Myopic perceptions—what do I see?

Take 1: What are these dancers trying to do? What are they doing in movement? How do they achieve the choreographic task?

Throwing. Multiple throws. Throwing limbs, throwing themselves, movements that attempt to escape the body but the body acts as a limit, an end, a cul-de-sac. The body functions as the limit of movement, constraint, failure of intention, intention as failure.

Looking in this way is an attempt to see what the dancer is trying to do, judging what that is, assessing its success.

Take 2: From the point of view of the activity itself

An event in the body. Jiggling, jigging around, hyperactive, full of beans. Never stopping. Moving, circulating, finding myriad ways to keep going. This event keeps going. The loop keeps it going.

The quality of movement is kind of like Jo Lloyd’s distinctive bouncing quality but there’s a different tone, ramped up. Accelerating.

Rhythm: Is it rhythmic? The rhythm of the event. Is it a repeatable rhythm?

Repetition: Are there repeats or series of differences?

Take 3: Personality

Each body is distinctive. As I watch several people moving I notice what is characteristic about each body. While there is a sense that everyone is doing ‘the same thing’, I notice characteristic differences in the way in which this is enacted:

This man stretches webbed fingers which take up an idea (of movement).

Very particular pelvises, lower spine in relation to the hip joint.

The body has personality.

Feet tap dancing.

The body does what it pleases. But what pleases a body? How does a particular body come to be pleased in this way? This is a question of habit, what Aristotle calls the formation of second nature. Dance training consists in a great deal of habit formation. Mention Ravaisson on habit: that habit arises through the imperceptible transformation of effort (will) into spontaneous involuntary movement (grace). Habit comprises an intelligence in the body that works beyond conscious deliberation. Dancers have strong kinaesthetic habits, cultivated through training, embedded through practice, context, repetition.

In a short space of time, I can see recognizable styles. Not something else taking over a body but a body exhibiting its moves, in its particular register. Turning itself to the task at hand.

So the choreography when set in motion must include the distinctive character of these dancers.

Enough, you say, enough of your myopia

So far, I’ve been giving you my perceptions. I see with my body, my body understands insofar as it can somehow connect, through its own kinaesthetic values and modes of understanding. I am quite interested in what dancers physically do, what a body does. But there is more. Even perceptually.
Why focus on the image as if it’s a stage, a proscenium arch? This machine, this room, this moment. What is it about the film, its ticker tape run through the projector, the thrust of serial images, many images, each one a flash card, which between them stage movement. What happens between these images? Multiple bodies, imperceptibly changing, infinitesimal differences, creating a flow of sorts. What of the relation between body-images. For a moment, I see many bodies, many images of a single body. Less real, still palpable.

Deformation of the real

Images blur. What body? Bodies, moments, not people dancing, the eye making its own journey, drawn, repelled, making its own dance, voluntary and involuntary. Eye and mind, thought and vision interact in relation to the visible.

Take another swipe—this time with Spinoza

Spinoza takes an ethical view of the body.

Bodies change. If they become more powerful, that is, more capable, this is regarded as a change for the good.

The more agency a body expresses, the greater its power. Ethics is thus about empowerment in the singular rather than domination over others. The challenge of this way of thinking lies in its refusal to fix any particular content for the notion of the good. Rather, the good arises as a difference in this body, through its becoming active.

Spinoza wants to affirm the body’s achievements, as a momentary accomplishment—in action.

What is active in this dance? Are these bodies becoming more capable through what they do? What is the relation between the film and our bodies? What moves between us? What shifts, what changes here?

Shifting relations, differentiating agencies, activity, capacity.

Active vs. passive. Are these bodies subjected or do the dancers subject themselves towards an increase of power/capacity?

Last one—Grosz, Bacon, Deleuze

According to Elizabeth Grosz in her Power Institute/Art Gallery of New South Wales lecture, ‘Bacon, Deleuze and imperceptible forces’ (18 October 2013):

Both Bacon and Deleuze ask what forces make something what it is, and what forces contort, stretch, twist, open up and transform it into something else, revealing what it always was, a complexity beyond self-evidence? What induces becomings, transformations, new living forces? How can we experience this directly, through impacts on the nervous system without the mediation of the brain? How can we feel these forces and give ourselves up to them? How to paint a head, a body, while invoking all the forces that make them more than themselves? Bacon subjects the body to the forces that make and unmake it.

Bacon asks how to think the ‘fact’ of the body, so paint directs this fact to the nervous system without the mediation of the brain, without overly conceptualizing it? How to paint the body at the point of its becoming something else? He asks how one can, as an artist, submit oneself to the forces that one must conjure up but cannot articulate? How to bring oneself into a rhythm with that which cannot be perceived?

Reconceptualization of the body not as an organised singularity but as a multiplicity of forces. (Nietzsche)

Thinking in this way, we might consider this work in relation to force.

The body as a staging ground for multiple forces.
Towards undoing the organization of the body.

What began as failure becomes something else, a towards which maybe achieves.

These forces exceed the body that dances, take it to new place.

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