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Humes 103

Professor Green

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“A body can do the Charleston
A body can undo
A body can bend your perspective
A body can resonate
A body can mind
A body can invite you to listen
A body can respond to questions
A body can manipulate sound
A body can become perfect through imperfection
A body can imagine itself a rock
A body: can time travel
A body can pulse
A body can interpret
A body can warm up
A body can stagnate
A body can conform
A body can tell a story
A body can be labeled
A body can think
A body can expand
A body can alliterate
A body can overcome
A body can jump a hundred times.
A body can sing an old Jewish folk song” (3)

In Ben Spatz's "What a Body Can Do," he draws upon a writing workshop he led, where participants were tasked with completing the sentence "A body can ____." Within this open-ended environment, there were no predefined limits on what a body could accomplish, and the community was allowed to define its possibilities. The outcome was wide-ranging responses that challenged conventional notions of a body's potential. Spatz could've chosen to write these answers in a standard format across the page, but instead he stacks each individual answer on top of each other, much like a poem or a song. This structure only appears this one time in the introduction, making it pop out to the reader and call attention to its presence. Spatz's choice to include this excerpt, along with its structure and rhetorical devices used, help frame his definition of the concept of "technique as practice" and "embodied knowledge."

One of the obvious rhetorical devices used in this passage is anaphora, which involves the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses. The repetition of the phrase "A body can" creates a rhythmic and hypnotic quality in the text. This draws the reader into the passage's cadence, which mirrors the pulsating potential of the human body that Spatz wants to convey. The use of anaphora magnifies the sense of what a body can achieve, emphasizing the range of possibilities, from "dancing the Charleston" to "singing an old Jewish folk song." Even though this list ends, the sentiment is that the possibilities of the body are endless.

Another rhetorical device used is enjambment, which occurs when a sentence or phrase continues onto the next line or stanza without a pause or break. Spanza uses this technique to maintain the flow and momentum of the text. All of the lines are enjambed, creating a sense of continuity and interconnectedness between the capabilities of the body. This underscores the idea that these actions are not isolated or separate but are part of the continuous and evolving

experience of the body. There is also no punctuation anywhere in the passage adding on to the fluid motion of the text and influencing how it would be read aloud. At the same time, it leaves room for interpretation because of the line breaks, so one person could choose to pause after each line and another could read it all as if it were one sentence. This emphasizes Spanza's point that there is no one correct way to use the body, just like there is no one correct way to read this text. The text itself is the body in this situation, fluid and connected with different possibilities of interpretation.

Spatz also uses figurative language like "A body can imagine itself a rock" and "A body: can time travel." These metaphors expand the reader's understanding of the body's potential. The image of a body imagining itself as a rock conveys the idea of strength and resilience, while the notion of a body time traveling hints at the body's ability to transcend time itself. These metaphors encourage readers to think more creatively about the body's capacities or beyond what society says a body can do. Spatz states that "the body's becoming is a process of endless possibility—of capacity for new movement, new interpretations, and new relationships with other bodies and environments" (2). The repetition in the passage reflects this concept by emphasizing the endless potentialities of the body and the extensive list shows the diversity of human experiences, emphasizing that the body is not limited to a narrow set of functions but is a tool for expression and connection.

By incorporating this excerpt from his workshop into his book, Spatz introduces a variety of interpretations of the body. Spatz states that he wants to "advocate the fostering and support of "research culture" in diverse areas of physical culture, performing arts, and everyday life"(4). So therefore the exercise supports his overarching goal of presenting a diverse range of viewpoints, creating an exploration of different experiences and acknowledging the participants' bodily

knowledge and creativity. This emphasizes Spatz's belief in the importance of collaborative efforts to understand the human body's capabilities since "we do not yet know what a body can do"(4).

Spatz's use of the passage further helps define his notion of technique as a form of knowledge and embodied knowledge. Spatz says "technique isn't solely about executing physical movements; it encompasses a grasp of how to effectively and creatively utilize the body. It's about accumulating experiences, sensory perceptions, and intuitive insights that contribute to a distinctive and personal form of knowledge." Spatz believes that technique should not be reduced to a rigid or technical set of movements, but Instead, should be viewed as a dynamic process that draws from various sources of knowledge and personal experiences. By engaging in specific physical actions and routines, individuals gain insights about their bodies and their potential. This connects with the inclusion of the excerpt because each answer given by the participants defies the conventional uses of the body and is unique to each individual based on their lived experiences and connections.

"Embodiment in practice" is the concept that knowledge is inherently tied to the body and can not be solely expressed by words. Spatz argues "the mind and body are holistically intertwined"(11). This recognizes that knowledge isn't just intellectual or abstract but is also lived through physical engagement with the world, as Spatz asserts that "embodiment is not a fixed condition; it is a way of being-in-the-world, acting, and responding" (9). Embodied practices include a wide range of activities, like the ones listed in the excerpt—jumping, undoing, transforming. In this way, Spatz's usage of an excerpt from the workshop supports the notion that technique involves more than just physical movements, but instead encompasses the body's ability to engage with different forms of expression, developing one's embodied

knowledge. Spatz reinforces the idea that the body's abilities and knowledge are not fixed or limited, but instead, they can be developed, refined, and expanded through experimentation and exploration.

Pledged.

Works Cited:

Spatz, B. (2015). *What a Body Can Do: Technique as knowledge, practice as research*. Routledge.