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?
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 Champloo removed for copyright reasons.

Champloo = 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?
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