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## How Bodies Reveal Inequality? Some Experiences of Theater of the Oppressed in Iran

Leila Papoli-Yazdi<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

“You are able to consume everything but your bodies...”. This stereotypic phrase is a very repetitive one, endorsed in most of the workshops on “body and archaeology”. The workshops, I am holding for three years in various cities of Iran are actually based on Augusto Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed* and the very concept of *Docile Bodies* of Michael Foucault. My very goal in these series of workshops is to clarify the process of oppression for students of anthropology and social sciences using a method more than describing the theoretical dilemma. Over the last couple of years, it has been more clarified to me that over half of the youths attending the workshops have no motivation to move or present their body and voice abilities. They prefer to remain the silent audiences of an instructor’s monologue. The rate of such a desire increases in larger cities representing the increasing rate of body control. To manage Boal’s plays, I usually conduct the machine play to warm up minds but surprisingly, more I practice, more these are female participants who share their experiences of body oppression while male students remain silent. Is there any recognized pattern which shapes their exception of presenting the bodies? Are they fearful of losing their social agency towards playing new Avant-garde roles? I believe that the answer is positive. There are patterns of docile bodies which are objectively observable in the process of playing Theater of the Oppressed in Iran and mostly these patterns are gender-based. In this article, I intend to describe the body patterns derived from the workshops on Body and Archaeology in order to a better understanding of docile bodies based on acts and practices.

**Keywords:** Body; Archeology; *Theater of Oppressed*; *Docile Bodies*; Theoretical Dilemma; Social Pattern.

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## Introduction

A continuous theme of my studies during the last decade was to find out the influential mechanism of propaganda and suppression on social norms and bodies. While my methodology was mostly archaeology, surprisingly, I found some patterns and models of oppression, objectifying bodies in a series of workshops I held in various cities of Iran based on Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* and the concept of *Docile Bodies* of Michael Foucault. My goal in these series of workshops was to clarify the process of oppression for the students of anthropology and social sciences using a method more than describing the theoretical dilemma but actually, as a researcher, I could find some traces of oppression in the bodies and acts of the participants.

During the last years, it came to the conclusion that more than half of the youths attending the workshops had no motivation to move or present their body and voice abilities. They preferred to remain the silent audiences of an instructor's monologue. The rate of such a desire increased in larger cities representing the increasing rate of body control.

To manage Boal's plays (2000, 2013), I usually conduct the machine play (based on Boal Machine. Boal, 2002, Picture 1) to warm up minds but actually very surprisingly, more I practice, more these are the female attendances who share their experiences of body oppression while the male students remain silent. Is there any recognized pattern which shapes their exception of presenting the bodies? Are they fearful of losing their social agency towards playing new Avant-garde roles? I believe that the answer is positive and I explore patterns of these behaviors from that one very influential parameter in shaping the

modern norms of the Iranian society would be propaganda which I discuss on, in this article. There are patterns of docile bodies which are objectively observable in the process of playing *Theater of the Oppressed* in Iran and mostly these patterns are gender-based. In this article, I will describe the body patterns derived from the workshops on body and archaeology in order to a better understanding of docile bodies according to acts and practices.

## Workshops: Bodies, Indocile Bodies and Archaeology

Literally, from June 2013 until September 2018, I held nine workshops to discuss "the archaeology of body" and a couple on a related book, I and my colleagues published in 2017 (Papoli-Yazdi et al 2017). Before, I had taught for a couple of years, gender politics and performances of *Judith Butler* (2011, 2015) in Freie Universitat, Berlin which gave me an experience to localize the agenda in Iran.

The very first workshops mostly focused on pre-college individuals where I and the other colleagues did not speak directly about the theories of body. Later, we found out that more than the children, these were youths who conceptualized body concepts in so vague manner. So, we gradually changed our strategy and spread the workshops all over Iran while we changed the audiences from younger generation to students and professors of social sciences and humanities.

The very aim of those workshops at the first step was to teach the participants the updated theories of body but after three workshops, the author found out that in a context where people had very few information about the role of body in legitimizing the politics, it was rally

meaningless to speak solely about the theories of body and the archaeology of body. Indeed, discussing on such agenda means to give an instrument of description and judging to the participants while not giving them this key notion to regard their own body. So, from the fourth workshop, the author changed the strategy of teaching to a dialogue method (see. Zhou, 2017) where, the attendees had to challenge the whole ideas. So, despite the different titles of these classes, the body of the themes is repetitive while the main idea is “discovering the body as a material of everyone”.

Those workshops were held in Mashhad (thrice), Zahedan (once), Bushehr (once), Tehran (5 times) and a single workshop in Isfahan. In these workshops, 282 individuals attended- some attended 2 or 3 different workshops with the same theme- who had been put apart from the general number of the participants. Gender-wise, there was approximately fifty-fifty ratio of men and women while women participants were more in Tehran than other cities. Among them, 38 were children and 244 adults. Here, in this article we will discuss mainly on the adults’ behavioral patterns while discussing on children’s needs necessarily more challenging psychological agenda which are far from the theme of this text.

From a thematically viewpoint, in all titles of these workshop series the word “body” and “archaeology” has been indicated while five of them got a name applying the word “gender” and none of them had any information about *Boal’s* method or naming “theater” or “theater for the oppressed” but actually there were exact information in all the flyers but from all the attendees only two individuals told that they

had searched such a method on the web, both male from Tehran.

In each workshop, less than 30 percent of the participants desired to cooperate with the topics presented by the instructor. The others mostly wished to get some information. More “gender”-related words used in the title of the workshop or the flyers, more the attendees would like to get information and leave the class while more encouraging attending the activities, more individuals would like to leave the class. Below, I will explain the pattern which shapes the motivation of people to attend such workshops.

### **Methodology and Key Concepts**

**1. *Archaeology*:** It not only as a method of investigating the material culture, but in these series of workshops, we aimed rather a Foucauldian method of criticizing the modern world. Noteworthy, *Michael Foucault’s* main texts have been translated into Persian over the last two decades and his agenda is one of the dominant theoretical issues desired by both reformists and extremists in Iran. In the departments of social sciences, both the extreme interpretation of Foucault’s texts (see Kachouian, 2000) and also a more critical interpretation is being taught (see Kazemi 2018). From the extreme viewpoint, the exaggerated emphasis of Foucault on the agency of modernism and the state opens a way to justify the oppression system and suppress the potential agency of individuals while in contrast, the leftists desire to use Foucault (2012) panopticism in order to explain how the state in Iran has reduced the social power. Indeed, one of the very familiar political notions for graduate students in Iran is Foucault while they are interested to know more about his ideas (not

in Archaeology departments but social sciences).

For me, as an archaeologist, the importance of Foucault in understanding the modern condition has been always more important. Towards, such an agenda, I tried to teach the students how to re-read Foucauldian notions and find its details in a broader concept. In this way, I mostly refer to the concept of docile bodies for the students.

One problem, in this process, is to make a distinction between two concepts of Archaeology as an academic discipline and Antiquarianism while their preposition is mostly to recognize Antiquarianism (see Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian, 2012). Before entering serious discussions, it is too important to have an introduction on what archaeology stands for. Also, a mistakable thumb-nailed concept in this way is the translation of the word “archaeology” to a synonym word of “paleontology” in Persian (see Kachouian, 2000) which has distorted the minds of young students. To elucidate the term, the author mainly suggests the participants to read some articles such as “Archaeology of the contemporary past” (González-Ruibal, 2014) or for more interested individuals “Archeology and modernity” (Thomas, 2000). When they learn that archaeology is not a science of nationalism and antiques, they would be leading to find out that archaeology studies materiality in order to find the patterns. Putting archaeology and body together, students in a further step should imagine their body as an object in purpose of considering the process of oppression.

**2. Body/Docile Bodies:** Perhaps the most compelling part of *Discipline and Punish* (2012) is the section on discipline where,

Foucault describes the insidious and subtle techniques of power that create docile bodies. Docile bodies may be subjected, used, transformed and improved ones. According to Foucault, the advent of docile bodies corresponds with an increase in control and a change of forms of control over bodies. These changes involve a change in scale, in object and in modality (McLaren, 2002: 87). These docile regulated bodies are practiced at and habituated to the rule of cultural life (Bordo, 1991:203). As he shows in his history of Western punitive techniques, the creation of docile bodies is, and has been, central to typical Western socio-political practices (Sheets-Johnston, 1994). Towards the agenda of docile bodies, the body becomes a target of medical and psychiatric knowledge that also appear as arbitrary forms of constraint in their claims to truth. At the same time, Foucault makes clear that we cannot escape being caught in power knowledge relation (Vallega-Neu, 2012: 116).

Regularly, not so much directly but one of the very beginning questions, the author asks in the workshops whether an attendee thinks his/her body is a docile one or not. To reach to the answer, the attendee is asked to write a short essay about “I”. She/he would describe her/his body in the daily situations or even in a surreal condition. After all exercises of the class, the attendee has to write the essay again and explain the differences.

Also, in recent years, the translation of several books on gender issues has influenced the knowledge of most students on body. They, at least, in very large cities have very basic knowledge about body/gender and gender roles but one of the very problem, I encounter in classes is the mixture of two concepts of sexuality and

gender. To solve the problem, I usually ask students to read some texts written by Judith Butler (2011).

**3. *Theater for the Oppressed*:** It is a theatrical method developed by *Augusto Boal* (2000) in the 1970s and elaborated in Brazil and Europe. Boal attempted to change great divisions between the oppressor and the oppressed, the de-sensualized mind and the sensual body, coercive authoritarianism and subversive plebeian poetry and finally between death and life (Malick,1995: 181). In theater of the oppressed, purely abstract and concrete phenomena may be possible, but there are more often than not interplays of the symbolic and the actual. The human body is at the basic level and prior to all meaning, actuality. The body attains identity, the sense of “I am” which forms and resides in the symbolic (Morelos, 1999:9).

One of the potential characteristics of theater of the oppressed is that every person, despite his knowledge of body and theater, can participate in the program and also it can be conducted everywhere and requires very few things. During the performances, the participants find out gradually the oppressed patterns of their bodies which is the aim of theater of the oppressed.

This suppression of our freedom of expression and action results from two causes, in the belief of Boal: external, social coercion and/or internal, ethical choice. Fear and Morality (Boal 2013:35, Picture 2, 3). In the case of Iran, I also add some more causes, history, tradition and social pressure. We can also increase these parameters by adding propaganda which I will discuss below as the most important factor to change the bodies and take their freedom in modern Iran.

Each workshop begins with a short introduction to the theories about body and docile body, proposing the participants to read some texts written by Michael Foucault, Judith Butler, Susan Sontag and in some cases when there are more postgraduate students in a class, also Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The second step is to ask them to watch some movies, which I usually propose “*Her*” directed by Spike Jonze and “*Memento*” by Christopher Nolan as well as Iranian film “*Crow*” directed by Bahram Beizai. The third step is to do some very simple activities based on Boal’s theater of the oppressed. I experienced that most of Iranian students are very ashamed to use their bodies in front of others. So, the first volunteer should be, in most cases, the instructor himself/herself or some of the students who have attended the same workshops before.

The first performance we conduct is usually some warming performances and also “Selfie” activity. Within, the students are asked to manage a selfie scene and add people to this scene. The second one would be mostly Boal’s Machine and then I usually ask the participants to design their own machineries. The workshops end up with discussions.

## **Patterns and Facts**

### ***Volunteers***

Very few people prefer to attend the activities in the first steps. More than 80% of them in both Tehran and other cities are women while almost all of the volunteers in other cities are female. I could not encourage any man to participate in Boal’s Machine in Isfahan or Mashhad but also the women are many and in some cases such as Isfahan, I had to divide them into two groups. According to participants’ words,

most of the men evidently have a deep fear to be challenged while some others believe that these methods are very likely children plays and not serious forms of learning a methodology of body expression. Both men and women, at the first step, prefer a class where they would sit and listen to a monologue but after a while, the idea of most of the women change. The gender of the instructor is important. When one of the instructors is male, more men will participate.

In general, one of the very obstacle in teaching Boal's method, in a class where most of the audiences have been from humanity faculties in Iran, is to oblige them to participate in dialogues. Literally, most of the behaviors are so homogenized and very little diversity can be observed.

### ***Lifestyles***

Both village men and women act better than those raised in cities while the participants who have been raised in small cities direct the designed machine better than the people living in large cities like Tehran. More coming out of Tehran, more participants feel free to act their bodies. So, the best performances and the most creative ones have been conducted in Bushehr and Zahedan while the people living in Mashhad were found too conservative. To narrate a story, the people living in cities mostly repeat the stories of Television and radio, not only the National broadcasting but also the interpretations they have heard in other Persian TVs. The highest rate of paying attention to media has been observed in Mashhad and the lowest in Bushehr. While the participants in Tehran mostly apply examples from TV series to represent how much TV reproduces violence but actually in other hand, it shows the dependence of

civil society to media. In contrast, the more rural people give examples of myths, tradition and folklore to expose the idea of violence. In both groups, attention to books, novels and movies are fewer than the media.

From a status viewpoint, participants from the Middle class, both civil and rural, act more freely while the people from upper and lower socioeconomic strata are more conservative.

### ***Designing***

When I ask participants to design their own machines, as presented above, most of the designers would be female students. But, there is a very dichotomy between machines made by female and male designers. The female machines are more violent, they apply ropes, blindfolds and cords to limit others' moves while the male participants prefer to use only their own body in order to show the process of obligation.

Very surprisingly, all of the participants, I worked with, desire to reproduce violent scenes. The most repetitive theme has been in both Tehran and other cities, Gasht-e Ershad, by both men and women. Actually, in discussions, men pointed that Gasht-e Ershad make them nervous. It is noteworthy that, the instructor never gives a theme to the participants but they are still more interested in designing violent scenes. Not interfering, they may harm each other. Men also put dialogues in the designed scenes but mostly, women prefer completely silent during performing the designed machine.

### ***Narrations***

To narrate their stories, men speak more but women create more surreal scenes. Naturally, most of the participants, despite their genders, prefer to narrate the stories of rough street violence. After a couple of



sessions, both men and women would be more creative in designing the scenes applying their body talents. Evidently, women, in their formal cloths, find more difficult to narrate a story with their bodies but they learn how to use another's body and direct the scene. I ask students to play opposite scenes and experience if they would perform violence against the person who is violent or not. Discussing the violent scenes, the instructor asks them to find the roots of this anger layer by layer. Not from psychological viewpoint but from a Foucauldian perspective, the participants would find step by step that these violent acts might be caused by the power system, propaganda and context rather than the individuals.

#### **Causes of Individuality Reduction: Propaganda**

##### ***Propaganda, Bodies and Narration***

The very first question is that why very few people make creative acts or why they have so many problems in applying their bodies. Summing up the reasons of conservative acts, it seems that the most influential parameter is propaganda and Media. Also, it seems that one of the parameters which relate such diverse people together is propaganda which is obvious through school books, media and political structure demonstrations, banners and slogans.

During theater for the oppressed workshops, I found repetitively that despite the ethnical and lifestyle differences of the participants, when they were asked to narrate a story, they preferred to reproduce the one told in school books. As written above, one of the very exercises, the instructor asked them to write was some narrations on "I". In the first step, more than 73% of "I" homework had been similar

to each other. Most female participants imagined themselves in interior spaces and most male ones in the exterior spaces. Most female students described themselves doing something ordinary within ordinary lives and the male ones imagined some surreal scenes while women spoke less about their desires and more on nostalgia.

I asked the students to read their texts loudly and then let the others find similarities in the texts. In Mashhad, during the classes, I found that such ideas seemed normal for everybody at the first glance. To change the atmosphere, I asked the male participants to imagine themselves in the house doing something ordinary and the female ones to depict their wishes and desires. For the first texts, conducting such imaginary is difficult but the young participants would be successful finally.

The question is that "why do you image yourself in these cliché places?" Thinking on the answer, most confess that they feel secure, women in the houses and men out. "Why do you avoid any dialogue in your texts?" It is hard to reply but discussing with each other, mostly find that two main parameters have changed their ideas of self: tradition and propaganda.

From the propaganda, they mainly mean TV shows and school books which seem to produce such similar productions. Both present the standard "good girl"/" good boy" and challenge very other lifestyle.

I believe that TV is the major propaganda means in Iran. All Iranians, despite their different natures of lifestyles, languages and ethnicities are being bombarded by the same TV channels. Regardless of broadcasting in or out of the country, their main ideas are systematically very similar. One very point which influences the minds is the idea of body

objectification. The artists of Iran national TV exaggerate their body language, they scream and almost all of them have experienced heavy body surgeries while the scars are so obvious on the faces. The women are always in interior spaces and men are out. "Bad women" are the ones who struggle with destiny and "bad men" are those who give the women the opportunity of freedom.

More importantly, the body motion of both women and men in Iran's TV is very limited. They run rarely, do not dance, sing rarely, they do not try to explore their body while showing some spaces like washrooms, bathrooms, bedrooms, cafes, bars and etc. is taboo and the artists are always playing their roles within yards, kitchens and halls. TV series emphasize on everyday life, eating, gathering, conflicting, marriage and sleeping even not reading, thinking or playing.

Persian TVs, out of Iran, produce the opposite spaces. There are very rare Persian series produced out of Iran but some by Jam TV which basically reproduce the everyday life system of Iran national TV series. But the women invited to talk shows and also the NEWS readers reproduce the idea of body objectifying by exaggerated makeup and emphasizing on standardized beauty. Indeed, outer and inner Iranian TVs are two blades of the same knife, both standardizing and conforming the bodies, one by censoring and the other by emphasizing. Both try to show Tehran, middle class life style as the only accepted lifestyle of Iran. Some participants in the theater of the oppressed elucidate that they do not like to volunteer in plays because they feel not to have a suitable body or voice. Many tell that they have not been trained enough. Mostly have a fear to seem ridiculous.

Back to an archaeology of power controlling system, I endorse on the ways from which the panopticism change the connection between subjects and objects and lead people to remain more and more indifferent. Controlling individuals, the main approach of contemporary propaganda is first to define a series of "must do" and "must not to do" which appears from the first grade of school. In comparison, all participants who were out of school and were aged less than seven could act freer than the children attending schools. This propaganda tries to advertise its ideal lifestyle in two vertical and horizontal forms.

In the way of imposing its lifestyle, the first preposition for propaganda is assuming the whole society as homogenic one. Despite such preposition, the Iranian society is comprised of more than ten ethnicities and religions. Propaganda tries to dictate a unique life style prescription for all these populations (see Paidar, 1997). Propaganda prefers to not cut off itself and not be flexible but centralized and inflexible. In contrast, anti-propaganda also represents a similar reaction. Opposition groups, themselves, represent that the systematic propaganda is going to change the humanitarian lifestyle to what is suitable for itself. Then, they use their media to image this lifestyle, un-deliberately the one which is itself advertising by system media: the woman in Iran are imposing to live like X if not they would be despicable. Such elucidation gives people a constructed reality which makes them to do some actions.

#### ***Propaganda Portion with Everyday Life***

Two general tools of propaganda are used in everyday life: language and media (Kamalipour and Snow, 2004). It imposes

itself with permanent repetition and practice. Propaganda tries to change the individual's life with an image produced by political system (Yang, 1994).

The permanent repetition of propaganda changes it to a transcendence phenomenon. Propaganda is everywhere, in TV, radio, newspapers, public religious discussions, wall paintings even on dishes the ones eat in. The fact is that propaganda advertises usually an object which may have not a real significance while the permanent repetitions make the individuals empty of sensitivity and sympathy but automatically accept it.

Before trying to impose a general life style, propaganda attempts to make its "to do" and "not to do" the only known way of thinking for individuals (Ellul, 2006). In such a case, the individual thinks the whole world is in wrong way but his/her way, all the world is looking at him/her, all wants to harm him/her and his/her country. Despite the common idea, the first tool of propaganda to impose its views is not threat and punishment but it is constructing a subjective world based on selective objectives.

The slogans of propaganda are mostly comprised of meaninglessness phrases, and repeated from school books to TV advertisements, even on tissues boxes. These phrases are in most cases empty of meaning. Repeating this meaninglessness phrases, the agency stands among visual networks formed of repeated inhomogeneous images. Being meaninglessness and rupture, these images confuse the audiences who may lose the concentration. This process continues in two diachronic/synchronic dimensions while using by both groups of political system and oppositions in two different forms.

In the case of Iran, propaganda has made body and sex, the two great taboos of everyday life. In general, propaganda wants to force individuals to define themselves and their bodies in relation to political system, to reproduce their bodies in two forms: with the system/ against the system. It is the propaganda that tries to redefine the society as the context of wield and the individuals as the tools of such wield. Actually, the problem for propaganda is that it can only vision and control the public lives and not necessarily the private ones from which the opposition emerges, this is also the problem of archaeologists; how we can reach the resisting hidden lives of individuals, how can we interpret the paradoxical lives of past individuals when most of our findings are related to public spheres.

### ***Propaganda as Context***

The propaganda is always attempting to introduce itself as the only accepted voice of its society. According to above examples of Iranian films, the monologue of propaganda may be repeated un-deliberately by its opposition. In a synchronic view, the propaganda might transcend so that the whole society would be explained from its view. It means that the propaganda may introduce itself as the only concrete of a society and as the social context.

Using the political capitals, propaganda has the facilities to reproduce itself in artistic, every day, and historical forms while it is the producer of history mainly as texts, reliefs and inscriptions: it is the political system which illustrates itself as a victor king whose enemy is being died under his horse hooves. Psychologically in a historical process, propaganda plays with the reality and illusion. The audiences may recognize that this image presented by political system

as a fake but the possibility to access the reality is so low that in most cases the propaganda is accepted as context.

Propaganda has the facilities and reasons to change itself as the context. It can reduce a total society only to the political system, the name of kings and the description of their victories. It can play with the mind of archaeologists and historians from the depth of history, a contextual game which may be performed also on human bodies.

### Education System and Conformity

One of the very repetitive questions asked in the workshops was the reference of every act, elucidating that in these methods we have the freedom to “create” some act does not satisfy most of the participants. In Isfahan and Tehran, the larger cities, the participants were actually seeking the exact texts from which the instructor designed the activities.

In some cases, the participants firstly would like to deny the pleasure of acting and narrating. One of these challenges occurred in Zahedan where the people are fine narrators but in the workshop, the participants preferred to listen to a monologue and not to share their experiences in a dialogue (see Sedghi, 2007:122).

A hidden layer of the preference to listen to monologues is the educational system that presents the teacher as the only person who has the right to speak but in the more remote places one parameter to avoid people to share their experiences is the pressure of conformity. Very surprisingly, the people who speak Persian with local accent are in some cases ashamed of speaking. When the instructor asks them to make dialogues using their mother tongues or accents, it is

not a rare case that the participants deny and prefer to speak in Persian.

*“You are able to consume everything but your bodies...”*

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paul Freire (1993) quotes “Dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed”. A method of changing the direction of the oppression is to change the role of oppressed bodies and make them consciousness about the process of dehumanization by giving them new roles; this is an aim of the method developed by Augusto Boal, Freire’s friend.

In Iran, it seems that there are lots of complexities imagining the bodies. During the last century, the national consciousness and feeling of Iranians (Berlin, 1972) which concerned all the ethnical differences have changed into an agenda depending on repetitive propaganda through which, the indifferences have been introduced as “weaknesses” (see Ansari, 2013). Towards the archaeology of bodies, theater of the oppressed helps the participants excavate a process within the political system. Through this notion, taking out the idea of docile bodies and to depict them again is necessary. Participants would find gradually that how propaganda and education have made them docile- indeed, they would learn that Foucault’s agenda is not only a system of reading the political structure but also the bodies and self, that archaeology is not antiquarianism but more a way to excavate every layer of political system, agency and behavior.

During the “theater of the oppressed” workshop, more than other considerations,

the instructor may concern the challenge between body and inequality. The female participant would like to act more concerning that “men have more space of act in the society and here we should show them our ability to create something”. In contrast, men like to narrate more. It is hard to mix all these abilities together. Only the people living far from the capital would gather in multi-gender teams and the participants in larger cities prefer to stay apart. In many cases, I tell participants that body is an object which they cannot consume; they cannot move this object use of it. I represent the differences between the participants from a rural and civic background and show them how living within the streets of large cities may cause such disability to move, run and be ashamed of using the body or voice.

The participants also prefer to reproduce propaganda. According to Berlin (2004), the people being raised in the dictatorial regime prefer to copy and paste not because they are not creative but because something published before is safe. Discussing with the participants, they are not aware of this process but prefer to stay in the shadow of power, educational system or their professors by repeating them.

Regarding Freire (2013:58), ‘the oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination. The earth, property,

production, the creations of people, peoples themselves, time – everything is reduced to the status of object at its disposal.’ The very mechanism of such reduction has been propaganda and conformity in the educational system which has been followed by humiliation of not standardized people. Talk Shows such as “*Mah Asal*” (Honeymoon) which always propagates disability, indifference and other genders as weaknesses which should be “solved” besides the very similar faces of the people in TV, speaking standard Persian have influenced the people.

Nevertheless, the social pressure has put the bodies in unseen cages. They would not like to act or move. The participants prefer to sit and listen to an endless monologue. Evidently, this is a relevance of such long-term oppression which is presenting itself in tired bodies and minds which tend to be more objectified than to be subjectified. I propose the other instructors to breakdown the propagandistic methods of teaching and apply some others, mostly developed by thinkers of Eastern Europe and Latin America, such as Boal who believe that the teachers and pupils should create some concepts together. Prior to learning the theoretical concept, creating a space where the teacher and pupil experience equality is more important, a class where the teacher is not the symbol of power structure and oppression but knowledge and acceptance.

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**Fig 1. Creating Boal's Machine**



**Fig 2. Photography by Jake DeLaurier**

<https://www.piedmontforum.com/2017/03/02/theatre-oppressed-seeks-solidarity/>



**Fig 3. Augusto Boal, Photo by Jean-Gabriel Carasso, 1979**



## بدن چگونه نابرابری را آشکار می‌کند؟ تجارب چندی از تئاتر ستم‌دیده در ایران

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### چکیده

طی پنج سال گذشته نُه کارگاه درباره بدن و باستان‌شناسی توسط نگارنده برگزار شده است. این کارگاه‌ها در تهران، زاهدان، اصفهان، بوشهر و مشهد برای دو گروه سنی کودکان و بزرگسالان اجرا شده است. شیوه اجرا در این کارگاه‌ها بر مبنای «تئاتر ستم‌دیده» است که توسط آگوستو بوال اندیشمند آرژانتینی در دهه ۱۹۷۰ شکل گرفته است. در این کارگاه‌ها تلاش می‌شود که شرکت‌کنندگان بتوانند به تدریج و لایه‌لایه با کاویدن بدن و مفاهیم مربوط به آن به دلایل مطیع‌شدگی و سرکوب بدن برسند. نکته قابل توجه در این کارگاه‌ها، کم‌بودن مهارت‌های حرکتی و روایت در بین جوانان است. آنان معمولاً ترجیح می‌دهند که مدرس مونولوگی طولانی را آغاز کند و کمتر در بحث‌ها، دیالوگ‌ها و بازی‌ها شرکت می‌کنند. از دید نگارنده، یکی از دلایل اصلی عدم مشارکت شرکت‌کنندگان، فشار پروپاگاندا و رسانه‌ها در تحمیل «بدن استاندارد» است، بدنی که عملاً وجود ندارد و فقط برای شهروندان شرم حضور و سخن گفتن را ایجاد می‌کند. از سوی دیگر پروپاگاندا نوعی سلسله‌مراتب بین دانشجو/استاد، ساختار حاکمیتی شهروند، تهرانی/شهرستانی را ایجاد کرده است که تبلور آن در کمبود مهارت‌های حضور و روایت نمود می‌یابد و در عین حال رخنمون بارزی از نبود عدالت اجتماعی و تساوی‌انگاری بین اقشار، جنسیت‌ها و افراد گوناگون است. نگارنده در این مقاله براساس بررسی شرکت‌کنندگان در کارگاه‌های یادشده، ضعف و قوت استفاده از بدن و روایت‌گری را طبقه‌بندی و الگوسازی کرده و تحلیلی از چرایی کمبود مهارت‌های حضور جوانان را ارائه می‌دهد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: باستان‌شناسی بدن، تئاتر ستم‌دیده، یکسان‌سازی، روش زندگی

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