

Cultural Performances of Asia: Concluding Thoughts and Questions

Image of Crazy-A
removed for
copyright reasons

Performance / Cultures / Asia

- What defines "Asia"?
- What is "culture"?
- How does "performance" give us a certain perspective on both?

Image of Bunraku
puppet
theater of Japan
removed for
copyright reasons.

East Brain, West Brain

Ortner review of Nisbett (NYT, '03)

- 2 billion people think the “same” way?
- Who is “more Western”?
 - men (and the West):
 - rational, individual, competitive
 - women (and the East):
 - emotional, social, harmonious
- Stereotypes collapse as intellectual tools
- But then how generalize?

Performance and Identity Politics

- Race, gender, sexuality, identity
 - “constructed” but still enduring discrimination
- Knowledge of “constructedness” itself has not given us the tools to transform society
- We must grasp the pressure points, the potential for transformation

Image of Samurai
Champoo removed
for copyright
reasons.

Champoo =
remix

Example 1: Blood+

Anime image removed for copyright reasons.

Performance 1

- Patterns of behavior give sense of identity
- But “identity” is always
 - conventional (communicates something)
 - contingent (depends on context)
 - contested (never fully settled)
- Performance gives us tools for seeing the constructedness of “Asia” and “culture”

Course examples

- King of Masks
 - gender, sexuality
 - street / stage
 - “just stories” but they transform lives . . .
- Anime
 - global culture and Japanese culture
 - content matters, but so do audiences
 - digital tech destabilizes global hegemonies
 - copyright, Western media, the “Japan expert”

Location and Power

- Pyramid of media culture

Image of The Pyramid Structure of Music Scene removed for copyright reasons.

Example 2: Evangelion

Anime image removed for copyright reasons.

Performance conclusion

- Performances reminds us of the power of locations, our own agency in changing the world
- Definitions matter, but they are always approximations, in some ways illusions constructed out of everyday behavior
- Performance and culture points to new ways of asking questions:
 - what audiences?
 - what determines “real” and “value”?
 - how are my assumptions hindering new possibilities?
 - and . . . what else?