of the first segment. The first segment utilized movement that was primarily circular and soft. Floor patterns followed an arc for any traveling steps, and body positions were intended to be soft and caressing. I wanted to communicate a certain aspect of love for her body—lots of touching and hints of celebrated sexuality. I think I could have incorporated this into more of the first movements choreographically; I also think that the dancer was not quite comfortable enough with her own body in order to convey the choreography that I did have.

The second section took movement used in the first section and made it more direct, controlled, and sharp. This was intended to convey both the controlling aspects of an eating disorder as well as the actual visual image of those suffering from eating disorders. I also tried to juxtapose the controlled, held movement with more frantic, out of control movement in order
to establish the inner struggle between the control over the body and the lack of control over the disease.

The third section, Dawn's solo, used movement which did not flow quite so easily as it may have been expected to in order to communicate a sense of manipulation and control over the self. This was contrasted with more purposeful, direct movement, such as the run to the knee slide into the corner, representing the struggle of the self to break away from the disease and communicate with the girl. While I think the choreography worked as it was conceived, I also think that the dancer never really understood why the choreography was created as it was, and consequently never really communicated its meaning to the audience. In addition, I also mistakenly choreographed for my body and my mentality and never fully succeeded at translating the movement to another dancer.

The final section worked perhaps the best of any of the others in the dance. This section employed more stretching, repetitive movement and contact between the two dancers. I wanted to maintain the repetition and control involved with the disease while attempting to convey the sadness and resignation and inability to make peace with oneself also involved in the end stages of the disease. I think perhaps this section connected intellectually and emotionally for the dancers in a way that the other sections did not, and that came through in performance. I also intentionally ended the dance on an ambiguous note, because the disease itself is so difficult to "cure" and is, in fact, something that most sufferers live with their entire life. This
was also the purpose of leaving the final slide on for the final moment. The ending worked well for its intention. I think some audience members felt unresolved about the ending of the piece, but that was what I was trying to communicate.

Costumes worked well for the piece. I wanted costumes that would both emphasize the universality of the body and body image issues as well as the starkness and de-emphasizing of the body related to eating disorders. The costumes for the actors were unobtrusive and appropriate for a "therapy setting" for the dialogue.

After watching the final performance, I would have liked a longer period of time to work on the motivational aspects of the dance. I think a number of things still did not connect for either one of the dancers, but especially for Dawn. I would have liked more time to work on really choreographing the use of the fabric on the set. I wanted the wrapping of the fabric around the actors to be more connected to the dialogue--and though I gave that note to the actors on a regular basis, they never were quite able to incorporate that into their performance without specific direction. I also would have liked the media projections to be of a different shape in order to fill the entire projection screen, but given the difficulties we had in getting the media in the first place, I was happy to have anything at all. I was pleased with the overall product, and I think the project accomplished what I set out to accomplish. I am quite a perfectionist, however, and I do wish it could have been more polished than it was. I am glad that I used younger
dancers in order to give them the challenge and experience of carrying a show themselves; but I think the final product would have been a little more finished if I had used more experienced performers.

As far as the process of the senior project goes, I had no problem with the way it is run now. I think, given the minor conflicts within the department, it might be wise to set up more concrete rules regarding spaces, performance dates, who o.k.s what, etc. I say that with some hesitation because I certainly could not have done this project the way I wanted it done had a number of restrictions been placed on me, and I do not want anyone else's creativity curtailed by administration for the sake of creating a list of rules and regulations. Aside from that, the process was a satisfactory one, and I appreciated the support I did get from my advisor and various technical faculty.
Because eating disorders are issues so strongly related to women (nearly 97% of those who suffer from eating disorders are female), much of the research and theories as to causal factors of this disease are very feminist in origin. A quick glance at the list of sources consulted shows that not a single resource used was written by a man. It has been a topic largely ignored by the male establishment, so the following research issues will seem to be skewed largely toward a feminist perspective. This is not to dismiss the men who do actually suffer from eating disorders, for their pain is just as significant and palpable as it is for the women going through the same thing. But the fact is that disordered relationships with food affect primarily women in our modern culture.

In fact, eating disorders have existed for quite some time. Joan Jacobs Brumberg (1988) states that it was "normal for the Victorian girl to develop poor appetite and skip her meals, 'affect daintiness', and eat only sweets. . ." Denying hunger made women seem as though they were in control of both their bodies and their natural, innate urges. Limiting food intake also enabled women to better fit into the dresses of the time, which denied any womanly flesh at all. Removing feminine curves was a way to struggle against the sensual nature that was so abhorred by Victorian era thought.

Disordered relationships with food have surfaced
significantly primarily during periods in history which were associated with women making gains in society. Eating disorders flourished in the 1920s, as women became more liberated and gained the power of the vote. They then subsided in the mid-thirties, forties, and part of the fifties, only to resurface again in the sixties and seventies, when women began to push for abortion rights and freedom from the Beaver Cleaver kitchen. They have again resurfaced in the nineties, as women fight for equal pay for equal work and opportunities become more and more available to single women. Naomi Wolf would argue that this is so because slenderness became an ideal imposed upon women by the male-dominant society in an effort to preoccupy women with their appearances and thus distract them from encroaching on male "turf". This is indeed a possibility, and is connected to the argument that eating disorders are fueled by media images and model fashions--both industries primarily dominated by male entrepreneurs. Others say that "women today seem to be practicing genocide against themselves, waging a violent war against their female body precisely because there are no indications that the female body has been invited to enter culture".

But other theories can account for this ebb and flow of eating disorders as well. Kim Chernin (1985) argues that the core of an eating disorder is really a problem of identity. Our still male-dominated culture does not allow women to fulfill a basic need to grow. Though opportunities are available to women for advancement and success in a number of areas, we still struggle with a basic belief that we are meant to fulfill
"motherly" and "wifely" roles in addition to anything we may want to do for ourselves. This creates a considerable conflict within women. To which belief do we remain faithful? The fear and panic which may arise for women confronted with this developmental choice can understandable paralyze a women and cause her to want to run away from the task of making this choice in the first place. An eating disorder is an "extremely effective way to stop movement into the world". In its worst case, it causes the woman to return to an infant state--needing to be cared for by others.

The onset of eating disorders indeed coincides most of the time with an underlying developmental crisis. With these new opportunities facing women, a significant inner conflict arises within women. We can no longer swallow the "hungers" (ambition) we have to succeed in a man's world, but we are also agitated by these appetites, and what we symbolically must leave behind in the process. In addition, we realize that it is indeed a man's world we are attempting to infiltrate, which also raises the theory that eating disorders represent an attempt to make ourselves over into men in order to fit into that world. "As we make ourselves over into men, we are busily stripping ourselves of everything we have been traditionally as women", say Chernin. This certainly fits in with the various rises in incidence of eating disorders over the last century.

Other theories suggest that the conflict between "traditional" female roles and entrance into the male world creates a considerable tension between mothers and daughters.
What has been deemed the "Cinderella complex", or a fear of independence, may in reality be a worry about becoming our mothers. We fear relegating ourselves to the mother-wife role that our mothers chose in order to raise us, and so we fear with every bite of food that we may be nourishing that very tendency to follow in our mothers' footsteps. This is true even if our mothers held down jobs or successful careers while raising us, for we instinctively feel that she could have gone even farther had she not been saddled with the burden of raising us. This guilt for holding our mothers back is then turned back on our own bodies. And this guilt is especially heightened any time we appear to have to opportunity to surpass our mothers. It is an odd form of survivor guilt. It is a paradox of feeling that we have the right to the social advantages available to us now, and yet at the same time feeling profound amounts of guilt as we take advantage of those opportunities our mothers were unable to choose. This sort of guilt does not affect men because it is socially expected that men separate from their mothers early and have more socially accepted ways of expressing rage or guilt toward their mothers. Chernin states,

If boys were less able to experience their mother rage through acts of sexual domination over women, and through the entire social system of female suppression, they too might require some other form of enactment in which rage and violence, need and helplessness, despair and guilt and the whole troubled history of the mother/child
are directed against themselves. Then they, too, might develop eating disorders.

Women, on the other hand, are expected to maintain a close, identifying relationship with their mothers. They dwell on their childhood and blame themselves for the suffering of their mothers. Eating disorders then become a way to stop her own development and withdraw from the competition between mother and daughter. Kim Chernin tells of the story of a mother and daughter who decided to enter law school together and set up a friendly mother-daughter competition for grades and studying. Mother and daughter were best of friends, and yet, as the mother began earning 'A's and succeeding in school, the daughter developed an extreme eating disorder—a way of withdrawing from the competition and allowing her mother to take the spotlight she had long sacrificed to raise her.

Other theories focus on biological makeup. There have been studies which suggest that there is a chemical imbalance in the brains of people who suffer from eating disorders—Prozac, an anti-depressant, has been shown to help those with bulimia overcome the urge to succumb to the symptoms of the disease.

Some suggest that eating disorders serve to remove sexuality, and thus remove or avoid an extreme fear of adulthood and indulge a need to return to childhood. Others suggest that the cult-like atmosphere surrounding eating disorders today represent a "tribal experience of female initiation". This is seen especially in college women, who "pursue initiation into her generation's collective, ceremonial forms without her mother's
intervention." It is a way of expressing independence, of identifying with a group separate from her family.

This is certainly only a sampling of the many theories that exist regarding eating disorders. I tried to focus strictly on these and incorporate them into distinct voices for each of the actresses rather than try to stick to any one theory and base the entire dance on that. In actuality, it is likely that many of these theories overlap and contribute in their own distinct way. There is no easy answer, and that is perhaps why there seems to be no easy cure. This disease is much like alcoholism--it never goes away, it is only manageable. It is my hope that this project opened the eyes of just one audience member who will either recognize the disorder in herself and seek help or will take steps to help others with the disease.
REFERENCES


darkness

as low  music comes in, backlight up on actors to show silhouette; projections begin on screen

as images play, dialogue begins. Special up on each actor as she begins to speak

#1: 109 million Americans bought low cal/sugar free products this year. Americans spend 32 billion dollars a year on diet products. 31 million American women are currently on diets. 48 million American women believe they are overweight. Percentage of body fat depicted by the average clothing store mannequin? 10% Minimum percentage of body fat needed for menstruation? 17-22%

#2: I like thinness. I'm not happy if I think I look fat in what I'm wearing. Kate Moss looks so cool in a bathing suit. I don't know if I'm conditioned to think this way or if it's just me. But I don't think anything could make me abandon my desire to be thin.

#3: In the transition to high school I kind of got lost. I wanted to be a part of things, and I felt like everybody around me was thin, so I thought if I got thin like they were everything would be perfect. I linked having the perfect body to being liked by other people.

#1: Research shows that virtually all women are ashamed of their bodies. It used to be adult women, teenage girls, who were ashamed, but now you see the shame down to very young girls--10, 11 years old. Society's standard of beauty is an image that is literally just short of starvation for most women.

#2: Sophia Loren and Marilyn Monroe could not get a job today--their agents would tell them to go on a diet, get a trainer.

#1: I have an eleven year old patient who won't eat because she's terrified of developing hips. She read on a cereal box that if she runs up and down the stairs 15 times she'll burn 300 calories.

#5: I was babysitting for this little girl--she couldn't have been more than 8--and she asked me how many calories a bottle of Clearly Canadian had. She's 8 years old! What does she need to be thinking about that for?!

#1: From the minute genders are assigned, people react differently to boys and girls. They say "look at those thighs, he'll be a great football player!" to a boy. To a girl they say "look at those eyelashes, she'll really be a head turner!"

#2: I always thought I was fat. In high school everybody was thin and perfect. There was a lot of pressure to be beautiful. I wanted to look as slender and
sleek as Kate Moss. I thought people like Cindy Crawford were overweight.

#1: The anorexic girl has become our present cultural heroine.

#4: Let me tell you something--on any given day, the younger girls--13, 14 years old--can be found throwing up breakfast and lunch in the school washroom. It's a group thing: peer pressure, the new drug of choice. They go in groups of 2 to 12, taking turns in the stalls, coaching each other through it...

#2: Bulimia was so common among students at my college that the pipes in one sorority house kept getting clogged because so many people were throwing up in the sinks.

#4: In my group of friends, we are addicted to the “5 lbs less” syndrome. 5 lbs less is always better. I must admit, I've done it all to lose weight. I've fasted for 10 days straight, overdosed on laxatives, exercised more hours than not, ate lettuce at 6 pm just to throw it up. I know I'm sick, but I keep most things secret. Two of my friends know because they're sick too. We have starving contests, see who can weigh the least next week...

All: We need a revolution in our values. We need to define attractiveness with much broader parameters.

#4: I hate to say it, but it is the exceptional girl who isn't anorexic or bulimic--in my school anyways. This is normal. I am normal and my friends are normal. We're the women of the future.

end projection of images. music fades out. light change to illuminate dance space, still not quite revealing the set behind it. new music fades in as Ellen enters to begin dance movement #1.

dialogue resumes slightly before E. reveals mirrors (*will specify during course of rehearsal).

#1: I am walking down the street in Manhattan, 5th Avenue in the lower sixties, women with shopping bags on all sides. I realize with some horror that for the last 15 blocks I have been counting how many women have better and how many women have worse figures than I do. Did I say 15 blocks? I meant 15 years.

#3: The future is a big blank--18 is as good as things can get. What I'd really like is for things to stay just the way they are right now.

#5: “Let's see if we can make it all the way to dinner,” my mother would always say, “without eating anything at all.”
I was a sucker for the glamour potential. It seduced me every bit as much as it nauseated me. Went right along with all the other ironies in my life. The way I longed to be beautiful, but hate to be flattered; the way I wanted to succeed, but to suffer in order to do it; how I detested privilege, but hankered after wealth; how I wanted everyone to love me, yet wished I could be totally independent.

Sometimes I’m afraid the main reason I spend half my life outdoors is simply because there aren’t any mirrors.*

(“should coincide with the first mirror being revealed--this begins dance movement #2)

We can’t allow ourselves to be who we really are, so we start feeling like that person we’re hiding isn’t worth anything. Without something to convince us we’re needed, we’re lost.

And lost is a scary place to be. So for whatever crazy reason, we get to thinking that being beautiful, being perfect, being in control will give us what we’re looking for.

The modern teenage girl learns to measure her worth on the scale--the lower the number, the higher she scores. And with calories and fat grams now printed on most grocery items, she literally feeds on the math of bodily subtraction.

One day I will be thin enough. Just the bones, no disfiguring flesh. Just the pure, clear shape of me. Bones. That is what we are, after all. What we’re made of, and everything else is storage, deposit, waste. Strip it away, use it up, no deposit, no return.

dialogue break-- E. finishes movement #2 in silence--movmt. #2 ends as E. pulls fabric from final mirror to reveal Dawn in mirror frame. Dawn steps out to begin her solo--movement #3.

as movement #3 begins, dialogue resumes. During the following “monologue”, lights begin slow change to reveal / highlight the scenery; actors begin the process of slowly pulling pieces of fabric off the reveal starkness of the set--actors will slowly and methodically wrap fabric in various ways around their bodies...by the end of the piece, the set will be completely revealed and the actors will be more or less completely concealed.

Every morning the same ritual, the same inventory, the same naming of parts before rising, for fear of what she may have become overnight. Jolting out of sleep--what was that dream, that voice offering her strawberries and cream?
The first thing I do is feel my hipbones, piercingly concave, two naked arcs of bone around an emptiness. Next I feel the wrists, encircling each with the opposite hand, checking that they're still frail and pitiful, like the legs of little birds. On the outside of the wrist, I follow the bone all the way up to the elbow, where it joins another, winglike, in a sharp point.

Moving down to the thighs, first I feel the hollow behind the knee to check that the tendon is still clean and tight, a naked cord. Then I follow the outside of each thigh up toward the hips: no hint of a bulge, no softening anywhere.

Next I grab the inner thigh and pinch hard, feeling almost all the way around the muscle there; finally, turning on one side and then the other, I press each buttock, checking that the bones are still sticking through.

Sitting up in bed, a little more anxiously now, I grasp the collar bones, so prominent that they protrude beyond the edges of the shoulders, like a wire coat hanger suspending this body, these bones. Beneath them, the rows of ribs, deeply corrugated.

And the breasts, which I don't inspect

Then I press the back of my neck and as far down my spine as I can, to make sure the vertebrae are all still there, a row of perfect little buttons: as if they held this body together, as if I could unbutton it and step out any time I wanted to.

Light change complete by this point. Fabric pulled from set, but not yet wrapped around actors. Begin movement #4—duet with Dawn and Ellen. Power struggle between the two. Anger.

I stare hard at the naked body and face that stares hard back at me. The lights flanking the mirror illuminate every crease, every wrinkle, every hollow and bulge...

I look haggard when stripped of makeup...

Ageless, with the cheeks of a baby and the gaze of a spinster. The puffy circles beneath my eyes seem to enlarge as I watch...

and the tip of my nose turns fiery red with my increasing concentration...

Ugly, ugly girl! How dare you imagine that you could ever be beautiful!!

Hair like straw, swollen face, expression like a drowned rat's!

I was my own monster.
#3: When you are so unhappy you don't know how to accomplish anything, then to have control over your body becomes an extreme accomplishment. You make of your body your very own kingdom where you are the tyrant, the absolute dictator. Everything becomes a symbol of victory over the body.

#1: They cannot see they are too thin because slenderness has become a statement of power.

#2: At lunch my classmates laugh at me for my eccentric eating habits. ... I lick my spoon at each minuscule bite, and reaching the bottom of the container, insist that I feel full. It is worth it. It wins me notoriety. I'm becoming famous around school for my display of self-discipline. My audience stands in awe of me, and I love it.

#4: I have to prove to myself and everyone watching that I, unlike the average human being, need nothing to subsist. I must prove, in effect, that I am truly superhuman.

#2: I will maintain my habits, goddamnit. I like my habits. My parents cannot convert me, cannot dissuade me from my priorities. Their concern only strengthens my resolve to adhere to my own scheme of ways and means.

#3: One week... a massive snowfall afforded me the chance to play the little girl I wish I were. I struggled against the cold to venture out and build a snowman. Truthfully, I had no interest in the snowman, but it seemed important as a symbolic turning back of time. Backtrack, slow down, catch up with lost illusions. I wanted so badly the thrill of innocence I missed the first time around. "I grew up too damned fast!" I felt like screaming back when my mother amusingly asked what I was doing. She doesn't understand. I was too old before, and now I'm not nearly old enough. I can't seem to locate my place in time.

#4: I was no longer a dancer; no longer a paradigm for... the sexually desirable female. I was no longer a bona fide sylph. And I had no bona fide self. What I did have was a troubling obsession with bingeing and vomiting.

#3: This contest served a mundane purpose. It distracted me from problems like the future, my parent's marriage, men, and all the other questions over which I had absolutely no control.

#4: I weighed myself constantly

#2: constantly

#3: constantly... but since I was drinking so much water and Tab, I was always
one or two pounds heavier than I wanted to be.

#4: First it was 125, then 115. Then I had to work a little harder, so I took up swimming. And every ounce I lost encouraged me to eat that much less.

#2: There are always rituals. The days you get through and the days you know you’ll probably eat. Not meals. I almost never eat a meal.

#5: I had elaborate strategies to keep myself from eating. One more hour, make it through one more hour, and then the next. When I did eat, it was always exactly at the same time of day...my entire life had to be organized around that.

#3: I thought I looked good. But my friends...one of them told me later that my face looked like a skull. Bone and skin.

All: It was what I'd always fantasized about.

#2: I was a fat person trapped in a thin body. And no matter what anyone said, no matter what I weighed, or how sharp my hip bones protruded through my skin...or my vertebra, or my ribs, no matter how delicate my wrist, I would always be too fat.

as the following sequence takes place, the images are again projected onto the screen...beginning to change more rapidly as the "excuse" section starts, building to an almost unidentifiable pace, and ending on the final line with one representative image projected above all the performers

#3: It all got kind of out of my control

#2: out of my control

# 4 and #5: out of my control

#5: But that's the thing about control. When you lose it, you realize how hard it is to get it back...and when you get it back the most frightening thing in the world is the thought of ever losing it again.

#2: I like the procedure where they wire your mouth shut. Sort of like braces to straighten out your self-control.

#3: When I go out to dinner, I can start to feel this panic. I try to avoid it.

#2: I've just eaten a huge lunch...
#3: It's my stomach--really giving me trouble again...

#4: I'm cleaning my system with fluids...

#5: Too wound up to eat right now...

#1: I'll have something later when I get home...

#4: I'm not really that hungry...

#3 and #5: I'm not really that hungry...

#2 and #1: I'm not really that hungry.

**hold in stillness for a few beats. slow fade to complete blackness, video image is the last thing to "disappear".**
the week of Festival of Dance is still up in the air, as are afternoon times for “all”. I need to find out exactly when Lou Ann is going to schedule rehearsals for company that week before finalizing—I would like to give the dancers a chance to go home and grab dinner before their Fest. of Dance rehearsals. I also need to finalize actors’ schedules to make sure all (or most) of them can be there for afternoon rehearsals.

**this is NOT set in stone. We may not need all of the time I have scheduled. I am being overly cautious on purpose. If we finish before the end of a scheduled block of time, we’ll leave. I know everyone is very busy at this time of year, and I don’t want anyone to get too burned out or overextended. If you see major problems with this proposed schedule, let me know—ASAP!**

***a BIG, HUGE THANKS to everyone in advance for agreeing to put in time for this project—it is very much appreciated, and I hope it will represent a good collaborative experience for everyone. I am flying by the seat of my pants here, so if anyone ever has any suggestions or comments, please feel free to add them. . .I want this to be a group effort.***

**Schedule:**

- **Wed 4/30** 6:00-10:00 tech run all
- **Thurs 5/1** 6:00-10:00 tech/dress all
- **Fri 5/2** 6:30 call
  8:00 curtain
“DISTORTIONS”

Tentative Rehearsal Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. 4/7</td>
<td>5:00-6:00</td>
<td>read thru/ discussion</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 4/9</td>
<td>3:00-5:30</td>
<td>teach choreography</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri 4/11</td>
<td>9:00-11:00am</td>
<td>teach choreography</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 4/14</td>
<td>5:00-8:00</td>
<td>teach/ work choreo.</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues 4/15</td>
<td>afternoon? 8:00-10:00</td>
<td>work choreo.</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 4/16</td>
<td>3:00-5:00 6:00-8:30</td>
<td>work choreo/ add text</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. 4/17</td>
<td>8:00-10:30</td>
<td>work all</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 4/18</td>
<td>9:00am-12:00 6:30-8:30</td>
<td>work dance/ work text/ work all</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mon 4/21</td>
<td>3:00-4:30 or 5:00-6:00</td>
<td>work dance</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues 4/22</td>
<td>5:00-6:00</td>
<td>work text</td>
<td>actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Wed 4/23</td>
<td>3:00-4:30 or 5:00-6:00</td>
<td>work all</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 4/24</td>
<td>off See Festival of Dance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri 4/25</td>
<td>10:00am-12:00 *3:00-4:30 or 5:00-6:00</td>
<td>work dance/ work all/ work all</td>
<td>D. and E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 4/28</td>
<td>5:00-8:30</td>
<td>work/run all</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues 4/29</td>
<td>5:00-8:30</td>
<td>work/run all</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Senior Honors Thesis
choreographed
and
directed by:
Kathleen A. Otterman
Kathleen A. Otterman
script compiled by:
scenic and lighting design by:
Brodie A. Steele

D S T O R T I O N
DISTORTIONS

sponsored by FTC Corporation

She must learn again to speak starting with I starting with we starting as the infant does with her own true hunger and pleasure and rage

advisor: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Coordinator of Dance

For more information on or help with eating disorders, contact Counseling and Psychological Services
Lucina 320
285-1736
or 747-7330 (after 5:00pm)

Shop Staff:

Technical Director: Robin Miller
Master Carpenter: Billy Kimbley
Master Electrician: BAZ
Sound Board Op: Tim Fandrei
Slide Projector Op: Brian LaCasse
House Manager: Michael Casey Clark
Videographer: Jay Stephens

Cast List:

Girl: Ellen Scott
Self: Dawn Harlow
Voice #1: Carrie Schlatter
Voice #2: Jennifer Kapitan
Voice #3: Jessica Guthrie
Voice #4: Robyn Norris
Voice #5: Cindy Yonts

Special Thanks to:
John Dalton, VIS; Sarah Mangelsdorf; Joe Modlin; Jason A Tratta; Stephanie Chalmers; Mark Hillenbrand; Dick and Linda Steele; Brodie A. Steele; Jen, Chris, and Nick Otterman; and the entire cast and crew for their generous donation of time and energy.
Distortions

On Friday May 2nd Distortions, a theatrical dance combination about eating disorders, was performed at University Theatre. Distortions was choreographed and directed by Kathleen A. Otterman. The cast consisted of two dancers, a girl and her "self," and five voices. The subject gave the production a serious tone.

There was a wonderful use of costuming. The dancers flesh colored unitards acted as a good representation of the naked body and the naked "self." While the voices were dressed in common clothes. The clothes they would wear to school to cover their horrid bodies.

Set structure gave a misty kind of feel. It made me feel like the whole show was almost a dream, but the harsh reality of the subject contradicted this. Placement of each voice, in their own separate world and yet still together, surrounding the girl and her "self" gives a good effect. They are consuming the disorder, the disease. Protecting it from the outside world of ridicule and condemnation. The deformed mirrors set a good example of how anorexic or bulimic persons see themselves. The third mirror, the one her "self" is inclosed in, shows best the image in the mind of an anorexic or bulimic.

Use of media is sometimes a gamble. Here the choice of media was good. Yet the screen for the slides was too far back and the projections too small. This could have been to not put a focus on the slides. In that instance it worked: I hardly noticed the screen.

The movement of the girl could have been choreographed a little more blatantly. At times it was hard to understand what the movement was trying to depict. For instance, she did a combination while a long arguing dialogue was going on; I couldn't understand
how the movement was interacting with the dialogue. Other times the movement was extremely expressive of the dialogue or subject. I especially liked the first time she looked in the mirror. Hands following the body, checking every angle, a face of wonder and disgust, a moment of unsuccessful will-power trying not to stare. All these were very deep movements concerning the obsessiveness of the disease. When the girl was first introduced, I liked how she acted as she was orienting herself to new surroundings. This made me think of how a person with an eating disorder would check out their surroundings to see if they are going to be accepted by the people around them or if there are any people at all. When the girl's self was first introduced she made a great impact on understanding what the girl feels in reflection of herself. At first the "self" acts as an exact reflection of the girl. Then, becoming an independent spirit reflects the idea of the "self" only being an image in a head, not the replica of that person. Their interaction is minimal, but when interacting I felt a struggle between them. The "self" consumed the girl and the girl tried to free her spirit from the confinement of the disease.

The actual movements were somewhat sloppy at times. Executions or changes of direction needed to be done more sharply and quicker. Some landings were particularly loud and could have been done softer. Also certain slides squeaked on the floor, this became a distraction.

Overall the production was done well for its caliber and subject. Kathleen did a good job of choreographing and directing, but the performers could have pushed a little more during the performance. All other aspects were wonderful.
THEATRE AND DANCE PERFORMANCE  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 5/5/97

TO: Don, Judy, Mark, Beth, Raphe, Frank

FROM: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Coordinator of Dance

SUBJECT: Katie Otterman’s Project

Since you were the faculty I noticed in the audience, I was wondering if any of you would be willing to write a brief evaluation of the project. I was the only dance faculty member at Katie’s presentation and I would appreciate including some other opinions and suggestions in the evaluation summary for our files.

Thank you.

Sarah,

I found Katie’s project to be visually exciting. The subject matter was relevant—especially given the age range of our students. I also thought Katie’s choreography was effective in relating to the content (subject).

However, to me there was one aspect lacking—a strong point of view. I wanted to know more about how the artist (Katie) felt about the subject. If the choreography was to inform me than it was not successful. I found the presentation gave us important facts but little opinion. Don