Article:

“The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers” by Ann Daly

Topic:

The Balanchine ballerina as a cultural icon of femininity reflects cultural values of femininity

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Thesis/Methology

The purpose of this research is to reflect the sexism in the ballet world. Author Daly analyses the Balanchine ballerina that "Balanchine glorified Woman," is based on the patriarchal system. Although Balanchine created so many more starring roles for women than men, but it happens that choreographers occupies the absolute dominance of men’s. In patriarchal society, women’s status has become increasingly low, always in the midst of what some designed for men, woman who are shown also as a sexual object for the male gaze.  Whether in the dance industry, or painting and film industry, women as a representative of the beautiful women, are appreciation by men. The woman's function is to fascinate men" (Lewis 1976:45) highlights the women’s social value is to satisfy men.

The author utilizes examples of specific choreographies “The Four Temperaments" to examine the “the ballerina is the center of attention because she is the one being displayed. The "feminine" passivity which marks this display is a low status activity in American culture; action is valued as "masculine" for its strength and self-assertive- ness”. (P10 para5 line 6),” Female position is contingent on the manipulations of her partner.” She told the audience early on that the man "is manipulating [the ballerina]-controlling her." At one point, he lifts her straight up and sets her on the floor on one pointe, her free leg crossed over the bent, supporting leg. She looks as if she is perched in an invisible chair.**”(p9 para3 line1)”** highlighting the status of women in American culture, show the passive position of women in ballet and the dominance position of male. Critic Robert Greskovic commented, “Man's support is allowing this woman to be more powerful, more open, and in my sense of looking at it more beautiful than she could be by herself because she has this…” (Page 9 paragraph 4 line 2). The concept of patriarchy seems to give women the new label that because of the male’s support, women’s position will consolidate. As a result, in the serious patriarchal society, whether equity between men and women can achieve? The author also arises the question " If Balanchine did glorify Women: whose idea of woman is she? (Page 7 paragraph7 line 5) This question gives the author a more in-depth analysis of this through the countless examples of permanent patriarchy shown in dance, and how ballet itself forms the structure of this value system.  In classical Ballet the woman must be seen and also look a certain way. They are held to extreme expectations. “When a woman dances nobody cares. All women can dance. But when a man dances, now that’s something.” Reflects the fact that gender asymmetry phenomenon exits in ballet, female were placed high expectations in ballet, Female ballerina are required to control weight, because is to catch the audience’s attention and it’s easier for male partner carried. According to research, most ballerinas are between about 5 foot 3 inches and 5 foot 8 inches tall. With this height range, weight is ideally anywhere between about 85 and 130 lbs., and depends heavily on muscle and bone mass. “Ballet is a women”, this is a famous saying of Balanchine, when he began to create his own dance style, Balanchine found women dance in the ballet is charming, so he tried to play in his own dance use actress technology, such as soft body, slender arms, with soft music slow dance, which shows the most beautiful appearance in Balanchine’s heart with his understanding of women. “Like the Romantic image of the female and the image of geisha girl in Japanese prints, she is revealing her feminine charms in a demure yet provocative way”(page 14 para2 line 7) In the eyes of male audience, the women’s eyes or provocative actions can called feminine charms. In fact, Balanchine ballet has broken the traditional view of women, he really understand what kind of women the men like to watch. The analysis shows that are meant to please the male gaze, to perpetuate a male dominant model.

“If the ballerina has been only a passing subject of critical feminist thinking, the Balanchine ballerina has been strictly off-limits. During his life, Balanchine was enveloped by a mythology that ascribed to him near- mystical inspiration, and now, four years after his death, Balanchine's legacy is generally considered sacrosanct. Yet Balanchine's statements about his idealized "Woman" openly declared their patriarchal foundations. Familiar themes emerge: Woman is naturally inferior in matters requiring action and imagination. Woman obligingly accepts her lowly place. Woman is an object of beauty and desire. Woman is first in ballet by default, because she is more beautiful than the opposite gender. “Feminist think” is based on patriarchal foundations. Balanchine’s inspiration comes from female and provide good visual enjoyment to the audience. From this sophisticated market-place the rich buyers selected their mistresses. Reflects the female’s social status, excellent female dancers cannot escape the fate of the controlled by men. At the same time, female as the object of desire is considered to meet men, and must be available.

“Struggling is not "feminine," but Balanchine's ballerina makes it so because Balanchine has choreographed it to emphasize the extension of her leg as she steps out of her cocoon. This episode, like the entire pas de deux, has violent undertones. They have to do not only with the physical extreme to which Balanchine stretches the classical vocabulary and the ballerina's body, but also with its sadomasochistic pattern: man manipulates powerless woman.”(Page14 paragraph2 line1) because it involves gender asymmetry and the ballet partner can very intuitively show that men constitute a strong linear support and balance, and Women are very unusual and her movement depends on her partner. This could be the required plot, but reflects the women’s status has been manipulated by male, especially the powerless woman may suffer from violence, even if it is just a choreography plot, and the most of the audience are male. Balanchine used these female dancers and set standards for others. Whether it is the abstract features of modern art, especially in the United States, or the problematic relationship between Balanchine and women. It is rumored that Balanchine has asked his dancers to go hungry, and the high leg extension he requested should lead to a lot of hip replacement. He wants a "pointed" dancer willing to obey his requirements and destroy his health through the great physical demands of hunger and choreography. Feminist scholars have thoroughly explored this aspect of Balanchine’s heritage. The most famous Ann Daly argued in the 1987 article “The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbird and Straits Swimmers” that Balanchine’s worship of women often quoted “dance is a woman” and not an appreciation of women. Instead, he placed the woman and controlled her.

Conclusions:

Wendy Perron and Stephanie Woodard. “ARE WOMEN DANCERS STILL DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?” 1 Mar. 1976, wendyperron.com/is-there-a-bias-against-women-in-dance-then-now/. “When a woman dances nobody cares. All women can dance. But when a man dances, now that’s something.”

Lynette. *The Ideal Weight for a Ballerina*. 2017, www.livestrong.com/article/308658-the-ideal-weight-for-a-ballerina/. Your height plays a significant role in determining your ideal weight. Most ballerinas are between about 5 foot 3 inches and 5 foot 8 inches tall. With this height range, weight is ideally anywhere between about 85 and 130 lbs., and depends heavily on muscle and bone mass.

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/01/26/balanchine-said