



Outside-In

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Outside-In

- Axis Dance Company, founded in 1987
- Includes performers with and without disabilities
- Choreography by Victoria Marks, Professor of Dance, UCLA



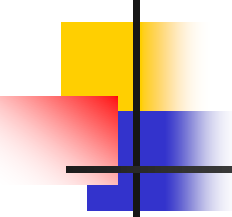
AXIS DANCE COMPANY

What is dance?

- *"There is no more defiant a land that I can think of than AXIS. They showed me what dance could be."*

-Bill T. Jones





Outside-In in Medical Education

Goals for a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. session with 1st year medical students on patients with disabilities...

- Catch students' attention by
 - exposing them to an unfamiliar artistic medium;
 - exploring its relevance to their newly chosen profession of medicine
- Interrupt and challenge their thinking about disability
- Help them understand disability as a cultural construction

Exploring the Meaning of Dance

- What is dance?
- What is its relationship to movement?
- What is the relationship of movement to life?
- ("the quick... and the dead")





Segment 1: The Clinical Gaze - Staring

- At what point did you realize this dance troupe includes members with disabilities?
- Did that affect the way you saw what was going on? (staring)
- How are various forms of "looking" at extraordinary bodies sanctioned, approved, or forbidden in the health professions?





Possibilities of Staring

- Gawking/voyeurism - promiscuous looking
 - Surrender to sensational
 - Visual intrusion
- Dominance staring
 - Used to enforce social hierarchies and regulate access to resources
 - Cultural othering; a colonizing look
- Stigmatizing staring
 - Pushes others away rather than dominates them
- Separated staring
 - Visual fleeing, running away from the fearful
- Clinical gaze
 - Asymmetrical staring
 - Aims to control "outlaw aspects" of human variation by creating categories and diagnoses
 - Destroys individual subjectivity and humanity



Possibilities of Staring

- Ethical, generative, engaged staring
 - Mutual interest, attention
 - A stare of connection, an I-Thou exchange
- Bad staring (Sontag)
 - Produces indifference, complacency
 - Looking without recognizing
 - Unethical passivity
- Good staring (Sontag)
 - Transitions from discomfort, shock, or fear to empathic identification
 - Bears visual witness
 - Leads to action (social justice)
- How are constructs such as...
 - Indifferent detachment (leading to objectification)
 - empathetic distress (leading to pity)
 - empathetic identification (leading to respect)
 - ... related to looking ?

Segment 1: Contagion/Contamination

- Contagion/contamination//
transmission/connection:
- What is the relationship of contagion/contamination
and disability?
- What is being transmitted?
- Transmission both destroys
(expiration) and revives
- Without transmission,
there can be no connection





Segment 2: Empathic distress vs. empathic identification

- “Stepping” into each other’s shoes/modes of being
 - How easy is this?
 - A two-way street
 - It can be fun - and funny
- What can we learn from seeing a wheelchair used to dance rather than as a mode of transportation?





Segment 3: Sexuality and Disability

- How would you describe the sensuality of the choreography?
- Persons with disabilities sometimes viewed as asexual
- From *Spastics*, by Vassar Miller
Rarely marry, expected to make it with Jesus,
Never really make it at all,
Don't know how,
Some can't
Feed themselves
Fool with, *well* –
Even some sappy saint said they
Look young because pure.
- How is this view challenged in the video?







Segment 4: Outside-In

- Outside-In Theme
 - Highlights concepts of exclusion, isolation, segregation, separation
 - Dancer gazes at picture of a landscape (outside)
 - Sees faces, then own face (separate)
 - Alternative is connection - moving "in"
 - With the help (kiss) of another (transmission), enters the landscape (inside)
- Facing death (underground)
 - The symbolic death of the spirit, the self
- The possibility of rebirth (awakening) and transmission (sneezing) leading to connection



Segment 5: Mirroring and Identity

- Mirroring - reflections of the other
 - Dancers both imitate and mirror each other's actions
 - We see ourselves (albeit imperfectly) in the imperfect other
- Identity -
 - Fingerprint
- Each dancer leaves his/her own unique traces





Cautionary Note: The Seduction of Triumphalism

- My view - a bunch of cool dancers having a very good time
- Students' view - "inspiring"
 - Admiration consistently greater for disabled than nondisabled dancers
 - Video encouraged students to overcome challenges and obstacles



Outside In Revisited

- Outside/In -
 - Challenge of first seeing, then understanding (incompletely) the Other
 - Risks/rewards of efforts at boundary crossing
- Who is outside? Who is inside?
 - What valence do these terms carry?
 - How does the dance play with the fluidity of the concept?
- Empathic identification: Opportunity to
 - Find (some aspect of) self in others
 - Respond to the "face" of the other
 - Express solidarity with the other (while acknowledging their fundamental unknowability)

Questions/Comments?

