

QUEENIE YANG: FINAL BLOG PORTFOLIO

INTRODUCTION

My final blog begins with a simple introduction to my body practice. I thought about a lot of topics before I finally decided to choose this one---to increase the flexibility of my body. I used to dance and sing the Beijing Opera when I was in primary school. I used to train about four hours a day and even more during the summer and winter holidays, fully devoted myself to intensive exercise and performing. My body was supple at that time, and I can do the splits, bend down, or even handstand. When I entered secondary school because of the academic pressure and the sound around me kept telling me that if I was not going to be a dancer in the future, I should focus on studying and view dancing as only a hobby. But gradually, it's not even a hobby for me and I no longer press my legs, bend down, or do the splits. So given this body practice project, I thought why not restart all of this. And I begin with increasing my body's flexibility. I started by buying a yoga mat and usually came from the main campus to my dorm around 9:50 and began stretching and expressing my legs for about 30 minutes. I measured the maximum distance between my leg and the yoga mat almost every day to keep a record of my body practice.



Sep

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In the following parts, I will demonstrate two main reflections from my body practice. As Bobel & Kwan put forward at the very beginning of their book, the world is full of norms and narrow

notions, it keeps telling us what to do and what to avoid (2019: 1). On the other hand, the authors came up with the idea of “body as a battleground”. That is, “individuals don’t always play by the rules, and they challenge cultural embodiment norms” (Bobel & Kwan 2019: 2). The body part of this final blog follows the same flow.

A CHANGE?

Just like what I mentioned in the first post about the concept of “body-minds”, the changes in my mind happened along with the change of my body and they supplement each other. I do realize something didn’t come up to me before, especially the reason I started dancing.

One day, when I was stretching, my roommate came in, I was surprised to find that she can almost do the splits. According to her, she used to dance too. “Every girl must practice dancing more or less in their childhoods,” she said. Her words left me in deep thought. Indeed, from the very beginning, it seems one reason for me to start dancing is the norms that girls are supposed to dance. When I was in primary and secondary school, the dance troupe for the school only had girls and if a boy showed his interest in dancing, he would be considered strange. Also, parents take girls to attend dance lessons while taking boys to robot lessons. I used to take it for granted but after the lecture, I came to realize that the cultural and social environment created certain norms and values which affect our thoughts and practices. Also, with digital information and communication technologies surging into our lives, our identity, liberty, and privacy have been undermined and our choices have interfered (Schüll 2016: 195). Along with that, I came to rethink that maybe those dancing lessons I took when I was young are a form of gendering my body.

I used to think dancing is my hobby and it’s 100% my choice. But now I realized that I am partly made to enjoy dancing by my parents who are as well influenced by this society to be specific about the norms, the power, the value within.

AN INSIST?

After knowing my body practice project and my past dance experience. One of my friends asked me what types of dances I used to do. To be honest, I have practiced many types of dances, mainly focusing on folk dance and classic dance. And when I mentioned that I have learned ballet I can see her eyes open wider and said, “that’s so 'high class'.” I soon recalled that we had learned the term “social class” in the lecture. After some chatting with her, I do realize she as well as many other people think that ballet is something elegant and high class and only rich families send their kids to practice ballet, while street dance gives people a sense of randomness and “lower class”. “It seems you have to master a lot of skills to dance ballet, but you can learn street dance within two hours,” she added. I admit that ballet is a very difficult type of dance, but street dance is a great technique as well. For me, I like the grace and pride of ballet at the same time I enjoy street dance as it’s very down-to-earth and easy to join to share the happiness of dancing.

Personally, I don’t think there are high or low dance types and I do believe class and taste are something made instead of born. The lower and middle class may have fewer chances to contact ballet and then enjoy ballet. But upper-class parents send their kids to learn it and those kids were partly made to like it. During my dancing career, I met a lot of people that are not doing the type of dance they enjoy. When reading Sharp (2000: 299) I remembered the author asked a very key question that is “do they ultimately generate pain or happiness?” Will their bodies, as well as their minds, be controlled by society starting from no rights, no limited control, to losing the full ownership of the body?

I believe I insist on thinking that all dance types are equal and should be chosen deliberately instead of as a way of showing class.

ENDING

Due to the word limit, the ending part will be brief. I want to express that I really appreciate this body practice project. Not only because my body is more flexible now and can do some cool moves, but also the new thoughts and reflections I have gained during this project.

1041 Words

Reference

Bobel, Chris & Kwan, Samantha. (2019). *Body battlegrounds: transgressions, tensions, and transformations*. Vanderbilt University Press Nashville.

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