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English 277
17 April 2015

Astrid In Between Reflection

While the concept of *Astrid In Between* came quickly and easily, the process of creating a choreographed piece based on a written novel proved to be much more difficult. When I initially developed the idea, I knew I wanted to feature two styles of dance to illustrate the two worlds that Astrid lived between: the society of the elite rich in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* and the life she wanted to live. I began with the music, which provided a natural structure to the piece – one that coincided well with the sequence of events in *Crazy Rich Asians*. Developing the choreography was the most difficult task of the project, as I struggled in how to represent the emotions Astrid experienced and the ideas of othering and conflict that surfaced in the novel through the movement of the body. The text provided a useful source, and I chose specific passages on which to choreograph, including Astrid's emotional reaction to discovering Michael's affair (100) and the description of Astrid in her youth (72). Translating those ideas and emotions from the page and into the movements were at times easy but often difficult. Choreographing Astrid's emotional reaction was the easiest, as anger and sorrow are common emotions that we all have experienced and to which we can relate. It was the ideas of othering and conflict that I struggled with most, as I was trying to portray the struggle of a character that I inherently could not fully understand. Choreographing, however, proved to be a powerful medium that required me to delve more deeply into the novel and try to figure out how to both understand and recreate those ideas in movement. In addition, I originally imagined a dance that involved other participants – particularly dancing the characters of Charlie Wu and Michael, but my limited resources forced me to reconsider my plan and ultimately that required me to focus on the specific movements and how to convey the emotions and ideas without simply retelling the story in dance. The experience, although challenging, pushed me to immerse myself in the work and attempt to understand the emotions and ideas Kwan included in his work.

In critiquing *Astrid In Between* there are two main areas of focus: the overall intentions and effect of the piece as well as the visual presentation of the medium. The choreographed piece provides deep insight to Astrid from Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*, giving viewers a lens through which to understand Astrid's emotions and experiences. In Palumbo-Liu's "The Deliverance of Others" he states that "we can never actually feel the pain of others, but we can imagine what it must feel like" (7); the dance piece offers a means of understanding Astrid's plight through the movement and expression of the dance. By including the contrasting dance styles, the piece highlights the conflict Astrid encounters between her desires and the societal pressures, providing a physical and visual representation of her struggle. In regard to the visual aspect of the presentation, a thorough analysis of the movements and overall visual product provides further insight into the meaning of the work. The work follows a general chronological structure, as outlined in the descriptions, and features different camera angles and settings throughout the piece. The two settings, the ballet barre and the open floor, further enhance the contrast between the two dance styles and emphasize how society and others have influenced Astrid throughout the novel. The music of the work is simple and repetitive, leaving the focus on the movements and serves to reinforce how Astrid's character shifts between falling under the influence of society and asserting herself. During the dance, the dancer provides very little direct eye contact with the camera, which has the effect of the dance being a window through which we discover Astrid,

compared to an outright declaration of her character. The various visual aspects combine to create a piece that relies on contrast, detail, and movement to communicate the emotions and ideas of Kwan's novel.