

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Representing Alterity through Puppetry and Performing Objects

An Online Symposium

April 9-10, 2021

Hosted by the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and the Puppet Arts program of the University of Connecticut



Wayang klithik puppet representing a Dutch military officer,
The Dr. Walter Angst and Sir Henry Angst Collection of Indonesian Puppets, Yale University Art Gallery.

Friday, April 9, 10:00-10:45

KEYNOTE (Moderator: Matthew Cohen)

Marvin Carlson, “Alterity in the Arabic Puppet Theatre”

The theme of alterity has been prominent in the theatre ever since the Greeks, who delighted in portraying the strange attitudes, costumes, appearance and language of the “babaros” (barbarians). Indeed the other has always been a subject of fascination and ridicule in theatre around the world. This has been particularly true of puppet theatre, where the concept of otherness takes on a powerful extra dimension in a world inhabited by the profoundly other figure of the puppet itself. I want to explore today some of the ways the shadow puppet theatre of the Middle East, one of the great puppetry traditions, has dealt with this theme. My examples will come from two widely separated sources, the trilogy of the Egyptian poet Ibn Dayial, from the late thirteenth century, and a collection of the popular Karagoz plays from modern Turkey.

I will begin by discussing the complex interrelationship between the puppet and alterity, a theme which is foundational to both of these samples, and I would argue, to puppet theatre generally, even when not directly addressed. This theme is much more fully and explicitly developed in the Ibn Daniyal trilogy, especially in the first play, but as I will suggest, it is part of the world view of both examples. The most obvious use of alterity in both puppet and living theatre, is the appearance of a “barbarian” character or characters, whose departures from cultural norms and misuse of language are a long established comic tradition. Such characters appear in both plays, and a somewhat surprising commonality, across 700 years, is the similar depiction of the uncivilized Sudanese, who appears very little changed from medieval to modern presentations. The other barbarians or other barbaric practices vary considerably, but alterity itself remains a common concern and device throughout.

Marvin Carlson is the Sidney E. Cohn Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He has received an honorary doctorate from the University of Athens, the ATHE Career Achievement Award, the ASTR Distinguished Scholarship Award, the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism, and the Calloway Prize for writing in theatre. He is the founding editor of the journals *Western European Stages* and *Arab Stages*. He is the author of twenty-three books, the most recent of which is *10,000 Nights* (Michigan, 2017).

Friday, April 9, 11:00am- 12:30pm

Alterity and Diversity (Moderator/discussant: Frank Proshan)

Jo Ann Cavallo, “Sicilian Puppet Theater: Alterity or Diversity?”

From the perspective of alterity, the predominant figure of the Other in Sicilian puppet theater is undoubtedly the Saracen (Muslim). As antagonists, Saracens have been associated with different historical aggressors, from North Africans to Ottoman Turks to the House of Bourbon ruling Sicily in the nineteenth century. However, depictions of Saracens across the source texts, time periods, and puppet theater companies are exceptionally multifaceted. Many non-Christian protagonists were beloved by the traditional *opera dei pupi* public. A chivalrous Mongol khan, for instance, was affectionately depicted with the characteristic mustache of Vittorio Emanuele II, “il re galantuomo” (the honest gentleman king). And some puppeteers reversed the angle and fostered identification with the Saracen underdogs in the face of oppression coming from elsewhere.

At the same time, the “Paladins of France” cycle, with its over 300 nightly episodes, is replete with stories that eschew an opposition between an “us” and a “them” and instead underscore our common humanity across borders of all kinds. Camaraderie, friendship, and even romance can readily emerge between individuals from the most disparate corners of the globe—from China to Africa and from Syria to the islands above the Russian landmass—in extended narratives that encourage and promote understanding and peace. In recent decades, moreover, Sicilian puppeteers have been especially active in staging plays that challenge collective confrontations and question conventional societal attitudes.

With such boundless material in both traditional and contemporary Sicilian puppet theater, scholars may shine the analytical lens on features that either emphasize alterity or embrace diversity. The plays themselves sometimes stage a shift from one perspective to the other, as when an unknown foreign Other becomes a friend, a benefactor, or a lover. My presentation will focus on a selection of examples under the guise of alterity before moving to three principal storylines that celebrate diversity through heterogamous marriages.

Jo Ann Cavallo (Ph.D., Yale, 1987) is Professor of Italian and current chair of the Department of Italian, Columbia University. Her latest book, *The World beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto*, received a Modern Language Association Publication Award and was translated into Italian. She is also the author of *The Romance Epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso: From Public Duty to Private Pleasure* and *Boiardo’s Orlando Innamorato: An Ethics of Desire*, and has published numerous articles on Italian authors from the medieval to the modern period and on popular traditions (especially Sicilian puppet theater and the epic *Maggio* of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines). Among her edited and co-edited volumes are *Teaching the Italian Renaissance Romance Epic* and *Speaking Truth to Power from Medieval to Modern Italy*. She created the websites eBOIARDO (<https://edblogs.columbia.edu/eboiardo>) and World Epics (<https://edblogs.columbia.edu/worldepics>) and edits the book series Anthem World Epic and Romance.

Olly Crick, "The Game of Comedy: Commedia and its Masks"

Although the popular image of Commedia dell'Arte persists as a comic form, full of multi-colored diamond-pattern clad servants, elegantly outwitting older and stupider Masters, its comic engine room is far more robust, focussing on differentials in social class, geographical region and perceptions of physical beauty. A statistical examination of commedia shows us that 50% or less of its roles actually wore a mask: some showed a human face, and some a grotesque mask. Each one of these categories, performatively enacted within the genre, would be enough to reductively label each of its roles in the eyes of the audience, but the combination of all three creates a comic gesture that creates an instant and visceral reaction in the onlooker. This initial reaction, unmediated by other dramatic agencies such as plot or devices such as disguise, depends, I suggest, on the social class, geographical origin and aspirational self-image of the spectator. Which character is being portrayed in which locale can become central to understanding commedia. I will examine all three of these categories to try and examine who is being "othered", why and to what end. Commedia as a form, I propose, has as one of its dramatic strengths, a system of stock characters that represent a spectrum of all society. Princes, Popes and Priests were consciously omitted from this spectrum, as offending or satirizing this class meant the loss of patronage or in many cases death. Each stock character came from a region and displayed that region's distinctive performative characteristics, its perceived social class and either wore a mask or didn't. As the areas these roles represented were all in close proximity, and Italy being a country that puts regionality over nationalism, a fair amount of local rivalry came with the territory.

My paper compares the role of the second Zanni, often known as Harlequin, with the second actress, in Goldoni's *Servant of two Masters*, here called Clarice. Harlequin comes from Bergamo: a mountainous and not very prosperous agricultural region, economically dependent on Venice. It has its own dialect and its own issues: famine on several occasions drove the Bergamese peasant class to Venice, looking for food and work, dressed in clothes made from patched white flour sacks. What did they find when they got there? A city that had its own dialect, had literally been built in a lagoon, and that survived entirely on trade.

The work these Bergamese in Venice could do was limited to manual labor: a house servant or a porter. Clarice, on the other hand, is the daughter of one of Venice's merchants, speaks in a refined way, and does not need to work for a living. Juxtaposing the two on stage creates an image displaying a series of opposing vectors: manual labor vs. leisure; entitled resident vs. immigrant; lower class vs. upper class and, as Harlequin wears a grotesque mask and Clarice wears makeup, male earthiness vs. feminine pulchritude. It is possible to pair up all the stock roles and see that there is always an immediate difference or contrast, always based on class, region, and beauty. A commedia performance is a society at play, seen through the lens of class in action. This may seem quite a modern Marxist viewpoint, but as the best-paying audiences were always aristocratic, it quite literally paid better to create comedies which kept the class system in place and even sang its praises. It is only in the 20th and 21st centuries with the Dell'Arte players, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Dario Fo that commedia servants have been able to do anything about their situation.

Olly Crick has been interested in commedia for a long time, and first trod the boards as Pedrolino in a Barry Grantham show in London in 1987. Since then he has worked with the Unfortunati (as the Doctor), TAG Teatro di Venice (as Captain Spavento in Venice Carnival in 1990), taught at RADA and LAMDA, and co-authored one book, and co-edited another on Commedia. He completed a Ph.D. at Edge Hill University on the dramaturgy and aesthetics of contemporary Commedia dell'Arte in 2019, and is currently rewriting it for publication, as well as co-editing a multi-author volume on *Commedia in the Asia-Pacific*.

Nazlı M. Ümit, “A Melting Pot or the Stage of a Racist Trickster: Relocating Karagöz in the Discourses of Othering”

Throughout different centuries, European travellers depicted Karagöz performances in similar ways. To them, Karagöz plays were amusing, bold and vulgar. Especially in 19th century narratives, enjoying a Karagöz play in a coffeehouse summarized the lazy and sexually forward ways of the Orient. After watching a Jewish Karagöz master's show in Ioannina, Sir John Hobhouse interprets the experience as “too horribly gross to be described.” As more Europeans scholars visited Ottoman territories, travel narratives were replaced by academic analysis. Karagöz became a subject of folklore, linguistics, physical anthropology, and ethnology. For instance, Felix von Luschan, the inventor of the chromatic scale, was measuring skulls in southern Turkey when he first met Karagöz. In his monograph *Das Türkische Schattenspiel* he examined the characters, dialects, and costumes of puppets with a similar method he practiced while studying Turks, Greeks, Kurds and Armenians, which helped European parliamentarians decide who was superior and deserved to stay in Anatolia. By the beginning of the 21st century, the Western discourses of identity, minority, integration, race, etc. revived among academic circles in Turkey. It excited those who favored ethnicism over civic nationalism. It was claimed Karagöz was a perfect example of multiculturalism and tolerance enjoyed during the Ottoman Empire as it shows how “others” lived in harmony until republican politics erased all the “colors”. In the light of published play scripts, this paper questions the existence of “others” in Karagöz and asks if Karagöz--as a form which has been celebrated for its witty use of political and social satire--is a representative of a dominant group discrediting “others”, and if laughter is the relief of the “superior” as some theories suggest, which groups are privileged by the humor in Karagöz, by the deeds of national Greek hero Karagiozis, by the adventures of Karagöz in Damascus, by the verdicts of Qaraqus from Cairo, or by the Caraghioslîc jokes in Romania. It also aims to discuss challenges that contemporary Karagöz practitioners--especially those who choose to perform the classical repertoire--face while preserving “colors”, as well as authentic content, which was nominated to the heritage list by UNESCO, and trying to be morally right and politically correct in a period when, paradoxically, race and ethnicities predominantly matter.

Nazlı M. Ümit holds an MA from the Department of Drama at Exeter University, and received her Ph.D. from the Institute of Turkology, Istanbul University, with a thesis on Turkish theatre historiography and European Orientalists. She practices Karagöz in professional performances and projects. She is currently an assistant professor at Istanbul Kultur University, specializing in Turkish-Ottoman theatre, theatre historiography, and Karagöz. Her publications on theatre and Karagöz include *Irish Theatre II: Lady Gregory* (Mitos, 2012); *Traditional Turkish Theatre*:

Karagöz Puppet Plays, ed. by Marvin Carlson and Nazlı M. Ümit (CUNY Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, 2019); *Hayal Yahut Karagöz'ün Son Perdesi ve Nev'îcad Hayal Tiyatrosu* (Libra, 2020); and *Turkish Theatre Historiography and European Orientalists* (Libra, 2020).

Friday, April 9, 1:15-2:15pm

**Hidden in Plain Sight: Early 20th Century African-American practitioners
(Moderator/discussant: John Bell)**

Paulette Richards, “Always Busy Somewhere: John W. Cooper Crafts—an Entrée for the Other”

African American ventriloquist John W. Cooper was born around 1871 to parents who had been enslaved. By age thirteen he was forced to fend for himself, thus he received very little formal education. Cooper nevertheless mastered the language and visual signifiers of genteel society and deployed them as a means of resisting stereotypical representations of Blackness and accessing social networks that were normally off limits to Blacks in the Jim Crow era.

Although Cooper toured for a time with Richards and Pringle’s Famous Georgia Minstrels, he performed as a ventriloquist in the olio section of the show and did not appear in blackface. Subsequently he broke into the white vaudeville circuit. His most successful act, “Fun in a Barbershop,” used cutting-edge technology that enabled him to animate six figures while playing a barber—a servant role acceptable to white audiences. Yet Cooper gave the best lines to the Black characters in the sketch, thereby de-centering the white point of view. His reviews were nevertheless equally good below the Mason-Dixon line as they were in the rest of the country.

Cooper was in fact a “race man” who taught his daughter to be proud of a cultural heritage that started in Africa, not in slavery. He loaned his time and talents to many benefit performances in the Black community and he commissioned a “beautiful brown boy” carved in his own image to serve as his animaterial alter ego. By throwing voice into this figure, Cooper began the process of re-uniting sound and image in figural representations of Black experience.

This study applies Fred Moten’s concept of animateriality—the assertion of intrinsic human dignity in the performance of Black experience—to explore Cooper’s strategies of self-representation by examining his cartes de visite, handbills, correspondence, and studio portraits along with the language he used to describe himself. Cooper’s success in getting audiences to accept the agency of a Black figure enabled them to more readily recognize the humanity and agency of a Black man.

Paulette Richards is a puppet artist and independent researcher. She holds a Ph.D. in French Civilization from the University of Virginia and has taught at Georgetown University and Georgia Tech. She survived a ten month stint in Senegal as a 2013/ 2014 Fulbright Scholar without contracting any tropical diseases, but sometime during her service as an artist in residence at the Institut français de Saint Louis, the puppet bug bit her hard. After returning to Atlanta she became a docent in the Worlds of Puppetry Museum at the Center for Puppetry Arts. She co-curated the *Living Objects: African American Puppetry* exhibit that ran at the University of Connecticut’s Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry from October 2018 to April 2019 with Dr. John Bell and also co-edited the anthology of essays from the *Living Objects Symposium*. Her book, *Object Performance in the Black Atlantic* is forthcoming from Routledge in 2022.

Ben Fisler, “Ralph Chessé and Forman Brown: When Carving the Other is Carving the Self”

The puppet by its nature is a figure of alterity, existing as the dynamic exchange between human being and performing object. To Paul Prisis (*The Rise of Manipulating* 2012), performers enter the fictional world of the puppets as their own others. This creates ambiguity in performance and discloses the human being in relation to the object. The performer’s identity invariably contributes to identity in such mimetic acts as construction and performance. So what happens when the puppeteer’s identity is a mask of its own, and the objects engage the puppeteer’s ambiguous relationship to race or sexuality?

This presentation explores the puppet as a disruptive figure of alterity, in an ongoing effort to recuperate the identities of two notable American puppeteers, Forman Brown and Ralph Chessé. It will address how their respective sexuality and ethnicity may have informed their work. Though having distinct meanings within the context of alterity, race and sexuality are particularly analogous in these cases. Brown was a gay man encoding metaphors of sexual identity as other in his plays. Chessé was a man of mixed race who publicly identified as white, while often showcasing black subjects. Brown was closeted in public, while in a lifelong relationship with fellow puppeteer, Richard Brandon. The Cheese’ family, listed historically as mulatto, chose to identify as white, an effort in which Chessé actively engaged, never acknowledging his own genetic connections to subjects he chose to represent, even reflecting in interviews of his depiction of black subjects as interest in the other. Brown’s life was code switching between public and private spheres, Chessé’s was one of denial in both, aided by literal whitewashing in the 1924 census.

Both artists engaged in distinct forms of what Michael Taussig calls responsivity, a process where mimesis yields into the other. Brown’s *Noah’s Ark* featured a male couple, two Dodo birds whose inability to produce offspring doomed the species. Chessé created paintings for the San Francisco Museum of Art and is especially noted among puppeteers for his adaptation of *The Emperor Jones*. Both artists demonstrate alterity as an ambiguous concept that disrupts itself. Their shows point to the objects as both exotic (the element of alterity that says “they are different from me”) and incorporated (the element that says “they are like me”), as their hidden identities blurred the boundaries between self and other.

Ben Fisler is the Arts Coordinator and Associate Professor of Theatre at Harford Community College. His article, “Black and Blackface in the Performing Object: Bullock, Chessé, Paris, the Jubilee Singers, and the Burdens of ... Everything” was part of the 2019 *Living Objects Symposium* and the resulting collection *Living Objects: African American Puppetry Essays*. Other publications appear in *The Puppetry Yearbook*, *Theatre Journal*, *Performance, Religion, and Spirituality*, and *Research in Drama Education*. Ben coordinates responses on behalf of KCACTF Region II, reviews productions throughout the mid-Atlantic for DC MetroArts, and acts professionally with companies such as Prince George’s Shakespeare in The Parks and the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, recently playing Sir Peter Teazle in *The School for Scandal*.

Friday, April 9, 2:30-3:30

Contemporary Legacies of Racial Violence (Moderator/discussant: Paulette Richards)

Mary Anderson and Richard Hayley, “Afterlives: Silhouettes and Shadows in the Art of Kara Walker”

Mobilizing the silhouette and the shadow as key aesthetic tactics, Kara Walker has risen to prominence for her artistic renderings of historical imagery of the antebellum American South. Walker’s work taps into stereotypical images and histories of representation and has been subject to scathing critiques, particularly early in her career. More contemporary reception of Walker’s work attends to the ways in which it holds space for the complexities and contradictions associated with bearing witness to trauma. In this paper, we will examine the affective and narrative difference between experiencing Walker’s still silhouettes and Walker’s moving silhouettes, as they perform as puppets in her video works. Arguing that even in the still works, our engagement with the silhouettes operates *as if* they were puppets, we nonetheless note the theatrical and spectatorial shift that takes place in bearing witness to moving puppets in Walker’s videos. As Rebecca Peabody explains, the shift in Walker’s approach to production and display through the medium of video allows her to “push harder on certain pressure points that have always been important within Walker’s practice: the constructed nature of historical fantasy ... as well as viewers’ cultural reliance on storytelling to remember and reimagine the past.” Exploring the ways in which Walker describes her practice, in conversation with critical reviews and thick description of several works, this presentation will discuss how, through the language of shadow, her representations of alterity speak to the complexity and fluidity of temporal distinctions between past and present. Staging a paradoxical relationship to periodization through the “chameleonic nature” of the puppet, Walker’s work can be understood as a practice of what Christina Sharpe calls “Black annotation and Black redaction,” which are not “opposites” but rather “trans*verse *and* coextensive ways to imagine.”

Mary Anderson is the Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at Wayne State University. She is interested in heuristic processes, the convolutions of remembering through writing, and objects in performance. Her articles have appeared in *Adjacent; Performance Matters; About Performance; Body, Space & Technology; Canadian Journal of Practice-based Research in Theatre; Theatre, Dance & Performance Training; Teaching Artist Journal; Research in Drama Education; Journal of Dance Education; International Journal of Education & the Arts; and Arts Education Policy Review.*

Richard Haley is a senior lecturer in digital art at Wayne State University. He exhibits and curates regularly, with a focus on practices at the intersection of sculpture, photography, video and performance art. With Felecia Chizuko Carlisle, he developed TIME/FRAME/MATTER, as an instrument to bring artists together to create works in real-time, to experiment with the live broadcast as a medium, and to discuss ideas about the transmission of material and objects through virtual space. Haley’s articles have appeared in *Performance Matters; About Performance; Body, Space & Technology; and Adjacent.*

Leslie Burton, “Effigies of Obama and Racial Othering in Public Object Performance”

In this paper, I examine the treatment of the effigies of Barack Obama in America that appeared before his election in 2008 and throughout his presidency. Protected by the First Amendment as symbolic speech, the destruction of political effigies (in essence the theatrical public execution of puppets) has a long history in American political discourse; presidential effigies have featured in popular protests for centuries. The effigies of Obama drew on this legacy, but simultaneously evoked the history of racial terror perpetrated against Black people in America ever since the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The post-racial narrative that characterized the neoliberal politics of the late-20th/early-21st century provided rhetorical cover for those who created and installed effigies of Obama, but the lack of national reckoning with the racist violence the figures so clearly referenced is, today, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, shocking.

Furthermore, the Obama effigies, which took the form of everything from Halloween decorations to lawn chairs strung up from trees, did not only clearly reference actual violence against an entire disenfranchised group, they also reanimated a kind of public object performance “tradition” that had almost faded from the public imagination. As will be discussed in this paper, racist groups hung effigies of Black (usually male) figures in public places in order to intimidate Black communities and demarcate “white” spaces throughout the 20th century. Unlike the destruction of political effigies, which usually presents the power of a community pitted against authority, racial effigies have rather represented the social power of one group to publicly suppress a less powerful group. Effigies of Obama mixed these two styles of effigy performance for the first time at a national scale, capturing a symbolic snapshot of the state of race relations at that moment. To pay attention to these effigies now is to shine light on a style of public object performance that has historically been ignored, even as it has been embedded within the national discourse, and to recognize that effigies of Obama were not aberrational reactions to political change or throwbacks to a racist past; they were continuations of cultural oppression and indicators of the racist present.

Leslie Burton is a performance-maker and Ph.D. candidate in the Theatre Studies Department at University College Cork, Republic of Ireland. Her research interests dwell in the intersections between performance studies, feminist and postcolonial theory, and new materialism. Her dissertation, “Enchanting Things: Practice Encounters with Material Performatives,” argues for puppetry as an entry point to cultural analysis as much as a creative and interpretive art form. In addition to maintaining her own object theatre practice, she has lectured in theatre studies at University College Cork, led puppetry workshops for children and adults, and acted as assistant director to the international Cork Puppetry Festival in 2018. The research that led to this conference contribution was made possible by the Irish Research Council.

Saturday, April 10, 9:00-10:30am

Others in Asian Traditions (Moderator/discussant: Matthew Cohen)

Kathy Foley, “The Other in Southeast Asian Puppetry”

A major antagonist in a classical Javanese/Sundanese *wayang* was a king of *negara sabrangan* (overseas kingdom) whose minister and ogre soldiers attack the protagonist. This “other/outsider” (non-Javanese) is needed in the plot of a traditional story. It seems likely that *negara sabrangan* was inspired in part by Bugis and other non-Javanese whose attacks on commerce threatened trade along the north coast of Java. *Sabrangan* characters are one version of “other” in this highly diverse geographical region which is replete with otherness.

This paper will look at some concepts of “other” in puppetry around the Gulf of Thailand noting three kinds of “other”-ing. First, the simple insertion of ethnic other for comedy. For example in Thai *nang talung* we have puppets to represent South Indians (*kaek*) and Chinese (*orang cina*), as well as Malays, Thais and aboriginal figures (*orang asli*). This comic representation of diversity has some parallels to the puppet practices of the Muslim world in genres like *karagoz* and *mobarak* where dialect and cultural stereotyped figures cycle through scenes that entertain but do not drive plot. Pak Enthus Sumono’s use of Saddam Hussein and George Bush for clown scenes during the Gulf War or Purbo Asmoro’s insertion of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris for a *wayang* for Biden’s inauguration in January 2021 is a relatively simple use of other for comic entertainment and timely satire but whose presence is not demanded by narrative.

A more substantial “other” is one required by plot structure. *Sabrangan*/overseas kingdom characters discussed above are in this category. They show the positive strength of the Javanized/local hero who defeats them. A variation on this structurally crucial other is found in the Amir Hamzah tales, concerning the uncle of Mohammed where the “other” is the *kafir* (non-Muslim). Here religion and not ethnicity is the source of difference.

A third kind of “outsider” is the internal other whose body and class signifies difference. Characters who seem the most indigenous, the major clowns (*punakawan, panasar, talok*) are such outsiders and their often dark skin and grotesque bodies mark them. In West Java they share iconographical features with the rank-and-file ogres in the *sabrangan* kingdom, yet are the positively positioned ones. Color, language, and class make them “other” to the protagonist but this other is accorded unique spiritual power.

Kathy Foley is a Distinguished Professor Emerita of Theatre Arts at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is current President of UNIMA-USA and serves on the UNIMA-International Research Commission and Publications and Writing Commission. She edited *Asian Theatre Journal* from 2005-2018 and was one of the first non-Indonesians to perform in the Indonesia National Wayang Festival as a dalang of *wayang golek sunda*. She studies with Dalang Otong Rasta and Dalang Abah Sunarya in Bandung, Jabar, Indonesia.

Robin Ruizendaal, "Representing Alterity in Chinese Puppet Theatre"

The foreigner or internal outsider as a danger to the nation and the national identity is not confined to China. James Donald, in his article "How English is it? Popular literature and national culture" (*New Formations* 6, [1988], 31-47), charts the function of the grotesque foreign villains and dangerous women in fostering national identity in popular entertainment. He discovers a "paranoid strand in popular culture," that in the Chinese context would refer to culture in general. Donald formulates this "paranoid strand" as follows:

Manifest in racism, its violent misogyny, and its phobias about alien cultures, alien ideologies and enemies within, is the terror that without the known boundaries, everything will collapse in undifferentiated, miasmatic chaos, that identity will disintegrate, and the "I" will be suffocated or swamped.

The central element in forging a Chinese identity consists of the constant threat of foreign aggression and internal enemies. The enemy changes from Xiongnu to Mongol, from Manchu to foreign imperialist in the course of Chinese history, yet he is always depicted as brutal and ugly and culturally inferior or radically different from the Chinese. In the puppet theatre foreigners have all these typical characteristics and often even refer to themselves as barbarians (*fan*), in order to emphasize their status.

In China we are confronted with a similar view of the foreigner and outsider as in the quote above, albeit within its specific Chinese context. The puppet theatre performance thus provides a tableau vivant of the cultural and social boundaries of traditional Chinese society and a definition of Chineseness: a national ideology that forges a loyalty to the state that supersedes loyalty to the lineage and the locality, but stresses the importance of family relations. The foreign threat, present in most frequently performed puppet plays, is the major force in further welding the Chinese identity. It distracts the attention from internal friction, as the state and "civilization as we know it" are at stake.

Robin Ruizendaal was the director of the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum in Taipei, Taiwan, from 2000-2020. He holds a Ph.D. in sinology from Leiden University in the Netherlands (*Marionette Theatre in Quanzhou*, Brill publishers, 2006). He has published widely on Asian puppet theatre (*Asian Theatre Puppets*, Thames & Hudson, 2009 etc.) and conducted fieldwork on most Asian puppet theatre traditions. Ruizendaal is curator of numerous (puppet) theatre related exhibitions in Taiwan and around the world. He has written and directed more than 20 modern and traditional Taiwanese (puppet) music theatre productions, that have been performed in over 30 countries worldwide. He is an honorary citizen of the city of Taipei and recipient of the Prix franco-taiwanais in 2019 for the promotion of Taiwanese puppet theatre around the world. He is currently in charge of the Taiwan Museum Asian puppet theatre research project and artistic director of the Taiyang Puppet Theatre Company.

Rudy Wiratama, “When Klana and His Mercenaries Sailed to Java: The Expression of Otherness in Surakarta Court-style *Wayang Gedhog* Performance”

The plays of *wayang gedhog*, a shadow puppetry form which emerged in the 16th century and once flourished in central Java’s royal courts, mainly depict the romance of the Javanese prince Panji of Janggala Kingdom and his fiancée Sekartaji or Candrakirana from Daha, who seek one another through a series of adventures and disguises. At the end of story cycles, the two lovers are rejoined, bringing prosperity to the island of Java, as they are the incarnations of Vishnu and Sri. But in contrast with oral Panji tales, the *wayang gedhog* version was told in a more epic way, involving the “historical” aspects of Panji as an ideal ancestor (*Jéluhur*) of Javanese kings and nobles. In his adventures, sometimes Panji will enter a competition or battle with Klana, the overseas king (*ratu sabrang*), considered his archenemy.

In contrast to the refined, ideal type of hero represented by Panji, Klana and his subjects are depicted as coarse, rude, and temperamental figures, manifesting behaviors antithetical to Javanese courtly moral standards. On his journey to Java to challenge the main protagonist, Klana also brought his subjects, the *sabangan* soldiers who consisted of multi-racial mercenaries, depicted in a particular iconography (“*corekan pamijen*”) both in their physical features and attributes. This gives *wayang gedhog* performances more color than other *wayang* forms. *Sabrang* figures in *wayang gedhog* are widely seen by Javanese audiences as replacements for demonic (*buta*) figures that constantly disturb the cosmos harmony in the classical *wayang kulit purwa*. Interestingly, the figures of Klana and his *sabangan* troops are often found talking in foreign languages both in written playtexts and performances. This enhances their “otherness” in Javanese eyes. This phenomenon raises some questions: Do Javanese always assume that overseas figures are a symbolic threat to their existence, or are there some exceptions? What was actually their dramatic purpose in *wayang gedhog* performance? And might relations between Javanese and outsiders be formulated after the model of the *wayang gedhog* universe?

Rudy Wiratama, also known as Raden Tumenggung Wiratamahadipura, was born in Surakarta on August 31, 1990. He is a lecturer in Javanese Art and Culture subjects in the Javanese Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. He is also a traditionally-trained Surakarta-style based puppeteer (*dhalang*) who performs *wayang purwa*, *madya*, *gedhog*, *krucil* and *dupara* under the guidance of leading puppet masters, mainly Ki Bambang Suwarno of the conservatoire ISI Surakarta and Ki Hali Jarwosularso of PDMN (the Mangkunegaran royal court’s school). Outside campus, he was also appointed as the secretary of PEPADI (Persatuan Pedalangan Indonesia) for the city of Surakarta and a member of Literature Committee in Dewan Kesenian Surakarta (Surakarta Art Council). Besides being a *dhalang*, he has written a number of books and journal and magazine articles about *wayang gedhog* and other genres of shadow puppetry. He has also been involved in a team initiating the creation of the new shadow puppet form *Wayang Gajah Mada* since 2017.

Saturday, April 10, 10:45:00am-12:45pm

Historiography (Moderator/discussant: John Bell)

William T.F. Condee, “Exhibiting Blackface Puppets from the German Imaginary”

German puppet collections have extensive holdings of Blackface puppets that are built on grotesquely racist stereotypes. The collections now face the problem of how—and whether—to display these puppets, made more acute because all the museums are being extensively renovated.

During three months in 2019, I conducted research at five major collections (Dresden, Bad Kreuznach, Munich, Berlin, and Lübeck), interviewing curators, viewing collections on display and in storage, and examining archives.

I examine these puppets within four broad contexts:

- The Imagined Turk: Eighteenth-century puppets represented caricatures of “Turks,” based on anxiety about the Ottoman Empire, as a form of xenophobic misrepresentation that reinforces notions of exoticism and Orientalism, with Blackness standing in for the ethnic Other.
- The Imagined African: Nineteenth-century puppets caricatured Africans, based on Germany’s colonization efforts, that demean the purported subjects as children, savages or animals.
- The Imagined African American: Late 19th- and early 20th-century puppets redeployed American racist imagery, especially following tours by African American artists, which often purport to celebrate the subjects while reinforcing implicit bias.
- The Imagined Multicultural Germany: Puppets during the post-World War II era, while still based on racial stereotypes, de-emphasized grotesque features in an effort to present a more sympathetic image.

I found that these collections are considering a range of strategies for these puppets:

- They should be displayed like other puppets, including labels with their “historic” names (a German racial slur), based on the idea that a museum should display history.
- They should be put in storage and not displayed, given their grotesque racism and violent history.
- They should be displayed in a separate area in which the history and culture can be contextualized through didactic material.
- They should be displayed in a special exhibition, on, for example, puppetry and race.

I conclude that curators are grappling with the future of these puppets in full light of their racist traditions, though the danger of reinscribing the discourse of systemic racism in German culture remains. This paper is part of a larger project studying the performative and visual culture of German Blackface puppets.

William T. F. Condee (J. Richard Hamilton Professor Emeritus of Humanities, Ohio University) is the author of *Coal and Culture: The Opera House in Appalachia* (Ohio, 2005) and *Theatrical Space: A Guide for Directors and Designers* (Scarecrow, 1995). Articles on Southeast Asian

puppetry were published in *Puppetry International*, *Studies in Theatre and Performance* and *Asian Journal of University Education*. Articles on other subjects appeared in *Theatre Survey*, *Theatre Topics*, and *Theatre Annual*. He has co-authored work (with Thomas Irmer) on German theater in *A History of German Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and *Theatre Journal*. His most recent work on Nonmaterial Performance has appeared in *Imagined Theatres* and *TDR: The Drama Review*, co-authored with Barry Rountree. Condee was Kohei Miura Visiting Professor at Chubu, Fulbright Senior Specialist at University of Leipzig and University of Malaya, and lectured at universities including East China Normal, Tsinghua, Nanjing, Dankook, and Hindu Dharma Institute (Bali).

Mayumi Ilari, “Mamulengo as Cultural Resistance”

The aim of this presentation is to briefly present mamulengo puppetry as an artistic form of cultural, social and racial resistance, from its colonial origins to the present. Mamulengo is one of the oldest and most representative artistic expressions of popular culture in Brazil. While its origins are mostly undocumented, it is considered a probable development of the influence of European puppetry brought by Portuguese settlers in colonial times. A tradition once present strictly in the North and Northeast, its theatrical version gained variations in plot, characters, stage and material characteristics, through different regions and generations. Its traditional audiences lived in remote rural areas, composed of humble northeastern villagers who gathered together especially for the puppet shows, in lively performances that originally lasted from four to six hours, or even longer.

Today, in an age of sophisticated and technological entertainment, it is still typically performed by popular artists, portraying the lives, everyday situations, and hardships lived by lower-class characters. Often dealing in humorous ways with themes of violence and brutality, mamulengo puppets typically make fun of the locally powerful: while dramatically defying and fooling typical authority characters (a sheriff, local priest or politician, etc.), they momentarily invert current injustices and release, through laughter, sentiments of oppressiveness (even if briefly and symbolically only), suppressing social differences in a lively, cathartic show.

Usually bringing up themes of class differences (except in touristic or carnival-related events and adaptations), mamulengos simultaneously address the issue of race. Having as protagonist a “black Arlecchino”, as puppeteers name him, this form of theatre touches the very roots of the country’s cultural and social formation. In that sense, two recent initiatives that restore and dignify the contribution of Black artists in the context of Brazilian puppetry will be briefly addressed: puppeteer Sebastian Marques’s “Benjamim, the Clown” puppets (created after our first Black clown, the late Benjamim de Oliveira), and puppeteer Chico Simões’s 2020 *Mamulengo Arts and Tricks*, his written version of the legendary story of brave slave Benedito (who, according to oral narratives told by generations of traditional puppeteers, was the creator of mamulengo in Brazil).

Mayumi Ilari teaches English and American Literature and Dramaturgy at the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences in the English/Modern Languages Department of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. She studied American drama and literature at State

University of Campinas and at University of São Paulo, Brazil, where she has taught since 2009, and has written mainly on topics related to theatre and society. Her current research focuses on literary and cultural studies in contemporary theatre and dramaturgy.

Ida Hledíková, “Characters of Others in Plays of Slovak Folk and Professional Puppet Theatre”

My contribution concerns depictions of characters in Slovak puppet theatre and its dramaturgy. In the first part, characters of folk theatre in Slovakia will be discussed. The term “folk theatre” implies that it is not a popular puppet theatre of the sort generally known in Europe as *bastinado*, or slapstick in English. Rather, I am concerned with a historical kind of theatre, played by folks through the 19th century. There were plays presented on the occasion of Christmas, spring folk celebrations, harvests, etc. In theatre texts of the folk theatre we find characters of Jews and gypsy heroes. Their portrayals have indicia of stereotypical depiction. Over time, there was a transfiguration of attitudes from the potentially racist to the positively idealistic and romantic.

The second part of the contribution looks into the dramaturgy of Slovak and Czech contemporary puppet theatre in which Romany heroes are presented. We will present the plays which were staged in professional puppet theatres, e.g. *Kalo Mitraš* by Miloslav Klíma, who was a dramaturg of the famous Czech director Josef Krofta (DRAK Theatre Hradec Králové); *Piatko and Pustaj*, written and directed by the young, renowned Slovak director Gejza Dezorz in the Puppet Theatre in Košice; a play written by Gabriela Pataráková titled *Nothing*; and a play of Ján Romanovský, *The Dilino’s Violins*. The majority of these texts were written and staged in the 1980s, the final decade of socialism and communism in the country and the beginning of the postcommunist period.

We will reflect and compare depictions of the main heroes in the above-mentioned plays—old folk plays and the plays of 1980s—as well as discuss reasons why the Romany ethnic minority was popular or a focal point of interest.

Ida Hledíková is a professor, theatre researcher, critic, historian, and expert on puppet theatre at the Puppetry Department in the Academy of Performing Arts (APA) in Bratislava, Slovakia. She graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts Prague in Dramaturgy and Directing of Puppet Theatre. From 2004 to 2010 she fulfilled the role of the vice-dean of the Theatre Faculty, responsible for research. Between 2011 and 2015 she was the vice-rector of APA. At present, she is the chairwoman of the Department of Puppetry. She is the author of numerous articles in the *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, two monographs on puppetry, editor of *The UNIMA Directory of Puppet Theatre Researchers* (2012), co-editor of *Tracing Past and Present*, and author of the internationally-awarded documentary film *The Last Caravan*. From 2000 until 2016 she was the President of the UNIMA Research Commission. She has also directed two puppetry festivals and curated children and youth programs in the international television and film festival Prix Danube.

Didier Plassard, “Puppetry for a Total War: French and German Puppet Plays in WWI”

European puppet theatres were deeply involved during World War I, which gave them an opportunity for demonstrating their social utility, as a tool of moral and civic education for children. Behind the lines, they took part in the wartime effort, in the context of a “total war” leading to a full-time mobilization of the civilian populations.

This mobilization implied many transformations of popular repertoires: the regional characters Guignol and Kasperl had to embody national identities; their traditional laziness, insolence and reluctance to commands disappeared, so that they could become exemplary soldiers; while the representation of these new heroes gave way to some complexity, enemies were more heavily caricatured.

In this context, very different options can nonetheless appear. In German plays, the war-time repertoire for Kasperl is mainly intended to make young audiences laugh at the conflict, and it therefore keeps farcical traits. In Paris, Gaston Cony’s *Guignol de la Guerre*, moralizing and edifying, tries to give a somehow realistic image of the soldiers’ everyday life. But they all agree in ascribing a radical otherness to their enemies, who are racialized or animalized, when they are not denied their humanity.

Based upon a comparison between German or Austrian (Oberndorfer, Renker, Rendlös, Voelckers) and French (Cony, Flesky du Rieux) puppet repertoires composed during or in the aftermath of WWI, this paper will examine how these productions took part in the “*bouillage de crânes*” (brainwashing) of public opinions, instilling hatred of other nations in the minds of the youngest.

Didier Plassard is full professor in Drama and Performance Studies at the Université Paul-Valéry (Montpellier, France). His research fields include avant-garde theatre, stage direction, dramaturgy, multimedia, and puppetry. Main publications: *L’Acteur en effigie* (L’Age d’homme, 1992, Georges-Jamati Award of Theatre Aesthetics); *Les Mains de lumière* (Institut International de la Marionnette, 1996, 2004); Edward Gordon Craig, *The Drama for Fools/Le Théâtre des fous* (L’Entretemps, 2012); *Mises en scène d’Allemagne(s)* (CNRS Editions, 2014). He was also editor-in-chief of *Prospero European Review* (2010-2013), guest editor (with Cristina Grazioli) of *Puck—La marionnette et les autres arts* (2014), and (with Carole Guidicelli) of *Art Press 2*, “La marionnette sur toutes les scènes” (2015). He was awarded a *Sirena d’oro* (*Arrivano dal mare!*, Italy, 2012), and was made *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* (Ministère de la Culture, 2015). Since October 2019, he is the Principal Investigator of *PuppetPlays*, a five-year research program funded by the European Union (ERC Advanced Grant 835193).

Saturday April 10, 1:30-2:30pm

**Staging Diaspora and Refugee Visibility in Contemporary Puppetry
(Moderator/discussant: Cariad Astles)**

Husam Abed, “Puppet or/and an Object for Refugee Visibility in *Escape* and *War Maker*”

This paper will explore using puppet or/and an object in a performance for refugee visibility. It investigates levels of meaning through choosing the material and puppet/object design/choice, co-presence between puppets/objects and puppeteers on stage, and spatial relations. I explore and compare how objects/puppets are used in a performance to represent refugees and tell their stories. In Katarina Vrobova’s *Escape* performance (Prague 2019), black-painted puppets are meant to represent the refugee body in a literal/figurative way; to tell a story of refugees, through a story of father and son. The stage and puppets were of mixed materials of wood and cardboard. In 2021, in my Prague-based company Dafa Puppet Theatre’s solo performance *War Maker*, objects will stand in for the human body, a refugee body; to tell his personal story. The story is of K.S., a visual artist with a Palestinian refugee background, and his dream of becoming a visual effects artist for sci-fi movies, yet always ending up in diaspora, chased by identity questions. The performance will explore using materials and found objects to share his autobiographical story.

In *Escape*, puppets were used to represent a human body; for example: a black-painted figure of a human represented the father; while in *War Maker*, objects and materials stand metaphorically for refugees, such as using salt to represent K. S.’s family and the use of a spoon to represent him in a detention center. How does our understanding of meaning and perception of refugees change when we use a puppet or an object to figuratively or metaphorically represent a refugee? How do we read the cultural identity of an absent refugee when we tell their story by using an object or puppet? This paper will engage with these questions; its central question will be: How does substituting a refugee with an object or puppet in a performance generate, or prevent, empathy and interact with refugee visibility?

Husam Abed is a Prague-based Palestinian Jordanian theatre director, puppeteer, facilitator, producer and musician, specializing in alternative and puppet theatre and devised multidisciplinary theatre. He is currently undertaking a Ph.D. at Bath Spa University in the UK, researching refugee visibility through puppetry and object theatre. He holds a Master of directing for alternative and puppet theatre from the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU), Czech Republic. He has published in *Applied Theatre Research*, and his multi-awarded solo performance *Smooth Life* was highlighted in “Spectacular Bodies, Unsettling Objects: Material Performance as Intervention in Stereotypes of Refugees” (Purcell-Gates 2020).

Husam is a co-founder of Dafa Puppet Theatre, where he sees theatre as a public practice. He leads theatre projects for children, youth, and adults worldwide, and focuses his work with refugee communities. He dedicates his time to spreading theatre and especially puppet theatre as an emancipatory tool for self-expression and communication. He has directed performances in Czech, Jordan, Bahrain, Austria and Hong Kong. His performances have taken part in theatre festivals in Europe, Hong Kong, Macao, and the Arab world. He is a co-founder of Hazaar, Flying Freedom Festival, LIV’in Festival in Prague and Ya khayal Theatre Lab for refugees and

local youth, a curator for IDEA festival (International Dance Encounter Amman) and an active member of Karama Film Festival for human rights in Jordan.

Francesca Di Fazio, “How to Signify Otherness and Diasporic Bodies Through Puppetry. Two Dramaturgies by Kossi Efoui”

Author of various theatre plays, French-speaking writer of Togolese origin Kossi Efoui transfers in his texts, relying on the puppet’s medium, his experience of political exile from his native country and statelessness, as well as search for an identity, in his adoptive country, France. Reluctant to embrace a Western view that tends to relegate authors of African origins to an exotic aesthetic, Kossi Efoui puts at the center of his dramaturgy a complex concept of identity.

This paper is centered on two different texts by Kossi Efoui, *Io (tragédie)* (2006) and *En Guise de divertissement* (2013). The latter was conceived as a stage writing together with the puppet theater company Théâtre Inutile, during a collaboration lasting twenty years. The basic themes of his dramaturgy—the trauma of exile, the poetics of “marronnage” and the expropriation, on the one hand, and the rehabilitation of a human feeling, of one’s own history and identity, on the other—find their best concretization in the staging carried out with puppets.

The two texts present two different declinations of otherness. In *Io (tragédie)*, a rewrite of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, Io, the protagonist of the drama, does not appear in the list of characters, she’s only evoked by the others’ characters and embodied on stage by a puppet. This condition of absence-presence makes clear the symbol that Io incarnates, that of a diasporic body forced to exile and to be perceived everywhere as “other”. *En Guise de divertissement* is a satire of political and historical practices of displaying unordinary bodies for entertainment, as in the context of human zoos. An old mannequin, through its body manipulated by a group of actors, witnesses the mistreatment inflicted on bodies in public space throughout history. The play puts the audience in front of their morbid need for entertainment even when this is acted on those who are marginalized due to a diversity, an otherness.

Francesca Di Fazio holds a master’s degree in contemporary literature at the University of Bologna under the direction of Professor Gerardo Guccini and an international professional master in dramaturgy at the Scuola Iolanda Gazzero–ERT Fondazione (Modena). She is currently undertaking a Ph.D. in theatre studies at the University Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3, within the European project *PuppetPlays* (ERC GA 835193 – Horizon 2020). Under the direction of professor Didier Plassard and in a joint doctorate degree with the University of Bologna under the direction of Professor Enrico Pitozzi, her thesis is focused on contemporary French and Italian dramaturgy for puppet theater. Beside the academic activity she works as a dramaturg in different cultural projects, in collaboration with theatrical institutions such as ERT Fondazione and with theatre magazines.

Saturday April 10, 2:45-3:45pm

Supernatural Others (Moderator/discussant: Kathy Foley)

Hazel Rickard, “Matter’s Dark Powers: Racializing Performing Objects in Nineteenth-century American Spiritualism”

American Spiritualists claimed that spirits revealed their presence through “physical manifestations”: table-tipping or “materializations” (when a spirit medium and spirit blended to produce “spiritual matter”). Mediums, mostly young White women, credited the spirits of “slaves” and “Indians” with producing the most powerful manifestations because they supposedly overflowed with physical energy. I ask: How did Spiritualist material performance engage with nineteenth-century conceptions of matter? And what were the consequences for the American concept of race?

Significantly, the height of the Spiritualist movement spanned the Civil War, Emancipation, the Indian Wars, and the movement for women’s suffrage. Persons frequently treated as objects or resources were engaged in struggles for self-possession and sovereignty. Conversely, technological innovations including electricity and the telegraph made the substrate of production increasingly immaterial, and commodity culture elevated objects to appear transcendent. In this context, Black and Native people were treated as sacrifices to modernity, inhabitants of a material world from which a White American spirit was formed.

In this paper, I show how spirit mediums attempted to rarify “matter” (imbuing it with life and agency) in order to liberate those bound to its hidden territories (particularly the victims of slavery and Indian genocide). Their practices reveal a racial and sexual drama where feminine Whiteness operated as a bridge: traversing the boundary between spirit and matter, mediums continually produced “spiritual gifts” (materializations, visions of the afterlife, inspired poetry, etc.) by absorbing the energy of dead racial Others. I focus on animated tables, machines, materialized spirit-hands, artwork and clothing in the séances of Mary Schindler, Wella and Pet Anderson, and Mary Comstock. I analyze texts produced by the mediums themselves as well as witness testimonies and the writings of psychical researchers.

Answering the question of how Spiritualists engaged with matter helps us answer the persistent question: How does Whiteness operate to hide its operations? The White spirit medium channeling the racial Other is a perfect illustration of how American racism is not just mythical or structural, but magical and practical. Performing objects illuminate the contradictory relationship between White Americans and the racial Others they depend upon for power.

Hazel Rickard is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota in Theatre Historiography. She received her MA from Washington University in St. Louis in Theatre and Performance studies. Her research interests include puppetry, Spiritualism, critical race, and sexuality studies.

Fan Pen Chen, “Shaman Leaders of the Snake People in Religious Marionette Plays”

Hagiographies of cult figures of the mainstream Han ethnicity have traditionally portrayed competing shaman leaders/deities of indigenous peoples of southern China, the Other, as demons and sprites (animals with the ability to transform into humans); making their defeat, displacement, and massacre more righteous and palatable. Such tales are not necessarily merely those of subjugation and vilification, however. The clash between the dominant culture and the Other resulted in manifold manifestations. Based on six “sacred” string-puppet plays on the Goddess Chen Jinggu and the Snake God Jiaomang, from southeastern China, this presentation will show how the indigenes, who were once known as the snake people, competed with and reacted to the invading culture; and vice versa. Although most of the Goddess’ plays denigrate and annihilate her nemesis, the snake demoness, persistent influence of snake deities can be detected. In one of the Goddess’ plays, the snake “demoness” is allowed to be worshipped as a local deity. Similarly, the sanctity of a local deity, a snake god who may have been a local shaman leader, has been preserved. The Snake God Jiaomang and his three sons continue to be worshipped in pockets of Fujian. Their legitimation was enabled through appropriation, through their becoming “human,” and fighting for the Chinese state and emperor.

Fan Pen Chen is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies at the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY-Albany). She was born in Taiwan, attended high school in Seattle, and received her BA degree from Yale University, and her MA and Ph.D degrees from Columbia University. She has authored the following books: *Chinese Shadow Theater: History, Popular Religion, and Women Warriors*; *Visions for the Masses: Chinese Shadow Plays from Shaanxi and Shanxi*; *Marionette Plays from Northern China*; and *Journey of a Goddess: Chen Jinggu Subdues White Snake Demon*; and dozens of articles on women in Chinese history and literature, Chinese drama, puppet theatres and popular religion. She is a board member of Chinese Theatre Works; and a board member and treasurer of CHINOPERL (Chinese Oral and Performing Literature), a national academic association.

Saturday April 10, 4:00-5:00pm

Orientalism and Occidentalism (Moderator/discussant: Jungmin Song)

Tobi Poster-Su, “A Real American Wife, A Japanese Object: Puppetry and the Orient in Minghella’s *Madama Butterfly*”

In Anthony Minghella’s celebrated 2005 production of *Madama Butterfly*, three white men manipulate the small, fragile body of Sorrow (Cio-Cio-San’s child), two of her servants and, in a dream sequence, Cio-Cio-San herself. All of these characters are Japanese or part-Japanese, and all are portrayed by puppets, with American characters all portrayed by human beings. The puppets were built and originally manipulated by the British puppetry company Blind Summit, who drew partly on the traditional Japanese form of Bunraku.

This paper uses both phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Piris 2014) and semiotic (Tillis 1992; Coetzee 1998) approaches to explore the various layers of meaning created by the use of puppetry, the design of the puppets and the visible presence of the puppeteers. Alongside this I explore how theoretical framings of Bunraku by theorists such as Barthes (1971) and Sontag (1984) may have impacted notions of Asian cultural authenticity, and how critiques of racial mimicry (Rogers and Thorpe 2014) might function in relation to puppet performance.

What to make of the racial dynamics of the piece when principal Japanese characters are played by Caucasian actors? How does this interact with Puccini’s text, itself a European vision of Japan? Are the puppeteers ‘playing’ Sorrow or is Sorrow played by the puppet? How might notions of the agency of the puppet lead to a diffusion of responsibility? How do we read Japanese-American identity into the features of a puppet child sculpted by Nick Barnes, a British man? When Cio-Cio-San returns in the guise of a puppet, looking both radically and racially different to her human form, how does this shape our understanding of character and identity?

At the core of these questions is the following line of enquiry which this paper will trace: How does this production use puppetry to represent the racialized Other, and how might this subvert, reinforce or make visible Orientalist views of the East within the source text?

Tobi Poster-Su is currently undertaking an AHRC/LAHP-funded Ph.D. on race, puppetry and performance at Queen Mary University of London, and lectures in Drama at Bath Spa University. A UK-based theatre maker, performer and scholar who specializes in puppetry and devised, cross-disciplinary work, he has published in *Applied Theatre Research* and delivered a plenary presentation at the 2020 Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) conference. As co-artistic director of Wattle and Daub, Tobi has co-created and performed in *The Depraved Appetite of Tarrare the Freak* (2017) and *Triptych* (2011), and is currently developing a new work exploring the lives of Chang and Eng Bunker and their complex relationship with race and privilege in the American South. He has directed puppetry for shows including Tom Morris’s adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* (2018) at Bristol Old Vic and *Heidi: A Goat’s Tale* (2012) at the egg, Bath.

John Emigh, “The Western Tourist as Exotic Other: Taming the Aggressive Ways of the Casual Stranger”

In the summer of 2004, I travelled with Prof. Barbara Hatley of the University of Tasmania to see a performance by the *Ludruk Karya Budaya* troupe of Mojokerto in Eastern Java. Coming from a lecture-demo in Singapore, I carried in my backpack a Balinese *Turis* mask. The *Turis* is a *bondres*, or buffoon mask that, like the *Commedia* Dottore, is all nose, brow, and upper lip. Originally created as a satiric representation of a blustering Dutch soldier, over time it has morphed into the representation of a clueless Western tourist who blunders into the performance of a *Topeng* chronicle play. The one I carried is a fine caricature of my own face.

Ludruk performances involve transvestite song and dance and comic sketches; the leader of the Mojokerto troupe was the principal comic. Prof. Hatley introduced us and encouraged me to show him the mask. I put it on and joked around with him, vigorously shaking his hand—in Indonesia an oafishly aggressive form of greeting. He laughed and said he wanted me to do this on the stage. I’d interrupt another satiric sketch, shake hands all around, and ask for decidedly non-halal foods. Eventually, I’d be asked for payment and would try to use dollars. He would then demand my mask and, once he had it, would chase me off the stage.

I demurred. The mask was an intrinsic part of the character, not to be removed. He replied that, “in Indonesia, politicians put masks on and take them off all the time.” His point was clear. The tourist’s economic and social power was based on a facade. I agreed to do the bit.

Prof. Hatley made a video of the resulting improvised sketch. In addition to asking for non-halal food, the hapless *Turis* asks to hook up with one of the beautiful “women” he had seen dancing. Slowly, he takes in the information that these were not women but transvestite performers – none of the many terms for which are given in his *Speaking Practical Indonesian*. The sketch concludes with the excruciating removal of the mask from my all too naked face, the company director donning the mask, doing a fine exaggeration of Balinese dance moves, and chasing me from the stage. The village audience of several hundred people laughed and seemed to appreciate our implicit commentary on the mixed blessings of the tourism industry.

John Emigh is Professor Emeritus at Brown University, where he taught and directed from 1967 to 2009; from 2009 to 2018 he taught in the Brown/Trinity MFA program. He has served on the board of Performance Studies International (PSi) and was founding Chairperson of the Association for Asian Performance. He authored *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre* and has published pioneering articles linking the fields of Neuroscience and Performance Studies. He has directed over 80 plays and, with Ullie Emigh, created the documentary, *Hajari Bhand of Rajasthan: Jester without Court*. After studying with I Nyoman Kakul in 1974-75, he has performed with Balinese *topeng* (masked theatre) troupes in the US and Bali and presented solo shows based on *topeng* at diverse venues throughout the US and Asia. In 2009, he received the Association for Theatre in Higher Education’s Career Achievement Award for Educational Theatre.