

Tel Aviv University
The Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts
Department of Theatre Studies

The Realm of the Other: Jesters, Gods, and Aliens in Shadowplay

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by

Chu Fa Ching Ebert

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by

Prof. Jacob Raz

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INTRODUCTION

In the fictional world of cinema and circus, where most children are introduced to drama, the hero is the centre of attention and gains all the glory. But I remember distinctly how, as a youngster in the audience, I always had the impression that the “bad guy”, i.e., the Other, was really the decisive figure. Without him and his clever devices, there would have been no plot, and life would have continued in a placid but monotonous key. This impression remained with me as I grew and saw adult performances, both on stage and screen. The Other (as he is known today) acquired clearer meaning and definition for me, and I realized that he could assume manifold and diverse manifestations. But he still basically motivates the action, and is often more complex and interesting than the actual hero. I include this personal comment, because it was this conviction that finally led me to the theme of this study.

The Other has been extensively discussed in the social sciences and humanities for the past century or so (e.g., O’Flaherty 1988, Raz 1992). In the simplest terms, the Other is anyone who differs in appearance or behaviour from the dominant majority – the alien, the stranger. He is found both on the fringes of society, the foreigner being the most obvious example, and within, as jester, homosexual, outlaw, etc. As a rule, the public’s attitude towards the Other is ambiguous; he is dreaded and rejected, but also arouses curiosity and perhaps even envy. He is potentially dangerous, because his deviance threatens to unbalance the status quo; simultaneously, however, his exoticism brings novelty and hints at the promise of renewal. Thus he is also attractive. As a suspicious unknown, moreover, he serves as an object on which one projects fears and secret desires. Usually he is associated with a divine/demonic person or group, and, as such, exists on a psychological or religious (mythical) plane.

Theatre, being a reflection of life, contains the full gamut of its characters. From among the numerous genres, I have chosen shadowplay in order to investigate the Other. Shadowplay, I believe, constitutes the Other’s theatrical medium *par excellence*. Our normative, day-to-day experience is three-dimensional;

the shadow, being two-dimensional, is the Other's appropriate representation; that is to say, it resembles the figures of our familiar world, but in its stylization and abstraction it possesses a mysterious quality that suggests a different level of reality. Shadowplay's combination of technical simplicity¹ and artistic sophistication is ideal for conveying a wide range of intangibles, from imaginary society to the psyche's subliminal operations, thus allowing the realm of the Other to be graphically rendered in various forms. Indeed, in its inception, shadowplay was evidently connected with ancestor worship, and, in evolving, traditional themes and characters – the cultic convictions and gods of the past – were merged with contemporary issues.

In arguing that shadowplay is one of the chief theatrical means for depicting the Other, I shall observe how it serves this purpose in very different periods and cultures. This will be apparent from my cursory survey, beginning with its origins in Asia and continuing until the present day. I have chosen three examples for more elaborate discussion: the Javanese *wayang kulit*, the Turkish *Karagöz*, and the twentieth-century multimedia theatre of Ping Chong. But this study is not essentially comparative; its primary aim is to cite and analyse certain themes or phenomena which consistently recur in the various styles of shadowplay in diverse historical and cultural contexts.

I submit that shadowplay represents the Other in the three basic (and interrelated) forms of aliens, gods, and jesters. The alien is the archetype of someone who is different from oneself. Gods are superhuman aliens, inherently remote from mankind, but, as recounted by myth, constantly interfering in mundane affairs. Often they are considered divine ancestors, the initiators of traditions and beliefs, and hence concerned with the welfare of their progeny. The jester is a well-known court figure who frequently appears in dramatic roles; in the present context, however, he is invested with a wider meaning, which includes his comic aspect. In shadowplay, he usually wields preternatural powers, but being more down-to-earth,

¹ It merely consists of a translucent screen behind which a source of light projects on a puppet or actor, so that the audience sees its silhouette.

more “human”, he serves as an intermediary between the fictional world of the stage and the audience, and thus can function as a (Brechtian) commentator on issues of topical interest.

I have tried to develop my thesis along systematic lines, beginning with a discussion of the main concepts I employ, then considering their application to theatre in general, and finally to shadowplay in particular. Once I have established the basic terms of my argument, I proceed with an analysis of the three examples I have chosen.

Chapter I presents the theoretical basis for the conception of the Other. Since it can only be defined in terms of Self, it proved imperative to explain my understanding of the latter. I consider Self a dynamic and complex entity, and since the shadowplays under discussion belong to both Eastern and Western cultures, I constructed a model containing social and psychological elements bridging their respective views of man and society. I have based my theory of Self on a number of interrelated interpretations: J. Elster (*Multiple Self*) and M. J. Apter (*Reversal Theory*) seek to account for the contradictory and paradoxical behaviour of an individual; Hamaguchi Esyun proposes an approach to Self that focuses on interpersonal relations, in contrast to the usual Western view, which stresses individuality; finally, Francis K. Hsu’s integral concept of *jen* represents Self on all its levels of interaction – from the deepest personal ones to those which are conscious and socially involved.

The theoretical models for the Other in this thesis are based on Victor Turner’s notion of liminality, pertinent to marginality (1958,1965), and Sander L. Gilman’s psychology-oriented concept (1985), which stresses ambiguity. Turner’s notion of liminality considers the individual on the threshold of society. This condition of being neither here nor there is analogous to the Other’s position as outsider (as alien, god, or jester), whereby he concurrently represents the forbidden and the appealing, as well as unbounded possibilities. According to Gilman, Self strives to preserve its identity by controlling the world. When its sense of order is under stress, it devises an Other with a set of signs – “Good” and “Bad”. He

provides a psychological model of the process of Self's transference to the Other which is extremely useful in analysing shadowplay in different contexts.

Chapter II is concerned with the Other's role in theatre, especially in shadowplay. It is shadowplay's particular aptitude for representing the Other that led to its being chosen as the subject of this study. Since the audience does not see the characters directly, but only their moving silhouettes, they acquire an eerie and magical quality; it is as if one were viewing, not merely flat puppets, but strange characters inhuman in form and nature. Shadowplay's longevity in many cultures, I believe, is an indication of its efficacy, resulting in the preservation of a whole corpus of theatrical traditions.

Chapter III considers the Otherness of the three distinct classes comprising this thesis – gods, aliens, and jesters – and their function in shaping the public's perception of the performance. It was their common marginality that warranted their selection for this study. All are liminal and ambiguous, but each possesses special attributes. The gods reflect man's most intimate fears and needs; throughout the centuries they have served to personify forces beyond his control, from natural phenomena to complex and often uncontrollable feelings. They are superhuman in their capabilities and immortal. The jester exists in virtually every culture. He challenges authority and violates norms; he surprises and sometimes shocks; but almost always provokes laughter. The class includes fools, tricksters and clowns, but further subdivision is helpful in understanding the nuances. The natural fool, for instance, is often simple-minded, and thus his status befalls him by birth; the artificial fool, by contrast, is sometimes very clever, and assumes his role by choice. Aliens are perhaps the most ambivalent of the three types, and arouse extreme feelings of fear and attraction. This group can also be subdivided into classes. Hans Meyer distinguishes between the Intentional Outsider, who willingly separates himself from society, and the Existential Outsider, whose condition is fated (whereby this distinction is similar to that between the natural and artificial fool). J. Raz has contrasted the Other Within, who belongs to a given society but is ostracized

owing to his low social standing or non-normative conduct (e.g., criminal, homosexual – sometimes women are classified here), and the Other Without, the foreigner who is different by dint of skin colour, language, or customs.

Chapter IV comprises a brief historical survey of shadowplay, beginning with the earliest known genres – the Indian and the Chinese – whose social and religious importance for the respective cultures is stressed. I consider the Javanese and Turkish versions only in passing, since they will be discussed in greater detail below. But I note how shadowplay initially reached the West in the form of the *ombres chinoises* in turn-of-the-century Paris.

In **Chapter V**, having introduced the theoretical framework of my study of the Other in shadowplay, I turn to the first of my three representative examples: Javanese *Wayang Kulit*. It is the most complex and refined form of traditional shadowplay, and is a pillar of Javanese culture, often presented during purification and exorcism rites. Many of its semi-divine heroes are considered the ancestors of today's populace. In spite of the fact that most Javanese are now Moslem, the Hindu-influenced *Wayang* remains a staple of their tradition. It is also important to note that, while most of the stories are based on the classical Indian epics, the latter were absorbed into the Javanese ethos, and some of the local gods and other characters were incorporated in the Hindu legends, creating original themes. I have concentrated on the Javanese plays derived from the *Mahabharata*, since they constitute the most important portion of the repertoire. The three categories of the Other, as I have defined them, are clearly identifiable in *Wayang*. The gods, Hindu in origin, have been "nationalized" in Java. The jesters under consideration are the comical and critical clown-servants, the *punakawan*; they are probably survivors from the pre-Hindu cult. The aliens, generally ogres and giants, are enemies from abroad, and exist to be routed and killed by the heroes. The greatly entertaining battles are designed to exhibit the puppeteer's abilities.

Chapter VI is devoted to *Karagöz*, Turkey's traditional shadowplay. It is a satirical genre, whose main character, *Karagöz* himself, is inherently an Other, a plebeian jester. But the plays always feature him together with his "patrician" companion, *Hacivat*, and, as a pair, they constitute a dynamic unity. *Karagöz* experienced its heyday during the Ottoman Empire, when free expression was normally repressed, but this highly irreverent, immoral theatre was tolerated and thrived. It is replete with aliens. The Turks ruled over a vast domain, and *Karagöz* was set in the quarters of Old Istanbul, inhabited by neighbourhood "types" (aliens within), as well as colourful provincials and foreigners (aliens without). In spite of the genre's secularism, there are references to God in the opening verses, and there are some non-human characters, such as witches and jinn, which have supernatural powers, and probably represent survivals from pre-Islamic traditions. With the empire's collapse, *Karagöz* lost its barb. Nevertheless, it remains a symbol of Turkish popular culture.

Chapter VII is devoted to third of my examples, the multimedia theatre of Ping Chong, a contemporary Chinese-American director who has developed a singular style. In his "shows", he combines traditional theatre, cinema, video, slide, puppetry, dance, and movement – whichever mode best suits the specific scene. Shadowplay is but one of the media he employed, and mostly in his earlier works, but it consistently serves to project the darker aspects of the alien, and thus illustrates my thesis that shadowplay is the ideal means to represent the Other in theatre. The alien is central to Ping Chong's work, and I analyse in detail two plays – *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* and *Humboldt's Current* – in which he is the main character, appearing both in shadow and three-dimensionally. I have extended the discussion to two other pieces which are admittedly not in shadowplay, but whose "aliens" enhance our understanding of the type. In *Deshima*, Ping Chong employs shadowplay to portray the jester in a vivid delineation of East-West relations. The jester, like the alien, is sometimes a shadow and sometimes three-dimensional. Ping Chong does not depict gods in shadowplay, but his *Nosferatu* (based on Murnau's famous film of that name), a bitter indictment of modern society, features an

incarnation of Evil, which I have included in the discussion, since it shows so graphically how an aspect of the human psyche is cast into a fearsome Other.

I believe that this study considers shadowplay from an original point of view. The genre is usually construed as a kind of ritual, a form of entertainment, or a social-political event. I argue that it is a theatrical device to portray the universal and psychologically fundamental persona of the Other. The exposition, I hope, will contribute to a new understanding of the ancient medium, its function and aesthetics, and artistic value.

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This study has involved a cross-section of various disciplines, and my approach has necessarily varied from subject to subject. I have thus turned for orientation and advice to several specialists in their respective fields. Wayang has been under scholarly investigation for over a century and its bibliography is immense, but it has never, to my knowledge, been considered from the present point of view. In addition to academic treatises, I have drawn considerable information and insight from videotapes of shadowplay performances from Java. I should like to express my thanks to the Dutch scholar, Dr. Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen, who has been wonderfully generous in sharing with me her expertise in the language, dance, and culture of Java.

The material on *Karagöz* is far more limited. Being a popular, improvisational form of entertainment which flourished under the Ottoman Empire, many descriptions of its classic form are found in travel accounts. After the First World War it was largely forgotten, and little of its tradition was preserved. Recent scholars, however, have advanced different interpretations of its character and import. I was privileged in being able to meet with Prof. Metin And, the author of the key study on the genre, and discuss my thesis with him. Over the past years, *Karagöz* has experienced a revival, but its nature has changed considerably, since its original milieu was abolished by history. I am grateful to Mr. R. Şinasi Çelikkol, who introduced me to the "living" art of *Karagöz* by staging a private performance for me

in Bursa. In October 1997, I travelled to Izmir for the International Puppet Festival, where I was able to attend performances by today's most prominent puppeteers. Dr. Avner Levy of the Hebrew University taught me the rudiments of the Turkish language, and provided many insights into the mind and culture of its people.

I initiated personal contact with Ping Chong in 1992, when I participated in his workshop at the Amsterdam Summer University. Our various conversations helped me to understand and appreciate his approach to theatre. I was subsequently able to interview him on several occasions. In addition, his office in New York was generous in providing me with videotapes, photographs, articles, and critiques of performances I was unable to attend personally, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank his manager, Mr. Bruce Allerdice, and his assistant, Ms. Sachiko Willis.

The diversity of the subjects under consideration here required recourse to various libraries, and in some I received special assistance. The Columbia University Library in New York contained valuable material on *Karagöz*. The Amsterdam University Library and the Leiden University Library both have collections of otherwise inaccessible material on Wayang. A research stipend in the summer of 1998 in the Villa d'Aubilly-Residency for researchers and creators from the Institut International de la Marionnette (UNIMA) in Charleville-Mézières, France, allowed me to study its publications on *Karagöz*, Wayang, and shadowplay in general. Especially important for me was its rich collection of videos. I am very grateful for the opportunity I had to avail myself of its resources and facilities, and I would like to express my thanks to the then director, Mme. Margareta Niculescu, the chief secretary, Mme. Rose Bon, and the rest of the staff.

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The modern computer has certainly rendered the writing and editing of a thesis far easier than heretofore; for me, however, it will always be a machine

with a monster inside. That I was able to tame it is mainly thanks to the patient supervision of a few professional programmers, notably Ms. Yarden Ustin.

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I

THE CONCEPT OF SELF AND THE OTHER

Je est un autre

Rimbaud, A., letter to P. Demeny (1871)
Oeuvres Complètes, 1963

The Other is a concept that stands in opposition to that of Self, whereby the latter has to be defined before the former can be broached. I found this a daunting task, for I wished to delineate a concept of Self that is not rigid and categorical, but dynamic, as I believe it to be. Accordingly, I based my model of Self on a number of interrelated interpretations: J. Elster's (1989) view of the individual as a *Multiple Self*, but one functioning as a unity; M. Apter's *Reversal Theory* (1982), which helps explain contradictory and paradoxical behaviour; Hamaguchi Esyun's (1985) *Contextual Theory of Self*, which stresses interpersonal relations (an Eastern approach), rather than the isolated individual (the usual Western approach); and Francis L.K. Hsu's concept of *Jen* (1985), which applies to Self in any culture, Eastern or Western. For reasons explained below, I have adopted the latter as my basic model.

Once the concept of Self has been established, I proceed to a general discussion of the Other. General, because I consider the usage of this term in various areas of study before considering its specific application to drama. Since the Other is, by definition, a figure outside the mainstream, I found Victor Turner's (1986) notion of *Liminality* extremely useful for purposes of analysis. And since, as will be seen, the Other arouses ambivalent feelings in those who can be described as Self, I have supplemented Turner's exposition with the ideas developed by S.L. Gilman (1985).

Finally, having discussed both Self and the Other in theoretical terms, I consider the subject of the Other in theatre and, more specifically, in shadowplay, which, as I argue, is its ideal mode of expression.

Introduction

In the study of human behaviour, the concept of Self has been a constant focus of attention. The field has largely been dominated by Western scholars, and their interpretations naturally reflect their cultural background. Generally speaking, Self has been seen as a dynamic unity of the immediately visible body and an impalpable core, variously interpreted, and receiving such appellations as *soul, spirit, ego, character, personality, etc.*, and which is explained as a composite of more or less integrated parts, levels, or layers, depending upon whether the components are arrayed hierarchically or deemed of equal importance.

The most obvious way of studying Self is via its external manifestations, i.e., the individual's behaviour. Like a physician diagnosing an illness, the scholar relies upon symptoms. However, human behaviour is often inconsistent or paradoxical, leading to the view that Self comprises a complex system in constant motion, struggling to maintain its integrity.

In its social context, the Self exists in relation to other Selves – the Others.

J. Raz (1992:1) summarizes the modern Western conception of Self as “inviolable, a supreme value in and of itself”. It is seen as enclosed (circumscribed) and unique, with its own motivational and cognitive systems, dynamic in itself and in relation to the Others. Social relationships are “mere associations”, and the Other is viewed as a potential invader from whom Self has to protect itself. Contact with the Other can be achieved through compromise or contract. Ironically, however, this same inviolability is accorded and maintained by the Others – Selves in their own right:

Self, then, is in constant, intensive, paradoxical relation with Other, from which it tries to protect itself, but from which it is granted this very protection.

(Ibid.)

Apart from this Other comprising another individual or individuals, Raz cites a further category, which he calls the Other *within* – the awareness within oneself, not of a unique personality, but of several, none of which is pre-eminent. In the extreme, it is a “fluid Self, full of ‘Others’ or ‘Othernesses’” (*ibid.*:2). There is no central core to this Self or division between Self and Otherness. Buddhists consider this fluidity and continuous interaction to be desirable. Self, they believe, is a mental state, and one’s aim should be its dissolution, the attainment of “no-Self” (*ibid.*).

In the following, I shall summarize several approaches to the study of Self that are pertinent to the Other considered in this study.

The Multiple Self

In his book of this name, consisting of essays by various authors, J. Elster (1985) presents a number of contemporary approaches in psychology, philosophy and economics to the study of Self. The title can be construed as referring both to the diversity of interpretations and to Self as a fragmented unity. In his introduction, Elster classifies these approaches according to three criteria (*ibid.*:1): 1. the scale of the split of Self, ranging from the interaction of partially independent units to total division; 2. the degree to which these partitions are interpersonal or intertemporal (i.e., reflecting the passing of time); 3. the way whereby the parts are integrated.

For example, Self, like a social organization, can experience difficulty in integrating its different “parts”, with their diverse motivations and beliefs. Contradictory behaviour is sometimes ascribed to the duality of the brain. The left hemisphere controls speech; it is analytical and based on sequential (computer-like) processing of data. The right hemisphere, by contrast, focuses on the visual and spatial processes; it is holistic and based on simultaneous processing. At the other

extreme is the view that Self is actually composed of very different Selves – Faustian Selves.

Nevertheless, Elster stresses that a person is always a unity, with some problems of cognitive co-ordination and motivational conflict. Most interpretations are dichotomous or trichotomous. Of the latter, Freud's is the most important. According to his scheme, the individual is divided into id, ego, and superego, each reflecting a different level of consciousness: conscious, subconscious, unconscious.

Finally, Elster (like Raz) considers the Eastern (Buddhist) view, whereby Self is apprehended from a very different angle than that adopted by his book's other contributors. It is conceived as a flowing phenomenon, illusory, constantly changing.

Reversal Theory

In another approach, psychologist Michael J. Apter (1982) explains the duality and apparent contradiction in human behaviour by his Reversal Theory. Generally speaking, Self is traditionally regarded as a consistent and self-regulating system that seeks homeostasis when confronted by disruption (*ibid.*:19). Apter criticizes such a position as simplistic, and submits instead his concept of multistability – bistability in its most basic form. The notion of reversal is central in this theory. He compares an individual's motivations to weights on a scale: a deeply-felt motivation is initially heavier in the balance of his personality; as it approaches realization, however, an element of satiation set in, and its weight diminishes, so that another motivation on the opposite side of the scale will prevail.

The fact that the individual's behaviour is occasionally inconsistent can be explained, Apter claims, by seeing his experience on two levels:

1. The level of content, which refers to the particular goal the individual is pursuing, the

sensations he has while pursuing it, and so on.

2. The way in which the individual interprets this content; it is a *metalevel* in relation to

the content, and results in *metamotivational states*: “A phenomenological state which is

characterized by a certain way of interpreting some aspect(s) of one’s own motivation” (*ibid.*:366). In reversal theory such states come in pairs of opposites, only

one of which is operative at a time.

Further on, the relationship between the goals and the means to achieve them can be experienced in two different states: *telic* and *paratelic*. The former is serious-minded, planning-oriented, and it avoids arousal. The latter, by contrast, is playful and spontaneous; it pursues immediate pleasure and high arousal. In the telic state, the individual concentrates on the goal; in the paratelic state, the activity is the essential. Apter cites cases, such as cooking (*ibid.*:48) in which the same action can involve switches from one state to the other. Telic and paratelic reversals can be motivated in various ways, such as the following:

Events that have an immediate effect on facilitating or inhibiting reversal, referred to as contingent, can be environmental or even internal (e.g., sudden physical pain). Frustration, accruing to a certain level, can induce reversal. Satiation is intrinsic to the Self’s reversal mechanism, as suggested by the metaphor of the scale: as one member of an oppositional pair becomes operative, an internal force for change begins to develop by degrees.

Reversal theory thus views contradictory and paradoxical behaviour, not as an abnormality, but as an acceptable tendency. It is helpful in explaining how the Other Within is crucial to the conception of Self.

Contextual Theory

As some of the genres treated in this study are not Western (i.e., Euro-American), it is relevant to look into the ideas of culture, society, and the individual (Self) advanced by the Japanese scholar Hamaguchi Esyun (1985). He discusses the erroneous view of Japanese culture and people formed abroad, due, he claims, to defective methodology. Although humanity can be considered an objective entity, each culture has its own subjective definition of society, and, as a consequence, its particular conception of Self and the Other, as well as of the character of interpersonal relations. Some view the individual's fundamental mode of existence as separate and independent; as such, interpersonal relations are arranged so as to assure the individual's freedom and ability to defend himself. Other cultures believe that man is basically collective, each individual being dependent on his fellows, whereby interpersonal relations form an essential element in his ego structure (1985:297). As a result, there is no single approach to the study of human society which encompasses the intrinsic differences between each culture's view of social relations.

There are two concepts, he maintains, which are crucial to the study of society: *emic* and *etic*. The former comprises the cultural traits from an insider's perspective, the latter from an outsider's perspective (*ibid.*:291). Ideally, a society is better understood "emically", although, in actuality, the fact that a certain scholar belongs to the society he is studying does not necessarily insure that his treatment will be better.

The Euro-American model in the study of the individual, according to Esyun, posits a unique *ego* at the core of his personality, his point of reference in life. As in Ptolemy's geocentric planetary system, the world revolves around the ego (*ibid.*:302). It is this preconception which has heretofore dominated social research. Japan, however, is a society in which the concept of Self is closely related to one's relation with the Other, so that studies of Japan based on methodological individualism are deficient. A notable example is Ruth Benedict's theory of Japan's "shame culture" (1946), in contrast to the West's "guilt culture". In the latter, the behavioural sanction is internal, and involves one's conscience; in Japan it is external, and involves one's reputation and dread of ridicule (Esyun 1985:291-292). In his

article, Esyun presents the position of those scholars who reject her approach, and interpret guilt and shame differently. Sakuta Keiichi notes that shame in Japan is a self-regulating mechanism, and not a response to external pressures (*ibid.*:292). In both Japan and China, shame is considered an internalized standard of action. Esyun cites Mori Mikisaburo, who observes that in China (where shame consciousness originated) shame is the opposite of name or honour; it is “the internal motivation that drives people from evil to good” (*ibid.*). Benedict’s mistake was in taking as her point of departure the centrality of individualism, with guilt (conscience) at its core, whereas shame in her view expressed an attitude of dependence. She took this dualistic concept, and applied it to Japan, which she considered the prototype of a non-Western society. Esyun also describes other approaches to the analysis of Japanese society (e.g., Nakane’s vertical society theory and Doi’s *amae* theory), which likewise deem Benedict’s model inadequate, since it proceeds from Euro-American methodological individualism.

On the other hand, Esyun warns, one should also eschew methodological holism, because both methodologies are actually two dimensions of “meta-methodological individualism” (*ibid.*:295-296), i.e., both methodologies are based on the individual as autonomous, and considered the fundamental form of human existence, while the society is a separate entity. The ideal paradigm should be based on the *emics* of the culture under discussion. Esyun accordingly proposes a new Japanese paradigm for the study of human nature and the characteristics of interpersonal relations (*ibid.*:297-298). He introduces the notion of the “actor” (*shutai*), defined by Murakami, Kumon, and Sato (*ibid.*) as “an entity which is equipped with a certain set of rules or patterns of recognition, evaluation, and action, and which consistently chooses actions relevant to the achievement of the goals it sets for itself”. This notion can be extended to a complex of persons – a group. The world of the individual can be divided between actors and objects (including other actors). The actor can recognize, evaluate, and control himself as an object, as well as the relationships between himself/itself and other objects. This process of objectification – called “actorship” – allows the individual to act as a self-organizing system (*ibid.*). Furthermore, we can identify two general categories of actors (*ibid.*:298-299): the

individual actor, who emphasizes the objectification of self – characteristic of Euro-Americans; and the *relational actor*, who emphasizes the objectification of the relationship between actor (Self) and objects (including other actors). The former stresses his individuality; he is the *kojin* (“individual”); the latter, by contrast, stresses the co-existentiality (complementarity) between relationships and people; he is the *kanjin*, (“contextual”).

The contextual is neither an extension of the ego nor a connection of egos. His sense of identification (and sometimes of conflict) with others is pre-existent, and Selfness is confirmed only through interpersonal relationships. Consciousness of Self is fluid; it changes over time and circumstances according to the interpersonal relations. Because of the centrality of relationships, self-restraint in social intercourse is considered appropriate for mature adults, while “the straightforward claim of the naked ego is considered childish” (*ibid.*:302-303).

Personality as a set of typical traits and patterns is used by the individual actor, but is inadequate for the contextual actor, as it implies the notion of a separate and independent individual. Eshun proposes the use of the term *hitogara* (a person’s traits) to express the sum of the actor’s characteristics. In addition, a new analytical concept, *jen*, proposed by Francis Hsu, was enlisted to help explain *hitogara*. *Jen* is the operational concept that describes the constant patterns – “the human constant” – not explained by “personality” in *hitogara* (*ibid.*:303).

Self in Cross-Cultural Perspective – The Concept of *Jen*

Francis L.K. Hsu proposes a more fitting concept to define and explain Self in different cultures, Western or otherwise (1985). It is concerned with the individual’s innermost core; his relationship with his immediate society and culture; and with the outer world.

To begin with, it is worthwhile considering Hsu’s justification of the need for a more comprehensive notion of Self. He criticizes the concept of

personality as an “expression of the Western ideal of individualism” (1985:24). Personality is viewed as an entity distinct from culture and society, an approach, he contends, which does not reflect Western man’s reality, much less that of any other culture. Personality, culture, and society cannot be considered separate elements, because understanding how Self is defined and operates in different cultures is basic to understanding their mechanisms of social and cultural stability and change.

Hsu reviews several attempts – by Talcott Parsons, Bert Kaplan, and Anthony Wallace – to reformulate the concept of personality. But he stresses that none of these probes deep enough or covers the entire subject. He proposes a radical change of direction; it requires, first of all, that one abandon the notion of “personality” and focus on the idea that the meaning of being human is founded on *interpersonal relations*. If everyone acted as individualized individuals, he avers, there would be no society; if, by contrast, everyone acted in complete conformity with others, “there would be no difference between human beings and bees” (*ibid.*:27). The human mode is somewhere between these two extremes.

He proposes the use of a new concept he calls *jen* (Chinese for “man”). But in Chinese, as in Japanese (*jin*), the concept of man is based on “the individual’s transactions with his fellow human beings” (*ibid.*:33). When the Chinese say “someone is not yet a *jen*” (*ta pu shih jen*), it signifies that his behaviour in relation to others is not acceptable. By the same token, there is “good *jen*” (*hao jen*) and “bad *jen*” (*huai jen*), but this latter term is weaker than the former. A person who abandons his parents is “not a *jen*”, while one who cheats on his friend is a “bad *jen*”. (The term also occurs in such phrases as “to endeavour to be *jen*” [*cho jen*] and “to learn to be *jen*” [*hsueh cho jen*].)

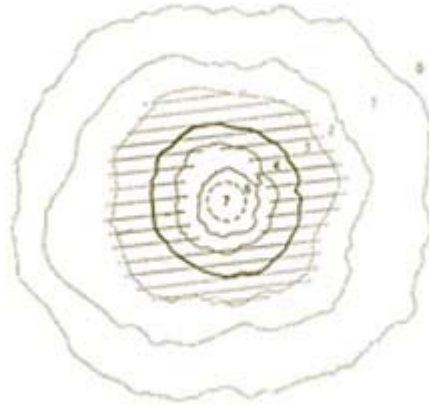
There is a close similarity between the concept of *jen* and the Yiddish word *mensch*. Hsu (*ibid.*:note 6:51) cites Leo Rosten’s definition of *mensch* as “someone of consequence, someone to admire and emulate; someone of noble character...it is hard to convey the special sense of respect, dignity, approbation that can be conveyed by calling someone a ‘real *mensch*’ ”. Similarly, the worst aspersion on someone’s character is to say that he is not a *mensch* or did not act like one.

To return to Hsu's thesis, personality concerns the deep core of an individual's complexes and anxieties, and his interpersonal relations can be seen as indicators or expressions of this core, while *jen's* focus is the individual's place in a web of interpersonal relationships. He calls the *jen* approach "Galilean", since man is seen within the context of a larger world, while the personality approach is "Ptolemaic", since man is the centre of the world. Hsu affirms that the interpersonal concept of *jen* is more fitting as a basis for studying human behaviour with reference to social and cultural stability and change than the individualistic concept of personality (*ibid.*:33).

Jen is not a static entity. It is a framework in which the individual seeks to maintain a satisfactory level of psychic and interpersonal equilibrium - *psychosocial homeostasis* in Hsu's nomenclature.

The following list presents Hsu's hierarchy of the elements of man's existence.

- 7. unconscious field]
- 6. pre-conscious field] Freudian
- 5. unexpressed conscious field
- 4. expressible conscious field]
- 3. intimate society and culture] Jen (Personage)
- 2. operative society and culture
- 1. wider society and culture
- 0. outer world



The individual's inner core accords with Freud's unconscious and pre-conscious layers, beyond which is the unexpressed and expressed conscious field, followed by the levels of intimate and then operative society and culture, which, taken together, compose the *jen*. It embraces the constant social-cultural space, including close relations with those who belong to the cultural area that contains the communicable contents of a person's consciousness, familiar life-styles, and beloved belongings. In sum, *jen* is a concept that incorporates interpersonal relations. Only by looking at a contextual who is a relational actor living in a social context and objectifying it, can one fully grasp the notion of *hitogara* with the aid of the *jen* concept.

Self

I consider Francis Hsu's model of Self to be the most suitable one on which to base my concept of the Other. It has a fixed core, corresponding to the Freudian ego, but also supplies further layers (the *jen*), which relate expressly to the individual's interaction with his surroundings. The resultant Self is a composite of psychological and social components. As this work concerns cultures of both the

East and the West, I believe this model can help in understanding the variety of Selves involved.

The Concept of the Other

According to tradition, Adam, the first Self, was startled to encounter Eve, the first Other. From then on, the placid rhythm of life in the Garden of Eden was irretrievably lost. There is no generation without its significant Other. Cain looked upon Abel, his brother, favoured by God, with envy and hatred.

The Self can be defined generally as an individual or group considered as the point of reference, while anyone outside it is an Other. It follows that this definition is relative, since the "Self" is clearly an "Other" for the Other.

The notion of the Other has been extensively treated by social sciences and the arts, especially over the past century. In psychology, Freud stressed the struggle within each person between his various levels of consciousness; his repressed drives and emotions were embodied in a kind of *alter ego* – an Other. Jung considered the Other to be the shady and primitive component of every individual. Anthropologists, in studying different cultures, have observed that the members of one tribe or community traditionally regard all non-members collectively as the Other. Sociologists have shown that this mechanism also operates within the context of a single society; members of different classes or subgroups are viewed with suspicion as potential subversives.

In drama, the Other is a common theme, especially since the beginning of modernism. In fact, it could be said that, since the early twentieth century, theatre has not merely focused on the Other, but has itself assumed something of the Other's role vis-à-vis society. For example, Alfred Jarry, the Futurists, and the Dadaists all regarded themselves as Others alien to and struggling against their contemporaries, including the cultural establishment. Under their influence, subsequent dramatists have developed themes and situations that reveal hidden social and psychological currents, while presenting alternative ("other")

solutions. In other words, theatre is the art of the Other in its capacity as critic, reformer, or revolutionary, but always on the margin of society.

The referent One, or Self, reflects the dominant society of the researchers. According to O'Flaherty (1988:2), these are: Westerners, humans, mortals, adults. The Others are clustered on their borders: foreigners, children, the insane. The interest and importance of the Other derive, not only from his being different, but also from his ambiguity (Raz 1992:iv); it is his mixture of positive and negative aspects that makes him so intriguing. In general, Others have a negative connotation; they are menacing and disruptive. However, as Raz observes (*ibid.*), they arouse, not just fear, but attraction, for they offer the promise of new ideas, change, and possible improvements. O'Flaherty (1988:3) affirms that the foreigner is regarded both with admiration and disdain. Social scientists, for instance, consider certain non-Westerners to be "savage" and "primitive"; nevertheless, while despised for their backwardness, brutality, foxiness, and so on, they are also admired for their putative innocence, purity of vision, and natural piety. This admiration derives from the fact that there is a "grey area of overlap" (*ibid.*) between Self and the Other's qualities; the dominant group recognizes in the Other "good qualities" which are dormant in themselves, and hopes that they can be awakened through reciprocal contact. The disdain is due to the Other's total strangeness, but it can also reflect the fear that the Other possesses darker, socially unacceptable qualities that they, the Selves, conceal within themselves, and "that science and progress hoped entirely to expunge" (*ibid.*). In O'Flaherty's view, our attempt to define the Others reveals more about ourselves than about them, since we define ourselves as not what they are (*ibid.*).

The Other is not oneself, and therefore different, and is viewed with suspicion and fear, since he might disrupt the balance of things (as Eve's appearance in the Garden of Eden). But difference also arouses curiosity, as it might bring alternative ideas, renewal. This is the point that J. Raz stresses in his study of the Other: his ambivalence is what makes him singular (1992:iv). It is important to note that the continuous dynamic confrontation between Self and the Other, the positive

and the negative, acting as a Hegelian dialectic, can provide the impulse to change and development.

In the following discussion of Others: Aliens, Gods and Jesters, I will utilize V. Turner's notion of Liminality and S.L. Gilman's psychological model of the Emergence of the Other.

Liminality

Social Drama

All the writings of V. Turner focus on *ritual*, which he saw as "...the performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts" (1992:75). As a consequence, the relationship between ritual and theatre is a constant in his research. Theatre or performance is a manifestation of human processes, it is "a paradigm of process" (Schechner 1992.:8). He considers the performative genres the survival of ritual in action, and he affirms the presence of performance in the phenomenon he calls *social drama*, defined as "a unit of harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations, and occurring on all levels of social organization (1974:37-41)." In general, social drama unfolds in four phases:

1. *Breach* of regular norms governing social relations in the society's structure.
2. *Crisis*. If the breach widens and is not readily resolved, fission might result. This phase has liminal (suspension) characteristics, being between two phases of more stable social processes.
3. *Redressive action*. In order to prevent fission, the authorities take such action. It can range from personal (i.e., informal) advice, mediation, and arbitration to formalized legal machinery (village elders, judicial procedures). Here there are also liminal features of suspension, of "betwixt and between". If there is no regression to crisis, it will reach one of the following solutions.

4. *Resolution*, that is, reconciliation of the disturbed social group, or irreparable *Schism*. There is social recognition of the outcome, and new organizations and loyalties can emerge.

Both Turner and Goffman apply the theatrical paradigm to social life, but for the latter all social interaction is theatrical; it is based on performance, which is the presentation of Self in everyday life (Goffman 1959). For Turner, by contrast, the dramaturgical phase begins when crisis arises in the normal flow of social interaction (1992:75-76). If daily life is a kind of theatre, then social drama is a kind of *meta-theatre*, that is, a dramaturgical language used in role-playing and status maintenance, which implies reflexivity, “the ability to communicate about the communication system itself” (Hockett 1960:392-430, cited by Turner 1992:76), or, according to R. Schechner, also cited by Turner (*ibid.*), the process whereby actors in a social drama “try to show others what they are doing or have done”. Turner notes that reflexivity occurs in two (of the four) phases of the social drama: crisis and redress. In the crisis phase, reflexivity occurs when past experiences are reviewed, and during redress, when the two previous phases (breach and crisis) are under examination. Turner distinguishes two performance classes:

1. *Social performances*, including social dramas.
2. *Cultural performances*, including aesthetic and stage dramas.

There are different types of social performances and genres of cultural performances, each possessing its own style, goals, development pattern, and characteristic roles, and varying according to the community’s level of complexity. Genres exist in performance, but not as a set element (i.e., as a script, scenario, or score); it is rather that the full meaning of the performance results from the union of script, actor, and audience at a given moment in a group’s ongoing social process. There is a relationship between everyday social processes in every society (tribal, feudal, capitalist, socialist, etc.) and its dominant genres of cultural performance. This relationship, according to Turner, is dialectic and reflexive. Performance is

frequently a direct or veiled criticism of the social life out of which it arises. Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a socio-cultural group or some of its most perceptive members reflect upon the socio-cultural components of their public “selves” (codes, symbols, social structure, ethics, laws, etc.). The product is generally not a mere reflex of this reality, but an elaborated, artificial expression of culture, a deliberate work of art (1992:24).

Liminality

Another of Turner’s central concepts is that of *liminality*. It has greatly influenced other researchers and helped them in defining their performative parameters. Turner’s notion of liminality was based on Van Gennep’s studies (1960) on the *rites de passage*. Van Gennep noted the importance of rituals, especially *rites de passage* (birth, initiation, marriage, death, the seasons, etc.) in all societies. He concluded that the *rite de passage* generally exhibits three phases, each possessing its specific rites:

1. *Rites of separation* (separation phase), the preliminal rites that disengage the initiand from his previous status.
2. *Rites of transition* (transition phase), or liminal rites, in which the initiand no longer belongs to his previous status, but not yet to the new one.
3. *Rites of incorporation* (return to society), or post-liminal rites, which bring the individual to his new situation or position.

Rites de passage thus involve transition between states, which represent, according to Turner (1958:338), relatively stable situations, including not only status and position, but any type of socially recognized modality, from a person or group’s physical, mental, or emotional condition to seasonal or ecological phenomena.

The liminal phase occurs in a threshold area, between two states, and signifies a marginal state, or *limen* (“threshold” in Latin). It is an area of ambiguity, a kind of limbo, in which individuals are removed from the group’s normal activities, and taken to a separate space, an area of ambiguity, where they have no identity. The rituals are performed in separate, often sacred, *space and time*, distinct from the periods and areas that generally accommodate the normal activities of working, sleeping, and eating. Liminality has a *subjunctive character*. As in the verbal mode, it has the “if” quality proposed by Stalislawski (1963:466), that is, the transference from the realm of actuality to that of imagination, including elements of hypothesis, supposition, volition, and possibility. It also has a *reflexive voice*, meaning that it is object and subject at the same time. The participants are allowed to “play” freely with the elements, symbols, and values of their usual structure, forming new combinations, inventions, and improvisations, without regard to conventional strictures. As a result, these liminal situations produce new symbols, modes, and paradigms. As in *rites of passage*, these permutations and transformations of symbols in liminality function only within relatively stable and repetitive systems, such as agrarian villages. In large and complex societies, the use of liminality is metaphorical.

Liminality in Rites de Passage

Ritual symbols of the liminal phase in *rites de passage* fall generally into two categories:

1. Effacement.
2. Ambiguity and paradox.

Initially the subject is socially, if not physically, *invisible* (1958:339). In the case of a novice in male puberty rites, society does not acknowledge the status of “not-boy-not-man”. The transitional being is deprived of all his possessions and social classifications; his private name is rescinded, and replaced by a generic term,

like *initiand* or *neophyte*. Finally, the liminal persona is defined by a set of complex and bizarre symbols modelled on biological processes, that Turner suppose Lévi-Strauss might call “isomorphic” with societal processes, i.e., giving an outward and visible form to an inward and abstract occurrence (*ibid.*).

In principle, social invisibility is dual: the neophyte is *no longer* and concurrently *not yet* classified. In the former instance, his state is compared to the clearly negative condition of death, decomposition, and catabolism. The neophyte is “structurally” dead and so treated: buried, forced to remain motionless as a corpse, stained black, obliged to live a while in the company of masked and monstrous mummers representing the dead or un-dead. The metaphor of dissolution is often applied to the neophyte, who is allowed to go filthy in order to identify with earth, the generalized matter to which everyone is finally reduced. The latter instance, in which the neophyte is not yet classified, is expressed in symbols modelled on processes of gestation or parturition. The novices are likened to newborn infants or sucklings.

The essential feature, therefore, of these symbolizations is that the neophyte is neither living nor dead from one point of view, and both living and dead from another. He is considered especially *polluting*. Turner (1958:340) cites Mary Douglas (1966), who defines the concept of pollution as “a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction”. The neophyte is regarded as ritually unclean. Since the transitional beings represent the confusion of all customary categories, they are a source of ambiguity and paradox; it is scandalous to see them, and, as such, they are commonly secluded or disguised.

Liminality is concerned with the unstructures: the destructure and the prestructure. In other words, it is the negation of all positive structural assertions and, concurrently, their common source (Turner 1958:340). It is the realm of pure possibility, where novel configurations of ideas and relations arise. Neophytes have a close connection with deities or superhuman powers; they are regarded as *unbounded*.

To summarize, liminality has both negative aspects – undoing, dissolution, decomposition; and positive aspects – growth, transformation, the reformulation of old elements into new patterns.

Beyond the Rites de Passage

In order to extend the characteristics of liminality beyond the *rites de passage*, let us consider a partial list or series of binary oppositions or discriminations which Turner proposes (1965:106-107) on the basis of the Levi-Strauss' model, involving the contrast between liminality and the status system:

Transition / state

Equality / inequality

Anonymity / systems of nomenclature

Absence of property / property

Nakedness or uniform clothing / distinctions of clothing

Sexual continence / sexuality

Sacredness / secularity

Simplicity / complexity

Acceptance of pain and suffering / avoidance of pain and suffering

These oppositions can be found in individuals or in groups. The major religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – possess several of these and other oppositions. The quality of “betwixt and between” in culture and society becomes an institutionalized condition in certain monastic and mendicant orders. Turner (*ibid.*:107-108) cites the example of the Rule of St. Benedict, by Attwater (1961). Its adherents live in a community and devote themselves entirely to God's service by means of self-discipline, prayer, and work. They are under the abbot's absolute authority, and bound to poverty, celibacy, and sexual abstention.

The millenarian religious movements, too, generally have liminal properties, such as homogeneity, equality, absence of property, a distinctive

uniform, sexual continence (or its antithesis), total obedience to the prophet or leader, sacred institutions, acceptance of pain and suffering, etc. It should be noted that, in most cases, once the millenarian society becomes institutionalized, it becomes more rigid and fanatical than the groups from which it separated because of the belief that it is the “bearer of universal-human truths” (1965:111-112).

Individuals belonging to the margins of society or its lowest strata are often accorded special privileges. The court jester, for instance, was allowed to gibe at any superior authority, and the Saora shaman of Middle India acquired the permanent status of sacred “outsiderhood”, allowing him to criticize anyone or to mediate between any component of the social system (Elwin 1955). Turner notes that the members of despised or outlawed ethnic groups (such as the Jews at various times) play major roles in myths and popular tales as expressions of universal human values. Henri Bergson is cited as referring to these mythical types, socially inferior and marginal (outsiders), who represent “open” morality, as opposed to the establishment’s “closed” morality (1965:108-111).

In conclusion, liminality can be found in transition processes and in states of individuals or groups that are marginal to the social order. In the latter instance, the liminal state can be considered permanent. It is, therefore, a useful and important concept applicable to the study of the Other.

The Emergence of the Other

Jung introduced the notion of “shadow”, the primitive Other within us, which he explained as follows (CW 7, par 103n):

By shadow I mean the “negative” side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious.

At the individual level, Jung does not consider the shadow (or the repressed tendencies it represents) as clearly evil, “but somewhat inferior, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad” (Wii, pars. 130-4). It even possesses primitive and childlike qualities that could revitalize human existence, if convention permitted. Nevertheless, the individual resists acknowledging these darker characteristics. Such resistance is understandable, but with a moderate commitment to self-examination he can confront his shadow. If he delves deeper, however, he will reach the level of archetypes, where absolute evil resides.

A contemporary and more comprehensive approach to the emergence of the Other is provided by S.L. Gilman (1985:16-18). For a child, the notion of “good” and “bad” corresponds to his ability or inability to control the world with which he interacts. This polarity becomes internalized, creating the pair: “good” Self and “bad” Self. In the process of maturation, as the Self’s boundaries become more clearly defined, the individual’s continuing difficulty in controlling his environment poses an anxiety-provoking threat to his self-integration. This anxiety is externalized, projected onto an illusory construct – the Other, who is invested with Self’s “good” and “bad” attributes. The “repressed sadistic impulses” become the “bad” Other (*ibid.*:20), while the “good” Other represents “infallible correctness”. “The former is that which we fear to become; the latter that which we fear we cannot achieve” (*ibid.*).

Thus, for Gilman, the Other is stereotyped with a set of signs revealing the loss of control. He states that we cannot function without stereotypes; they are necessary in order to deal with our tensions. Furthermore, they are neither random nor archetypal, but constitute a rough set of mental representations associated with the individual’s social and historical context. Gilman stresses the influence of the *social context* in the formation of the stereotypes. It is society which provides the individual with status and meaning. His self-esteem is linked to the image of himself in relation to his culture’s values or to Others. Culture maintains the “sense of difference”. Difference, as Gilman understands it, is “that which threatens order and control; it is the polar opposite to our group” (*ibid.*:21). Hence

we interact with the world through our internalized representation of it, and the Other can be invested with qualities that have little or no relation to reality.

Since the interaction of the individual with the world is a dynamic process, his stereotypes also vary, sometimes from one extreme to the other: e.g., from fear to glorification, from love to hatred, etc. For the normal individual, stereotypes are inherently protean.

II

THE OTHER IN SHADOWPLAY

The Other in Theatre

The purpose of this study is to examine the Other in theatre, specifically in shadowplay. As mentioned above, Otherness is characteristic of theatre's role in society in general, and, within the theatrical context, jesters, gods and aliens – the present focus – are among the Other's most pronounced embodiments. These figures are usually not the main personae of the plots, but their nature confers upon them functions or prompts actions that can be essential to the temper and development of the piece: e.g., the gods can influence the outcome of a battle by the exercise of their powers, as Zeus and Hera in the Trojan war (Hamilton 1969:178-192); the jester can "step out" of the play and comment about it directly to the audience (in Wayang, the Punakawan - the clowns - remark on the strictness of their master, the drama's hero); the ungainly alien provokes derisive laughter as soon as he appears on the screen (in the *wayang kulit* of Java or Bali, or in the Turkish *Karagöz*). They are Others because they are "different", although for diverse reasons. The gods are immortal and have supernatural powers. Jesters, by contrast, represent the dregs of society, either by birth or owing to physical deformities; they have been

studied extensively for centuries because they were often influential at court and in the arts. In their theatrical portrayal (perhaps taken from life), they are generally cunning and clever; and they speak the raw truth, albeit farcically. The aliens are different in appearance, manners, customs, and values. They all share the ambiguity and paradoxical status of the liminal state: their exoticism is both feared and sought after, and thus their image is both positive and negative. In one's initial encounter with them, fear evokes the "bad" stereotype, which, however, as mentioned above, can change into a "good" stereotype in the course of further contact with them. Nevertheless in a theatrical genre based on traditional stereotypes, e.g., the provincial types in

Karagöz, there are few redeeming features in their outlandish ways.

In contrast to the initiands in the *rites de passage*, these Others are usually not in a temporary liminal state, but are fixed in a sort of permanent "betwixt and between". There is no transcendence of the past and promotion to a new status; these Others are what they are, and are not expected to evince transformations. This is the nature of these figures in theatre, especially in traditional and popular theatre, where the stock types are well defined and stable.

Because of their unsettling characteristics, these Others introduce tension and motivate changes and surprises in the plays. I consider them crucial to the dynamic of theatre.

Shadowplay's Place in the Theatrical Arts

I have chosen to concentrate on shadowplay in this study because I believe that this genre's technical simplicity, high artistic level, and shadowy representations are ideal for the delineation of the Other's particular qualities.

Shadowplay is a theatrical form of extreme technical simplicity: the puppets, commonly two-dimensional, are inserted between a screen and the light source behind it, resulting in a dramaturgy of silhouettes. This simplicity is illusory, however, and can be compared to the buoyancy of the ballerina, who, on her point shoes, leaps into the air and lands, seemingly as light as a plume. But, in reality, in

order to achieve such a graceful effect, she needs to possess and apply great muscular strength, “hidden” in her usually elongated limbs and torso. Shadowplay requires ample dexterity and knowledge of the genre’s potentialities, precisely because the simple shadows reveal the puppet’s every movement, which, in executing an action, can be modulated subtly to suggest a wide range of emotions and ideas. Its characters and scenery (as noted by the director, Ping Chong) can be transformed with remarkable celerity. Its possibilities of communication are vast, perhaps more so, I would venture to say, than those of any other theatrical mode.

Ironically, therefore, its richness lies in its simplicity. Theatre, in general, has developed constantly throughout its history, and it has always taken advantage of and absorbed new trends and technical inventions. This is certainly true of puppetry, which employs new materials in building the puppets, computer effects, etc. Nor has shadowplay been immune to this trend. The electric bulb, for instance, has replaced the flickering oil-lamp, even in the most traditional performances, even though the bulb renders the figures more static, and diminishes the eerie atmosphere. But practicality has prevailed. Nevertheless, because shadowplay relies less on innovation than dexterity, it continues to lay exacting demands on the puppeteer’s ability and artistry.

In its origins, historical or legendary, shadowplay is always related to Otherness: it signifies the resuscitation of persons from the realm of the dead, the shades. They can be ancestors, deceased loved ones, unjustly executed victims, and so on. The ritualistic approach to dealing with the netherworld still persists in many traditional and popular forms of shadowplay – by way of prayers and offerings before or at the onset of a performance: e.g., *wayang kulit* in Java and Bali; *Karagöz* in Turkey. Furthermore, shadow performances are still undertaken in Java as exorcism ceremonies (*Murwakala* – exorcism of the god Kala, so that he will not abduct children into the state of taboo). As a rule, however, the ritualistic aspects in these traditional cultures do not detract from shadowplay’s entertaining character, because these practices are ancient and ingrained in everyday life.

Puppet theatre has been accepted in the West as a credible and serious art form only since the early twentieth century. Heinrich von Kleist’s

writings contributed greatly to this new attitude. In a famous article, published in 1810, he related his discussion with a well-known dancer he encountered on the street watching a popular marionette show (1965:338-345). The dancer averred that he was actually learning from the puppets' "natural" movements, since human performers had become so deformed by mannerisms. More recently, Dennis Silk (1996:xi-xxi) proposed the institution of "Thing Theatre", whereby actors could learn from things "to be themselves", instead of acting in an artificial mode. In a video of one of his puppet plays, *Courtship*, the cast is introduced as a group, including a doll, a shoe, needles, a measuring-tape, a wooden dog, human actors, etc. All are of same standing, each executing movements and actions according to its possibilities (sometimes the humans also function as manipulators of things). Traditionally, shadow puppets are only "things" – puppets imitating or stylizing human forms. In modern shadowplay, by contrast, humans and things (puppets, objects, etc.) appear together as characters of the same play.

The pieces presented in shadowplay can be and are performed in other theatrical forms, but none possesses the magic, the subtlety, and the technical and artistic possibilities that only shadows can provide. This assertion is substantiated by the persistence of traditional shadowplay in Indonesia and China, as well as by the existence of numerous modern shadowplay companies today. All these reasons have contributed to my choice of shadowplay for the study of jesters, gods and aliens as Others.

III

THE OTHERNESS OF GODS, JESTERS, AND ALIENS

This chapter presents a discussion of Gods, Jesters, and Aliens respectively in their capacity as Others. It will also seek to justify their special place in theatre and shadowplay, as posited by the present thesis.

God as OtherIntroduction

In many ancient cultures the gods were personifications of the elements, whose otherwise inscrutable forces they controlled. Their powers were greater than those wielded by man, and their motives were not always comprehensible to him. Their higher status and capabilities made them respected and loved when beneficial, but feared when destructive and arbitrary. Sometimes the gods were benign and baneful at one and the same time. In any event, it can be affirmed that throughout history, at all stages of civilization, man has felt the need to ascertain the reason for unaccountable phenomena both outside and within himself, and has often ascribed them to the actions of a single powerful divinity or a group of divinities.

The ambiguity of God has provoked extensive discussion and debate among the monotheistic cultures of the West (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam); in the East (Hinduism, Buddhism), however, this duality is construed as natural; it is not accounted theologically disturbing that the same god can act both graciously and harmfully.

Of the various Others considered in this study, the gods are the closest to Self, even if their physical attributes are completely different. They are projections of Self, and can serve as its most intimate spiritual expression; they are imaginary Others, and represent idealizations, symbols, and cultural beliefs; they personify the values of bravery, honour, and (in some cultures, e.g., the Javanese) refinement and

rare beauty. For Jung, the total personality, conscious and unconscious, is Self (1974:5), and God is in man's Self through Christ (*ibid.*:36).

In drama, which constitutes our main concern, the gods appear in their grandeur or otherwise, but always as exceptional beings, with superhuman traits. Since Greek times, they appear in plays, in which they repeatedly descend from their abode, mingling with men, and interfering in their lives, beneficently or injuriously.

Origins

It seems that the idea of and belief in gods existed in the earliest phases of mankind. The archaeologist and biblical scholar, W.F. Albright (1967:168-178), surveyed the research devoted to the origins of religion from the outset of the twentieth century on, and extrapolated two main themes: the gradual clarification and systematization of the "primitive" and "savage" mind; and the antiquity and diffusion of belief in "high" gods.

He refers to the insights, based on ethnographical data, of the psychologist, R. Lévy-Bruhl (*ibid.*:168), concerning primitive man. He criticizes Lévy-Bruhl for reaching his conclusions solely by comparing the thinking processes of "primitive" and "civilized" man, while neglecting to analyze the "primitive" thought processes of today's unsophisticated populace. Nevertheless, Albright concedes, the pre-logical character of thinking in primitive man is notable. It does not recognize contradictions or possess a clear notion of causal relations between events, which are interpreted instead as sequence, concomitance, or accidental resemblance. It is also important to stress the notions of impersonality and fluidity. Individuals are not envisaged as separate entities by the savage, but are rather merged in a collective or corporate personality, or dissolved in factitious relationships between man, animals, plants, as well as cosmic or other inanimate objects and forces. Lévy-Bruhl discerned a sort of primitive ability to form abstractions, giving rise to elementary metaphysics, reflected in the idea of impersonal power or force, called *pre-animism* by Marett (*ibid.*:169), which is found in

unusual persons, objects, or phenomena, as well as in gods and spirits. This conception survived in the religion and mythology of the Ancient Near East, and remained dominant for millennia in magic. K. Bert (*ibid.*) has observed this impersonal power in various more recent cultures: *mana* in the South Pacific; *orenda* among the Iroquois, *wakonda* for the Sioux. A. Bertholet calls it *dynamism* (*ibid.*).

Early twentieth-century studies of the history of religion observed the worship of “high” gods and spirits in many primitive cultures across the globe – in Africa, Australia, and South America (*ibid.*:170). These gods are all-powerful, and responsible for the creation of the world. They are generally cosmic deities who abide in Heaven. Albright cites W. Schmidt’s research (1912-36) on religious phenomena and conceptions. Schmidt assembled a vast array of data demonstrating belief in high gods, and concluded that this attests to a rudimentary monotheism which evolved into the various theological patterns current in the primitive cultures of his day. His position aroused considerable controversy, but it is undeniable that his research raises serious doubts about the views of those theorists who posit linear development (*ibid.*:171): e.g., A. Comte (fetishism > polytheism > monotheism), E.B. Taylor (animism > polytheism > monotheism), and R.R. Marett (pre-animism or dynamism > polytheism > monotheism). Schmidt argued that these schemes were over-simplifications of complex and fluid religious phenomena; he suggested that in the period elapsing since the first Mousterian (Neanderthal) burials, some 50,000 years ago, it is conceivable that these “evolutionary” tendencies completed their cycles and reverted to states often resembling their points of departure (*ibid.*).

Scholars such as Baron von Richthofen, F.R. Lehmann, and others have determined that belief in an afterlife has an extensive prehistory; it can also be traced back to the Mousterian Neanderthals. The archaeological record attests to fear of the deceased; their spirits were still actively engaged in the world; in fact, there was no clear distinction between the realms of the living and the dead.

Albright’s discussion of the later periods is basically focused on the Ancient Near East, his particular field of interest, but his general conclusions are applicable to traditions cultures throughout the world, and thus can be cited in the context of this study. In fact, all the proto-metaphysical conceptions known to

anthropologists from ethnographic investigation are found in the Ancient Near East: the notion of taboo; the polarity of “holiness” and “abomination”, arising from the sense of inviolability or untouchability; the aforementioned dynamistic power; the belief that there exists an outline, plan, or pattern of things-which-are-to-be (the precursor of the Platonic Idea), designed by the gods at the creation of the world, and fixed in heaven in order to insure the permanence of their work; the concept of fate or destiny.

By the late prehistoric period, these ideas had presumably already been applied to religion. By 3000 BCE, the traditional beginning of history, marked by the invention of writing, it is absolutely certain that they had, according to Albright. Man had abstracted the idea of the “divine” from “divine being(s)”, associating this category with all the qualities they considered good in social relations, as well as with power and the act of creation. Furthermore, the empirical necessity of having a single head for any complex organization led men to infer a single power behind the multiple phenomena of nature. This power appears in various forms and with various limitations – but a high god is invariably head of the cosmos (*ibid.*:176-8).

It is not the purpose of this study to review the historical development of the concept of the divine, but merely to show that all cultures, early and late, have entertained a sense of supernatural powers which mortals, suffering from their limitations and anxieties, have sought to understand, appease, and influence.

Drama and religion are related in most cultures. Religious ceremonies, past and present, frequently comprised the dramatic re-enactment of sacred texts or events. God has continuously played a thespian role.

God’s Attributes – Otherness

The deities are distinct from man in several crucial respects, one of them being their immortality (O’Flaherty 1988:3). There is usually a supreme god who created the cosmos and man, but there are often mythological accounts

explaining the origins of the lesser gods. Once created, however, they live forever, and dwell in a remote, paradisaical sphere (Heaven, Mt. Olympus, etc.). That is to say, they exist outside historical (human) time (Kirk 1970:11). In addition, the gods have supernatural powers and are capable of marvelous exploits. These are attributes which make them Others from the human point of view; their Otherness consists in their being fundamentally different, indeed superior.

In the Greek epics, as pointed out by Burkert (1985:121-122), the gods are basically spectators of affairs on earth, but are quick to intervene if they adjudge their interests at stake. For example, when Achilles and Memnon clash, their respective divine mothers, Thetis and Eos, rush to the scene. Burkert observes that the narrative often occurs on two levels, whereby divine action and human action influence each other (*ibid.*). There is also divine intervention in the psychic realm, which is most likely a residue from pre-Homeric times. A god might instil a person with courage, despair, shrewdness, or delusion (*ibid.*:122). This interference in human affairs is attested in most traditional epics, notably those of India, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, where some of the heroes are gods or demi-gods, and even dwell among mortals: e.g., Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, is the king of Dwaravati, and a close friend of the Pandawa brothers. The interaction between gods and mortals provides the thematic base for many dramatic forms. O'Flaherty (1988:3) writes that myths, in themselves stories about Others, relate that the gods appear among humans mostly in the form of "other" Others: animals, strangers, madmen, and children. Zeus came to earth as Xenios (Stranger), and, in order not to provoke his wrath, hospitality to strangers was a fundamental law in ancient Greece.

In the *deus ex machina* of Greek theatre, characters portraying gods actually obtrude upon the human sphere by means of a mechanical contrivance, as if descending from the skies. F. Rokem (1995:2) notes that this device was very fashionable in Baroque theatre, where "...these gods, who are generally surrounded by hosts of angels assisting them in their descent from the heavenly spheres to the human level of existence, are an important aspect of the more inclusive conceptual and perceptive mechanisms that invest the fictional world in the theatre with significance". Later, however, superhuman interference underwent a transformation.

In turn-of-the-century realistic drama, God was defunct in his traditional form, but was “reincarnated” in other guises. Rokem discusses Ibsen’s plays, in which God was transmuted into a dead or “almost dead” father-figure. He is not physically visible, but acts as a psychological influence over the characters. But unlike the *deus ex machina* of Greek or Baroque drama, he does not bring the conflict to a happy resolution. On the contrary, Ibsen’s father-figure wreaks “destructive vengeance” on the living members of the decaying bourgeois family (*ibid.*:15). In Ibsen, as in Athens, a “superior” intervenes and determines the outcome of events, but his modern *deus* is vindictive and baneful.

Later in the twentieth century, theatre dealt with existential and social issues exceeding the confines of the family. As a consequence, there was a radical change in the role and meaning of *deus ex machina*. God is often represented as an empty space which the characters seek to fill (*ibid.*:19-20). Rokem cites the seminal examples of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. In both cases there is an expectation of something one knows will never occur: the sisters will never move to Moscow, and Godot will never materialize. Rokem notes that the century’s social and political upheavals entailed a new focus, which was reflected on the stage. In modern theatre, he concludes, *deus ex machina* reflects a “complicated process of mourning over the death of God and of metaphysics” (*ibid.*:17).

In traditional Asian theatre, by contrast, such issues are less relevant, as the theatrical material has remained basically conservative in its attitude towards religion. The gods remain gods, because the people still believe in them. The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* continue to serve as the basic texts for classical Indian drama (*Kathakali*, for example). And these epics provide numerous occasions on which the gods mingle with humans, and, being partial to one party or another, they often meddle in the course of events.

The supreme god, as creator of the universe, is a paternal figure. In Ancient Greece, all animate beings, mortal and divine, addressed Zeus as “father” (Burkert 1985:129). As such, he is considered the protector and consoler of man in times of distress. Nevertheless, this creator-god can also be destructive and malevolent. In the monotheistic religions, especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition,

this ambiguity (duality) has been a source of considerable discussion. The existence of evil is disturbing to monotheists, for an omnipotent and gracious deity should avert the intrusion of ill, and a gamut of explanations (which need not be reviewed here) has been submitted to account for this dilemma. It is interesting to note that M. Eliade (1979:79-80), in his study of this subject, writes that, for Goethe, evil is rather a productive principle. Mephistopheles' activity, according to Eliade, is not directed against God, but rather against life. He undertakes to satisfy Faust, to afford him a moment of repose: that is, to arrest the vital flux. For life is unceasing momentum, and "whatever ceases to change and transform itself decays and perishes". The resulting spiritual sterility will prove Faust's damnation. Ultimately, however, Mephistopheles is an instrument of God. In seeking to assuage Faust's desire for life, he actually arouses it. Thus, despite his attempt to wreak evil, he produces Good; unwittingly, he is collaborating with God. Which is why God, with divine foresight, willingly gives Mephistopheles to man as a companion. Goethe viewed error and evil as necessary for human existence, as for that of Cosmos, which he called the "the All-one" (*ibid.* 80).

Goethe tried to find a solution to the problem of evil within the framework of the Christian tradition. The polytheistic religions, by contrast, tend to accept this state of affairs as natural. The rages and infidelities of Zeus, for example, did not lessen the veneration in which his devotees held him. Eliade also discusses the existence of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coexistence of opposites, and the issue of totality. In India, Shiva has both benign and destructive aspects, and the power of evil can arise from that of good. But the goal to be sought by man – through prayer, meditation, and physical work (as in yoga) – is to be above good and evil, to attain a state in which both are poised within oneself. Thus, for Hindus and those who follow their example, the existence of evil is not a disturbance, but an integral component of the world.

Conclusion

God's attributes define his Otherness, his differences from man, who is mortal, impotent *vis-à-vis* the passing of time, and generally limited in his capacities, physical and otherwise. Still, it was man who conferred upon God his attributes. He is a subjunctive entity, an *as if*, created by our intellectual and emotional needs. He was even created in man's image – more beautiful and powerful than any human, to be sure. He represents man's idealizations, fantasies, and fears. It is thus possible to enhance one's knowledge of Self by examining its conception of God. But it is the image of a better and more puissant Self, one without human limitations.

God dwells on the boundaries of the human world, neither here nor there, but concurrently both here and everywhere. He inhabits a separate, liminal sphere, although he can, at will, cross the line dividing it from ours. Paradoxically, however, his superhuman attributes cannot be suspended. He cannot diminish his own powers, which would be in contradiction of himself. Thus, he is always different, always an Other, and incites love and fear accordingly. He is loved for being the father and protector, and in times of distress prayers and expectations are directed to him. But, ultimately, he is also held responsible for the ills afflicting us. He is the Good and Bad Other, reflecting (in Gilman's scheme) the Good and Bad Self.

The Jester's Otherness

It is the ultimate clowning irony; the fun dissolves as you study it.

William E. Mitchell

Clowning as Critical Practice, 1992, p.27

Introduction

The jester's most appealing feature is his talent to amuse and cause laughter. If only for an instant, he disorients his company, obscuring their familiar and normative frame of reference. He dares to create a topsy-turvy world through

absurdity, exaggeration, and inversion, challenging the status quo in a mocking and humoristic tone. Although certain researchers have insisted that the comic figure's importance lies deeper than the superficial level of "comic relief" or mere comedian (Steward 1931:198), it should not be forgotten that the main attraction, popularity, and power of the trickster, the fool, the clown, the jester, and their like, reside in their ability to make people laugh.

Humour is certainly not universal – not everyone gets the joke. Mitchell (1992:25) states that, "humor, like beauty, is in the perception of the beholder". A complex of cultural factors influences an individual's reaction to potentially humorous events (Mitchell, 1992:ix; Siegel 1987:251). Laughter, moreover, is not always elicited by witticism or antics; it is sometimes a cruel response to physical or mental aberration. To understand the jester, one has to analyse the elements he employs to make us laugh.

The jester is invested with the legacy of the trickster, an archetype occurring in diverse cultures, and possessing mystical and multicultural traits. He has no definite form, appearing variously as almost any creature, real or imaginary (Radin 1956:x); examples can be cited for almost every culture: as an animal – the Monkey (Sun Wukong) of Chinese tradition, Br'er Rabbit of Afro-American fable, Reynard the Fox of medieval vintage; as a supernatural being – the jinni in Aladdin's lamp; as ordinary humans – Till Eulenspiegel of Germany, Peer Gynt of Norway.

In whatever form, the trickster is a liminal figure on the margin of society, generally lacking status and destitute of possessions. "Traditionally, tricksters live on their wits; lacking the strength of their opponents, they are always in jeopardy, always hungry, always needing something to survive" (Farwell 1994:79). Accordingly, the trickster is constantly in motion, driven by his basic needs and passions. His actions are impulsive and his means dubious. Often he suffers the consequences of his own devices. He is an ambiguous character lacking moral restraints, and shifting from one extreme of behaviour to another, as circumstances warrant. Thus he can be both innovative and disruptive.

The exploits of the trickster are usually laughter-provoking – an attribute which, as stated above, I consider basic to the jester's appeal. The laughter arises from his both incongruous and daring behaviour, which is simultaneously funny and surprising. In aboriginal societies, Radin (1956:x) maintains, the laughter he arouses is "tempered by awe". It is difficult, however, as he admits, to pinpoint the cause of the laughter: the trickster himself? the tricks he plays on others? or the implications of his conduct for the audience? As the distinction is extremely elusive, I think it is valid to say that all three motives are concurrently present, but the focus shifts according to the situation and the jest.

Before proceeding, I believe it will be helpful to introduce a couple of theoretical points that can serve in clarifying the presentation:

1. The natural and artificial fool
2. The clowning genres.

1. The Natural and Artificial Fool

This distinction, common in Elizabethan times, dates back to the twelfth century as a folk construct (Welsford 1966:119). Zijderveld (1982:35) defines the natural fools as "half-witted simpletons or mentally deranged psychotics". But, albeit "pathetic, frightening, wise, and funny", the fool "commands attention" (Mitchell 1992:16). He is unable to follow the rules, subverts conventional reason, creating incongruous images that startle and sometimes amuse. The natural fool represents a "negative reflection of humanity" (*ibid.*:17). Normalcy is inverted in ways that may be "perverse, capricious, playful, illogical, and silly" (*ibid.*). So his degree of acceptance is directly related to his social context. Historically, while he usually had to fend for himself, the fool was tolerated and even humanely treated, often being a lively presence in the villages. By the seventeenth century, however, with the emergence of bourgeois values, he was classed together with the criminal

and poor as a social undesirable, and sometimes even incarcerated (*ibid.*:16).

The artificial fool is an individual who purposely behaves (skilfully and humorously, as a rule) like a natural fool, in order to mock the prevailing mores and values. His pretence is a means to achieve personal, often very basic ends, such as food or money. The artificial fool could either be professional or amateur, the latter appearing occasionally in popular events, such as the annual "Feast of the Fools." As their name implies, the professional fools were "permanent", and very popular in the Middle Ages; it was not uncommon to find them as fixtures in rich and royal households, and some acquired powerful and influential positions. In spite of his wit, the artificial fool was not, it appears, invariably sane²; but it is also conceivable that, owing to his outrageous behaviour, he was simply deemed mentally deranged.

Often the natural fool was physically deformed. This condition, of course, does not necessarily entail mental deviation, and it was not uncommon to find clever fools who were dwarfs or hunchbacks settled as professional fools. The fool's abnormality was sometimes related to magic. It was believed that, as a kind of intermediary between our world and the other, he possessed supernatural powers, and served as protection against the "evil eye", his ugliness and deformation neutralizing its power. Whether natural or artificial, he was frequently attired in unusual, often colourful costumes that stressed his special status.

In shadowplay, as a rule, the fool is "natural" and singular in his physical appearance, often deformed and grotesque, in sharp contrast to the "normal" figures. But one can claim that, in actuality, he is "artificial", since the characters and speech of all the puppets are determined by the intelligent puppeteer.

2. Clowing Genres

² For examples, see Enid Welsford's *Fool*, Chap. I, "The Professional Buffon", pp.3-28.

Clowning has acquired a wide range of meanings in various cultures. Mitchell (1992:27-33) proposes a useful system of classification, which affords a clearer overview of the field. But it is merely for didactic purposes, since, in practice, the genres are not mutually exclusive, but overlap!

He divides clowning into 'formal' and 'informal' genres. Informal clowning is generally improvised and spontaneous; it is determined by the contingencies that arise from the interaction of the clown and his immediate audience. He usually heightens awareness of his surroundings by dealing with contemporary and familiar subjects. But Mitchell (1992:29) warns that, "the individual who plays the fool too frequently risks stigmatization as a marginal person".

Formal clowning, by contrast, is generally based on a set script or a traditional procedure. The performer's status and role are predetermined, but his interpretation of the play or his role within the prescribed structure may allow for considerable latitude. Within this genre there are subdivisions: ritual (sacral or secular) and theatrical.

In ritual clowning, the actor impersonates someone greater than himself, e.g., a deity or an agent of change, as in the Hopi dance of the *kachinas* (Towsen 1976:3-4). Beyond being mere entertainment, this form has symbolic import, and thus levity is combined with gravity. The difference between the sacral and secular ritual is plain: the former is performed in magical and cultic circumstances, the latter is unrelated to spiritual concerns – but, more often than not, it has sacral origins which have gradually become obscure, such as Carnival in Brazil, which is connected with the Catholic observance of Lent.

Broadly speaking, theatrical clowning is determined by a script, usually rehearsed beforehand. Performers from this group include stand-up comedians, mimes, farceurs, and circus and street clowns.

In shadowplay we find examples from the whole spectrum of formal and informal clowning. Traditional forms of shadowplay, such as the Javanese and Balinese Wayang, still retain the element of sacral ritual. The position of the clowning scenes is fixed within the overall context, and the characters have very

specific traits, but the scenes are informal in nature, involving impromptu comments on current affairs.

The Jester

The roster of artificial fools is wide and varied. Their common denominator is the ability to arouse laughter, and it is not always easy to distinguish between the different types. Dictionary definitions of *clown*, *fool*, and *jester* are frequently interchangeable, attesting to the overlap in meaning and function.

In spite of their similarities, it is still possible to ascertain differences, especially as modern usage has narrowed their respective scopes. The fool is normally considered an authentic half-wit or insane, which tends to impair his role as a critic. The gradual decline of the clown and the fool has been discussed by a number of scholars (Willeford 1969; Saks 1978; Welsford 1966; Foley 1987). The clown is funny and superficial, and is today associated with the innocuous family entertainment of the circus – although, as mentioned above, his antics can mask serious intent. K. Foley (1987) observes that the clown's scope in Java has contracted because of the decrease in communal life incurred by the individualism of democratic society. He lost his singular status with the rise of the popular entertainer.

These considerations have induced me to call my comic figure in this study the “jester”. It seems to me that this term is broader than the others, and includes the characteristics of the clown and the fool, both in the East and the West. But his madness is a deliberate guise, and he exercises intellectual control over his apparently anarchic role. Even if the comics in the shadowplays are real simpletons, like Karagöz, behind them is the jester, i.e., the puppeteer, the artificial fool who delivers his provocative messages through them. Nevertheless, many of the authors I cite employ the term of “clown” for the figure I call “jester”, and accordingly I will have occasion to use it, as well as that of “fool”, for, as mentioned above, their meanings are often synonymous.

The jester is generally not the central character, either in drama or society. He is usually the companion of the king or hero, with the function of attendant; however, in contrast to his master, recognizes reality, the truth. The classic example is Lear's Fool. The jester can also serve as the playwright's voice, proffering comments on the action. He is thus a functional figure in Van Laan's sense [see below p.268]. He can extend beyond his stage role, and communicate directly with the audience, becoming thus a kind of intermediary between the real and fictional realms. These characteristics form the basis of the jester's singularity, his Otherness.

The Jester's Otherness

As discussed above, Otherness, broadly speaking, means being unlike the majority, outside the status quo. The Other can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive, and sometimes both simultaneously. The jester is an Other because he is either on the margin of the social order or at its very bottom. He has no definable station, relegating him to a kind of limbo or liminal state, which, as defined by Turner, is that of being "not-here and not-there", but "betwixt and between" – on the threshold.

Like the initiand in *rites de passage*, the jester is exempt from the norms and obligations of society...or, better, his behaviour is not subject to its usual restrictions, and he exploits this privilege, humorously, in order to convey his basic message.

Traditionally, the theatrical jester is singular both in looks and conduct. In contrast to the ideally handsome hero, his physical appearance is often marked by ugliness and deformity, and his dress calls attention either by dint of its exaggeration in mode and colour, or by its bareness – in one way or the other, by its contrast. His manners are habitually more down-to-earth than his master's. He might, indeed, try to imitate the courtly style, but his imitation is usually a form of mockery. His idiom tends to be popular, often a village dialect, which he mixes with his master's cultivated language, and his comments and jokes are blatant expressions of his basic interests: food, money, and sex.

In sum, the jester is portrayed as ridiculous, out-of-place, inadequate – qualities, which, in themselves, render him comic. Since he generally issues from the bottom of the social scale, the simple audience identifies immediately with him.

The jester's mockery is normally directed at the mores of his master's society. Being funny is not only his main attraction, but also his essential tool. He is allowed to behave outrageously and raise subjects normally considered taboo. As such, he performs a reflexive role: his utilization of exaggeration, inversion, and the absurd enhances his public's understanding of the established norms. To appeal to a current expression, he engages in a form of consciousness-raising. Breaking the illusion of the screen, he talks directly to the people, reminding them of the real world, and, as critic, he can serve as an intermediary or spokesman for the playwright or puppeteer.

Most clowning is, in fact, criticism. But, as Mitchell stresses (1992:24), “what varies is the relationship of the clown’s performance to the prevalent cultural values”. Thus, clowning can be subversive or conservative, deriding either the dominant culture or the “culturally unacceptable”. If the latter, then the clown's role is that of culture preserver, which is often true of the ritual clown encountered in rigidly structured societies.

Aliens as Others

Introduction

The alien is basically a foreigner, someone who comes from somewhere else; he is different from the members of the local group; he does not belong. The differences can be cultural (background, customs, language, conduct, values) and/or physical (race, skin colour, facial traits).

Historically, the attitude of the mainstream group towards aliens has varied. It is generally ambiguous, as even the most negative position reveals elements of curiosity towards the unknown. But even the most positive and

welcoming stance, one dictated by tradition, is often tinged with fear, for, by his very nature, the stranger threatens to disturb the balance of the milieu. Thus, the attitude towards him is rarely totally one-sided.

One way or the other, the alien is consigned to the margin of society. His marginality is sometimes the result of his own choice, at others it is due to circumstances beyond his control. Accordingly, Hans Mayer (1982: xvii) distinguishes between the 'intentional outsider' and the 'existential outsider', an argument I will consider below. Jacob Raz' treatment of the 'alien within' and 'without society' (1992:20) will also prove helpful in advancing the present thesis.

To begin with, it will be useful to survey the diverse attitudes adopted towards the alien.

Attitudes towards the Alien

The alien commonly arouses ambivalent feelings of both fear and attraction, whereby one of the poles predominates according to his image in relation to the values of the host society. Sometimes the alien is treated with xenophobic hostility. Examples of this abound. The Edo period in Japan provides an extreme case. From the mid-seventeenth until the mid-nineteenth century, the country was closed to the outside world: foreigners were not granted admittance, nor could the Japanese travel abroad. The only contact with the West was afforded by the Dutch, a few of whose officials were permitted to enter in Nagasaki. But they were kept under strict control, and an artificial island, Deshima, was built outside the city to accommodate the foreign crew and keep them isolated (Palmer 1963:138, 548-551).

If the alien does not conform to any reassuring stereotype of the Other, or seems to resemble the image of negative fantasies, he is commonly regarded as a threatening Bad Other, no different than an extra-terrestrial. When aliens belong to a less advanced society and enjoy less stable living-conditions, they are considered "inferior". The Amero-Indians, for instance, who lived in states closer to nature, were deemed "primitive" by the invaders of their lands. There is thus a generalized

negative view of the alien, a “looking down” on the foreigner. According to Certeau (1986:xviii), the alien is seen as an Other to be tamed, as a “same-to-be” or “yet-not-same”. Such, he contends, was the attitude of King Arthur’s knights in meeting strangers on their quests, or of the Crusaders, for whom only Christianity betokened true knowledge, towards the Infidels. Later, when they “grudgingly” acknowledged Islam as a power, they still did not accept it as a valid form of faith.

This negative view is generally tinged with fear of the unknown, of the crude and forbidden qualities the alien is liable to introduce. O’Flaherty (1988:3) states that this view is embraced because the Other represents the darker aspects of ourselves. But it is also fear, the suspicion that the stranger might possess exceptional or magical powers, that induces peoples to receive him as a guest. The idea that he might be a god or command supernatural influence is present in various cultures. Raz (1992:23-24) cites the itinerant priests, *yugyo shonin*, of Japan, who were deemed intermediaries between the gods and man. In ancient Greece, hospitality towards the alien was highly valued. Xenos (“Stranger”) was an epithet of Zeus, and the caller might be the god himself, who often descended to earth in various guises (especially on amorous adventures) in order to mix with mortals. An ungracious host risked incurring his wrath. In the myth of Baucis and Philemon (Hamilton 1969:111), Zeus wandered incognito asking for shelter, but was repudiated by all inhabitants of Phrygia, save a poor old couple, who received him kindly. Finally, he revealed himself, punished those who spurned him, and rewarded his hosts. It should be noted that, although the rules of hospitality were normative in Greece, this story implies that they were not always respected, and thus it can be construed as a moral and monitory parable.

The alien’s differences render him “exotic”, “naïve” – traits that make him attractive. With the Bedouin, hospitality towards the passing stranger, whose survival might depend upon it, is obligatory. He will be received, even if he hails from an enemy tribe. The guest is likewise expected to abide by the rules, and not take advantage of his hosts: to remain no longer than three days, and to depart in peace. Otherwise his visit will become unwelcome (Cole 1975:66; Kay 1978:19-20; Dickson 1983:71). In Japan, the stranger is perceived with mixed feelings, sometimes

with overt hostility. Raz (1992:21) mentions mediaeval scrolls and paintings of dogs chasing passing travellers – a depiction which presumably reflects the attitude of their owners. He also cites Komatsu K. (*ibid.*:21), who recorded a number of stories recounting the killing of strangers. Even errant shamans, ordinarily esteemed and desirable figures, should not overstay their welcome. Their presence and influence is accepted for the duration of a specific function, after which they are considered threatening.

In sum, because a stranger is surrounded by an aura of mystery, he can bring novelties, but also adverse effects. This ambivalence is inevitable, even in traditionally hospitable societies. The guest has to be very careful not to violate the accepted norms of conduct, lest he be expelled. As a result of this duality, the alien has become a theme of keen interest in the arts. The fact that he is exceptional, or potentially exceptional, has conferred upon him an important role in theatre: e.g., *Der Besuch der alten Dame* by Dürrenmatt; *Plutus* by Aristophanes.

Intentional and Existential Outsiders

Whether viewed positively or negatively, aliens are outsiders; they do not belong; they are Others. According to Hans Mayer (1982:xiv-xviii), outsiders are persons who have crossed the borders of the accepted norms, and he classifies them according to two kinds: intentional and existential. The intentional outsider is a marginal by choice; he has consciously chosen to cross borders. And he cites, as literary examples, Don Quixote, Faust, and Hamlet, each of whom stepped out of his native society, remaining on its fringes by volition. The existential outsider, by contrast, is marginal by birth. He (or she) is an Other because of sex (a woman), ethnic or racial origins, psychic or bodily make-up. Historically, Mayer writes, there were times when the intentional outsider was highly esteemed by his peers for being different. However, since the decline of Christianity and society's secularization, entailing the rise of the bourgeoisie, being an outsider of any kind has acquired a negative connotation (*ibid.*). Moreover, the existential outsider was no longer an

individual, but became the “people who...” (*ibid.*:xvii), i.e., a group (collective) designation.

In a social context, the classification of outsiders generally follows a gradational scheme, in which extremes are avoided. In theatre, however, the categories are clearly defined. Mayer illustrates this point by appealing to Greek drama, which, he affirms, did not reflect normal life, but rather dealt with subjects who were abnormal Others. Comedy and tragedy can be viewed as the contrasting realms of the intentional and existential outsiders respectively (*ibid.*:5-6). “The comic heroes of Aristophanes are volitional lone wolves and misfits”, whereby he cites the examples of Trygaios and Lysistrata. He portrays Euripides and Socrates as “dreamy buffoons” (*ibid.*:6). The characters of tragedy, by contrast, are prototypical existential outsiders, most of whom are condemned by the gods and do not really seek the tragic outcome of the situation in which they are involved. Examples are numerous: the curse upon the Houses of Atreus and Thebes, the frenzy of the Bacchae under Dionysus’ sway. Combinations also occur, in which volitional isolation is linked to an affliction arising from hubris or a divine curse, as in the cases of Prometheus, Antigone (Sophocles), and Medea (Euripides).

This process also characterizes the heroes of Roman tragedies: e.g., Medea, Phaedra, or Hercules of Seneca. Later, with Christianity, the outsiders are defined in relation to the unity of the faith; they are the unbelieving pagans, Jews, schismatics, heretics. Within the community of the Church, only intentional outsiders are conceivable, with the sole exception of Judas Iscariot, the incarnation of the Jewish people, irretrievably tainted by the murder of Christ. The Jew became the existential outsider.

In conclusion, Mayer stresses the resemblance between the various intentional outsiders in literature and theatre throughout history: the Greek tragic figures have their counterparts in Faust, Hamlet, Till Eulenspiegel, Joan of Arc, Don Juan, Don Quixote, Shylock – all are *strange* to the existing order. They are not condemned by an order ideologically opposed to them, but by their own kind (whom they themselves have disavowed): Faust is a scandal to the bourgeoisie, Don Juan is an objectionable member of the aristocracy (*ibid.*:7). Mayer calls their action *titanism*, that is, action freely undertaken in a rebellious Promethean spirit. As to the

existential outsider, whose marginality derives from circumstances of his lineage or sex, his very existence is a transgression of boundaries (*ibid.*:9). With the process of secularization, outsiders were no longer consigned to the confines of myth and dogma. Today, as a result of economic exigencies, abetted by the ease of transportation, many societies are multicultural, and minorities abound in prosperous countries. And although Mayer's scheme of intentional and existential outsiders remains an important tool for the classification and analysis of the outsider's historical role, present-day reality seems better represented by a system of gradations between the two extremes. Thus, for the purposes of this study, it will be helpful to supplement his approach with a distinction between the Other *within* and *without* in a specific society.

The Other Within and Without

We initially defined the alien as a foreigner, someone from another country. As such, he is the Other Without. He might cross the physical borders into a given country, but he remains an alien, an existential outsider who is always marginal. In his study of traditional Japanese society, Raz (1992:20-33) distinguishes between the Other Within and the Other Without: the latter betokens the foreigner, the existential outsider, the former is represented by native Japanese who are socially marginal – the wandering blind storytellers, priests, and so on. These concepts, I believe, can be applied to any social context.

Within a specific society, persons of similar background, looks, and behaviour can nonetheless be considered Others by virtue of belonging to a different class or cast. Criminals and homosexuals, for instance, are Others *within* the community. *Karagöz* provides a wide sampling of this latter category: e.g., peasants differing in manner and speech from the natives of Istanbul, and who are mocked on this account. They are existential Others Within. The intentional outsider is generally an Other Within, since he crosses the border of the society to which he belongs, and inhabits a liminal zone by choice. Some comprise Others both Within and Without. In many societies, the woman is assigned this role (a theme which has been widely

treated in recent research). All the human frailties and vices are attributed to her; in Gilman's nomenclature, she is the Bad Other.

Conclusion

Thus the two paradigms presented above – the intentional and existential outsider and the Other Within and Without – are not mutually exclusive, but complementary, and often overlap. Perhaps the most extreme and virtually universal alien, existential and within, is the woman. There is almost no society that does not put her on a pedestal as the symbol of virtue and/or segregate her for physical or social reasons, real or imaginary: she is weaker in character and body; she is impure because of menstruation; she is less intelligent because her brain is smaller; she is cunning, manipulative, etc. Men adopt a dual attitude towards her: she is both saint and sinner. In Brazil, for instance, her purity is epitomized by the image of the Virgin Mary; during Carnival, however, she becomes the whore, celebrated for her libertinism (DaMatta 1991:107-8). Mérimée's *Carmen* displays all these ambivalencies: she is sensual, exotic (a gypsy), impulsive, emotional, and (simultaneously) a sinner – lustful, callous, and amoral.

The alien is thus an Other by definition; physically or psychologically, he is an outsider, and does not belong. Most societies have stereotypes for certain groups of aliens, and generally they are associated with pollution, in Mary Douglas' sense (1966:2): as agents of change and possibly of chaos, they are feared.

Gods, jesters, and aliens share the common feature and fate of being unusual in some way; socially they are liminal, betwixt and between. Gods and jesters, however, are individuals, and exercise specific functions. Aliens, by contrast, are less clearly defined; they do not necessarily hail from a different realm, nor are they necessarily critics of society (like jesters); they are simply different from the mainstream population. The concepts expounded by both Mayer and Raz are helpful in classifying them. And, as Mayer has shown, the aliens' marginality is what makes them so apt a theme for theatre and the other arts.

General Conclusion

The immortal gods, the versatile jesters, and the threatening-attractive aliens, are all socially and psychologically, and sometimes also culturally, different from Self. They are Others – Good or Bad. In theatre, their stereotyped characteristics are exploited, and, in consequence, they are the often two-dimensional, functional figures. But they are generally reflexive, mirroring the image of Self – be it the individual *Jen* or society and its values. It is not always a precise replica, but serves as commentary or as a call for self-awareness.

The singularity of the three classes relegates them to the margins of the social order. The aliens and jesters might exert influence, the gods power over their “hosts”; they all are able to “alter” the society in which they are marginalized.

In the rigid structure of traditional shadowplay (Javanese Wayang, for example), these Others belong to the hierarchy; they have a clear position and function, as well as a set and necessary role in the story (a point to be discussed below). Nevertheless, they are undeniably Others – they exist to confirm Self and the status quo.

With the exception of Karagöz, the figures of this trio do not ordinarily comprise central shadowplay characters, but they are crucial to the dramatic development. Each has a specific function. For example: God intervenes in human affairs; the jester is a social conscience, bringing the audience to a higher level of understanding; the alien is an agent of disturbance and innovation. Their appearance not only serves to change the direction of events, but can be the drama’s underlying *raison d’être*. These Others can perform an additional function by adding a new dimension to the play, and consequently to the fictional world. The gods contribute a supernatural sphere of reality, which reflects the beliefs of the people and their traditions. The aliens contribute a different culture, with views and norms of conduct which deviate from those of the mainstream. And the jesters, detached from their societies, comment upon them, either affirmatively or critically, intensifying the public’s involvement with the play. The gods, jesters, and aliens all serve to enhance

and deepen the theatrical experience by injecting elements that ultimately further understanding of Self.

IV

THE SHADOWPLAY TRADITION

Wu-ti, emperor of China, of the Han dynasty, was suffering; his favorite wife, Wang, had died. No one could comfort him. The arts and the jokes of the comedian and the clown were too vulgar for him; the tales of the narrators were too boring; the rare foods too tasteless; and not even his many concubines succeeded in comforting him. But the god of kindness was with him, Sciao-wong (also called Ciao-meng) arrived at the court of the emperor and offered to make the ghost of the beautiful Wang appear. Thus, the emperor Wu-ti sat night after night before a stretched screen in front of a door, behind which the spirit of his favorite wife appeared. They would talk about the marvelous days and nights that they had spent together; they reviewed affairs of state and gossiped about the daily intrigues of the court. One day the emperor's love for Wang was so strong that, breaking his own promise not to touch the screen or look behind it, he tore it apart and saw Sciao-wong holding a cutout figure with whose shadows he had evoked the illusion of the spirit of Wang.

René Simmen, *The World of Puppets* 1975:79

Introduction

Scholars are divided in their views concerning shadowplay's land of origin. There is a general consensus that it arose in Asia, probably in India (Pischel 1906) or China (Blackham 1960; Reiniger 1975:15-16; Laufer 1923:36), but decisive proof is lacking. Simmen (1975:79-80) cites controversial evidence of a shadow theatre dating back to the second century BCE in the Sitabenga Cave (in the state of Sarguja) in India. The episode above involving Wu-ti supposedly occurred in 120 BCE, but there are no records to support the legend. According to Simmen (*ibid.*), the first actual account of shadowplay in China is found in the *T'an su*, a 5000-volume encyclopedia dating to the eleventh century; it ascribes the start of shadowplay to the reign of the Sung Emperor Jöng-tsung (1023-1065). Rassers (1982:3-8, 95-215) contends that the Javanese version, Wayang, is indigenous, and derives from early initiation rites. It is possible that shadowplay began concurrently in various places.

By the time of its first mention in historical annals, it is already a well-established and mature form of art. Thus the question of its origins cannot be adequately answered at present. It is important to note, however, that in each of the countries in which it appears it possesses distinct characteristics reflecting the local culture.

The story of Wu-ti (or Wudi) is fictitious; nevertheless, it stresses the connection between shadowplay and the realm of the dead. Shadows are construed as the souls of the deceased, especially ancestors (Laufer 1923:36-37). As such, shadowplay becomes a means of evoking one's forefathers and reaffirming one's lineage. Simmen (1975:80) observes how in various cultures the name of the screen is related to the departed or their world: the "Screen of Death" in China, "Fog and Clouds" in Java, the "Curtain of the Departing [of the hour of death]" in Turkey, the "Screen of Dreams" or the "Veil of the Omnipotent Secret" in Arabia. In many countries, he avers, "shadow" is a synonym for "death", and thus shadowplay is like a spell, a magical event. Its legendary origins in Turkey bear certain similarities to the Chinese story of Wu-ti. Its two main figures, Karagöz and Hacivat, were once workers engaged on the construction of the Green Mosque in Bursa. But their constant banter distracted their fellows to such an extent that progress was seriously hampered, so exasperating the Sultan that he ordered their execution. Afterwards, however, he missed their ebullience and wit, and regretted his deed. It was one of his retainers who erected a screen and manipulated puppets, enabling the two late workers to resume their antics (And 1979:32). – Despite its apparently universal association with the netherworld, shadowplay has assimilated to the ethos of each of the various nations in which it has taken root, often becoming an important mode of cultural expression.

Technically, shadowplay is a form of puppet theatre in which moving silhouettes are cast upon a screen (of silk, cloth, paper, etc.). Unlike other theatrical or puppetry forms, the actual actors or puppets are unseen, only their projection. (In this respect, Javanese *wayang kulit* is exceptional, since the spectators can watch from either side of the screen.) In spite of the performance space being two-dimensional, one has the distinct impression of depth (in contrast to television or cinema). There are a few techniques inherent to the medium that allow for special effects. For

example, the size of the images can be changed by varying the distance of the puppets from the light source; they are smaller and clearer when closer to the screen, becoming larger and more diffuse in approaching the lantern. A jinni, say, which issues from a bottle (next to the screen) grows gradually greater as its puppet is withdrawn. The characters, moreover, can enter and exit from any part of the screen. Or vanish magically – by simply turning the puppet sideways and removing it abruptly.

The flat puppets are generally made of leather, but cardboard, metal, and wood are also used. They are usually one-piece in construction, sometimes with one or more moving attachments, like an arm. The Chinese shadow puppets are composed of eleven separate pieces, which greatly enhances their flexibility. The one-piece puppets tend to have small suggestive movements; the more complex ones can mimic such activities as sitting, walking, running, performing acrobatics, picking up small objects, even hovering in the air, flying, and so forth. As a rule, the puppets are in profile in order to show facial expression. The puppets are either naturalistic depictions of men or fanciful representations of gods, jinn, ogres, etc., with sublime or dreadful features. Set behind a screen and illumined by an oil-lamp or electric bulb, they come to life, and enact heroic or romantic tales, fantastic feats, or burlesque comedy. The plays are generally based on scenarios of a known story or of one written by the puppeteer, who improvises during the performance, adding contemporary references, and thereby bringing the traditional themes closer to the public. His role is essential, in that the success of the performance largely depends on the skill of his manipulation and on his ability to create individual voices for each of his characters; one could even say that he is the “soul” of the puppets. Sometimes there is more than one puppeteer, and the presentations often have musical accompaniment and singing. Thus this seemingly simple art demands, in actuality, a high degree of proficiency. Shadowplay is especially effective in presenting ancestral material (myths, legends, historical dramas), and, thanks to the additive of improvisation, each show becomes a singular and unrepeatable experience.

Most traditional shadowplay had religious significance, certainly in Asia (India, China, Indonesia). It was performed in the context of important rituals

(fertility rites, exorcism, etc.) and on special occasions, such as births, anniversaries, weddings, and funerals; it served to entreat a heroic son or a happy and prosperous future, or to commemorate past deeds. It was utilized to transmit traditions (sacred and secular), and to educate and entertain the audience. This element of entertainment should not be underrated. Even in traditional contexts, shadowplay's improvisational character allows the introduction of political and social commentary, as well as local gossip. This is usually the particular task of the jesters, who appeal to the general populace. In contrast to the idealized heroes, they are comical in aspect, and speak and behave like commoners; they tell jokes and use malicious innuendoes. By this means, the serious character of the classical stories is rendered more accessible, contemporary, and enjoyable. This constant updating of shadowplay is, I believe, one of the factors keeping the ancient form alive. Today, the authorities still employ it as a means of disseminating doctrine, of informing the public about such issues as family planning, and of combating illiteracy (Simmen 1975:86).

This study will concentrate on three forms of shadowplay: Javanese Wayang, Turkish *Karagöz*, and a modern-day version in the work of Ping Chong. I have chosen these particular exemplars because they illustrate the genre's continuity across a wide diversity of history, geography, and culture, while stressing the role of the Other. It is natural to begin with Wayang, the most ancient and elaborate form of shadowplay still extant. *Karagöz* epitomizes the popular spirit of Ottoman Istanbul (and, for this reason, it struggles to survive in a changed world). On the surface, its vernacular stories seem very different from the sacred dramas of Java, but the performances contain intriguing reminiscences of Far Eastern practices and motifs, and many of the same attitudes are voiced. It has been studied far less extensively than its Javanese counterpart. Ping Chong, a widely acclaimed representative of contemporary theatre, employs shadowplay in his multimedia approach; his choice of this particular mode to stress the theme of the Other (which is often central to his oeuvre) confirms my basic conviction that shadowplay is the ideal medium for conveying the Other's essence.

Before focusing on these main topics, however, I shall undertake a brief survey of shadowplay in its other important historical manifestations: in

ancient India and China, where it apparently originated, and whence it derives its tone; and, later, in nineteenth-century France, specifically in the famous cabaret of *Chat Noir*, where the Eastern genre was adapted to the West. My aim in so doing is to provide an overall context for the themes I have chosen to develop.

Shadowplay in India³

According to Brandon (1993:64), Indian theatre has developed in a continuum through three different phases: Sanskrit theatre, rural theatre, and modern theatre. Sanskrit theatre came into being and evolved between the first and tenth centuries CE. The dominant religion (apart from Buddhist interludes) was Hinduism, and Sanskrit was the language of its priests and kings, who wielded both cultural and religious power. The Hindu epics, committed to writing between about 1000 to 100 BCE, comprised the main source of dramatic material: the *Mahabharata*, an account of dynastic struggle and civil war, provides a comprehensive portrait of ancient India; the *Ramayana*, which describes Rama's quest to regain his throne and abducted wife; and the *Puranas*, a collection of stories recounting the life and exploits of Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

By the tenth-eleventh centuries CE, conquerors from Persia and Afghanistan brought Islam to India, an event which was followed by mass conversions of the local populace, the almost total eclipse of Buddhism, and the loss of social and political power by the Hindu elite. Mohammed's adherents forbade theatrical performances. In reaction to the Muslim sway, a movement known as Vaisnavism arose, its aim being to renew faith in the Hindu doctrines and values indigenous to India. It promoted the development of theatre in the villages throughout the subcontinent, serving the masses in a multitude of regional languages. This rural theatre flourished between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

³ Fig. 1, p. 61.

Between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, British occupation transformed India into an urban society. This is the period in which modern theatre had its origins, and it continues to reflect the views and concerns of the educated Indian public (*ibid.*:64-65).

Contractor (1984 – no page numbering) believes that shadowplay in India antedates theatre with human actors. It evolved out of pictorial performances, that is,



1. Shadow puppet from Andhra, India. Sita from the Ramayana. (Hogarth and Bussell 1985:30).

static puppet arrangements: e.g., the *Chitra Kathi* of Pinguli in Maharashtra, the *Pads* in Rajasthan, other *Chitra Kathas* in the South, and the *Yampatta* in Bihar. Puppet theatre in a wide variety of forms characterized village life. It is difficult to date their

origins exactly, as records are scarce (in fact, generally nonexistent), and it is likely that shadowplay developed concurrently in diverse areas. It presently survives mostly in the south of the subcontinent, and its genres include a variety of shadowplay types, such as the *gombeyatta* in Karnataka, the *pavaikuthu* in Kerala, the *Ravana chhaya* in Orissa, and the *tollu bommalu* in Andhra Pradesh. Because of its conservative character, one can surmise that early Indian shadowplay (like the epics on which it was based) was not substantially different from its extant forms.

Generally speaking, shadowplay in India has religious significance, both in terms of its contents and the occasions on which it is performed. Most of the enacted dramas are stories taken from the aforementioned *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and *Puranas*. Often the epics are rewritten in a regional version: e.g., the *pavaikuthu*, which is based on a Tamil rendition of the *Ramayana*, the *Kambar Ramayana*, named after the ninth-century poet Kambar, its reputed author.

Usually the puppeteers are wanderers hired for specific occasions. Some are affiliated with temples like the *gombeyatta* performers, and are supported during the year. Companies are mostly composed of the main puppeteer and a few assistants (often family members) and musicians. The main puppeteer knows all the standard texts, manipulates the puppets, and provides the voice of most, if not all, of the characters (although sometimes a woman, often his wife, produces the female voices). In the case of large puppets, such as *gombeyatta*, which can be from 75 cm to 1 m in height, two puppeteers are required to manipulate each.

Puppets vary considerably in size from state to state, the largest being the *gombeyatta*, whereas the smallest, the *pavaikuthu*, reach only 10 cm in height. In some traditions, the size of the puppet is dictated by its status: the larger the puppet, the higher its social prestige. Refined characters have fine physiognomy, whereas demons have gross features, reflecting their crudity. In many styles, there are different puppets to represent the same character in his or her different moods.

The puppets are made of different kinds of leather – goat, antelope, buffalo, and deer – according to region. The leather is treated until it becomes translucent; then it is cut and brightly painted; sometimes there are perforations for dress and ornaments, so that the silhouettes reveal the colours and designs. (By way

of exception, the puppets of *pavaikuthu* are made of thick, opaque leather with few perforations, whereby they appear solid black.) Many puppets have articulations – mostly at an arm or hand, sometimes at the head or legs. Dancers can be articulated at the waist. The puppets are held in the centre by split bamboo canes, the moving parts by separate sticks.

Most performances are held between the monsoons (that is, twice a year), and also during religious festivals. Any space in which people can assemble serves as a venue. Bamboo poles are stuck into the earthen floor, a white screen is stretched between them, and the sides are covered by cloths. The puppeteer squats unseen on a woven mat. The shadows are cast by means of an oil-lamp suspended at some distance from the screen. The musicians, arrayed behind the puppeteer, play the *tabla* (small drum), cymbals, and bells; sometimes there are also singers. The performance generally starts with a *puja* (prayer) to Ganapati (Ganesh), god of success and beginnings, whose puppet is affixed by a thorn to the screen, together with puppets of animals and trees. Sometimes (e.g., in *tollu bommallu*) a prayer is recited to Saraswathi, goddess of learning. Stock characters often appear in a comic interlude and distribute blessings to the sponsors: in *tollu bommallu*, for example, Katikayata, a drunken lecher, and Bangawaka, his fat huckstering wife. The epic follows. The performance commences in the evening and often finishes at dawn (Brandon 1993:114). At its conclusion there are further prayers to Ganapati.

It is important to note the special character of the *pavaikuthu* of Kerala. As Brandon explains (1993:101-102), *pava* means “figure of a shadow”, and *kuthu* means “play”. Blackburn (1996:2) translates *tol pava kuttu* as “leather puppet play”. One of its peculiarities is that the plays are based on a Tamil version of the *Ramayana*, the *Kambar Ramayana* (or *Kamparamayana*, according to Blackburn 1996), probably composed (as mentioned above) by the poet Kambar by the ninth century (Brandon 1993:101). It is said that the shadowplay inspired by it originated in the fifteenth century. The people of this region speak Malayalam instead of Tamil. The performances are given by the *palavar* (scholar or poet). The text is in the form of questions and answers, arguments and counter-arguments. The verses are chanted or sung in Tamil, while the discussions are conducted in a mixture of Tamil and

Malayalam. The play is presented during the temple festivals for the goddess Bhagawati, generally in the spring. The performances can last from seven to 41 nights; today, however, owing to the fast pace of modern life, they rarely exceed 21 days (Contractor 1984 – no page numbering).

Another peculiarity of the *pavaikuthu* is its being the only traditional Indian shadowplay that has a permanent theatre, the *kuthumadom* (the drama-house), which is located on the grounds of Kali's temple (according to Brandon 1993:102; Bhagavati's temple, according to Blackburn 1996:1). It comprises a long structure with walls and a roof. Its façade is open, and a white screen is stretched across it. It faces south (towards the temple) so that the goddess can watch the dramatized killing of Rava; she missed the original event, being occupied just then with the slaying of the demon Devika (Contractor 1984 – no page numbering). It is customary, as soon as the screen is installed, to set a bench before it for the goddess (*ibid.*).

In spite of its religious character, the *pavaikuthu* has a somewhat marginal status. It is not permissible to perform it within the temple of the goddess, in contrast to other art forms, such as the *Ottan Tullal* (a kind of dance in which the dancer recites mythic stories in Malayan) or the *Kathakali* dance-drama. It commences only after the conclusion of the other events in the main temple. According to Blackburn's eye-witness account, a number of people arrive during the early preparations asking for relief from troubles; they offer a small donation, and their names are recorded. At about one o'clock in the morning, a procession with drums issues from the temple and encircles the drama-house thrice. There is a ritual transfer, whereby the temple's heavy brass lamp is "lent" in order to illumine the puppet play. The procession disperses, and only some sponsors and spectators remain. The main puppeteer makes a *puja* to Ganesh, whose puppet is pinned to the screen. He places offerings of rice, flowers, incense, and coconut on a banana leaf on the floor. Then he chants verses, lights the incense, and waves the puppet about. The other puppeteers prostrate themselves before him, each touching his feet as a sign of respect, until he touches the Ganesa puppet. Finally, the temple lamp is lit with the cotton wicks of 21 oil-filled coconuts, and placed behind the screen. The performance begins with drumming and the chanting of devotional songs, as two Brahmin

puppets execute a dance. The puppeteer starts with a proverbial verse, then he blesses the patrons of the night. The drama opens with the puppeteers singing the narrative verses, followed by commentary. It lasts until five o'clock in the morning, when the wicks are extinguished. The coconuts are distributed among the puppeteers and drummers. And there is no audience to witness the final proceedings, since the play is not given with a public in mind (1996:8-9)!

India is one of the original centres of shadowplay, but only vestiges of the art survive. Brandon (1993:89) claims that in the *gombeyatta* of Karnataka there are still some 300 families who carry on its tradition. Nevertheless, shadowplay is no longer widely popular in India. Blackburn (1996:1) compares it to Buddhism, which arose and thrived in India, but which today has few local adherents, in contrast to many of the neighbouring countries, in which it remains the principal faith. Shadowplay "was thought to have vanished from its Indian birthplace as it migrated and flourished elsewhere in Asia" (*ibid.*). Cinema has largely supplanted it. But *pavaikuthu* endures. There are still more than 80 drama-houses offering it (although in 1989 Blackburn located only 25 active puppeteers). He accounts for its persistence by virtue of its sacred text and the belief that donations will benefit the donor. The presentation of the *Kamparamayanam* in shadowplay is considered the "common man's *puja*, a medium through which everyone may address their problems to Bhagavati, though attendance is not required" (*ibid.*:238). All other forms of shadowplay in India are performed for an audience. Ironically, as he observes, the very fact that *pavaikuthu* lacks one may be responsible for its survival in age dominated by electronic entertainment (*ibid.*).

In sum, shadowplay barely exists in today's India. Traditionally, its practice was passed from one generation to another within specific families or from master to apprentice. Unfortunately, there is no formal institution devoted to its preservation, although performing troupes can still be found here and there.

In travelling beyond India's borders, shadowplay retained the Hindu legends, but both – art and belief – were transformed in their countries of adoption. In Indonesia, for example, the *Mahabharata* was fundamental, but it generally acquired new meanings, as the Indian epic was absorbed into the local mythico-

historical tradition; it virtually became an original creation. This is particularly striking with respect to the comic character who speaks directly to the audience (in the Wayang of Java and Bali, for example). However, a key element remained: shadowplay's sacred character. All the variations in the region have inherited the *Mahabharata*, even if Hinduism was supplanted by other religions, such as Islam.⁴

Shadowplay in China⁵

Like Laufer (1923:37), Jilin (1988:5-7) states that Chinese shadowplay was religious in its origins, and he cites ancient legends from various parts of the country in support of his thesis. One from Shanxi Province, for example, relates that the puppeteers of the *zhichuang ying* ("paper window shadow") – who date back to the Shang Dynasty (sixteenth to eleventh century BCE) – honour Huang Lound Zhenren (Yellow Dragon Immortal) as the founder of shadowplay. The Immortal and his nephew reputedly amused themselves by cutting out the shapes of animals and people, and using them to cast shadows on a (probably silk-paper) window. This legend affirms that the puppet shows were linked to Taoism. Another such legend involves Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy in Chinese Buddhism. She is considered the foundress and ancestral patron of shadowplay, and, in the tale, she cuts figurines out of bamboo leaves in order to illustrate her Buddhist teachings. Erda (1979:9) also cites the religious themes of shadowplay in the Tang Dynasty (618-906). At this time, Taoism and Buddhism coexisted, and their notions concerning the spiritual needs of mankind were reflected in numerous legends. But even if Chinese shadowplay has religious roots, it gradually evolved into a secular form of entertainment, and, in contradistinction to India, its cultic character was lost. Nevertheless, traditional plays with Taoist or Buddhist themes remained popular on account of their legendary and exciting plots.

⁴ Contrator (1984) relates having met individual puppeteers of different shadowplay styles, with very delapidated puppets. They probably lack disciples.

⁵ Fig. 2, p. 67.



2. Chinese shadow puppets. Scene from *Boating in the Lake* (Jilin 1988:30).

However (*pace* Jilin), none of the legends are substantiated by documents, and thus the origins of shadowplay in China are purely speculative. According to Berliner (1986:125-134), most historians trace it back to the Song Dynasty in the eleventh century. This period, characterized by wealth and political tranquility, witnessed advancement in all the arts, from the formal varieties (brush-painting, ceramics, and literature) to the folk genres. Urbanization promoted the growth of the middle class, which, in turn, sponsored public entertainment. The jugglers and acrobats who had formerly performed only in the houses of the rich could now be seen in the market-place. The performers could earn a living among the commoners, whose economic circumstances had improved markedly. It is likely that Chinese shadowplay originated among the lower and middle classes. There are several accounts from the Song period describing it. In 1147, for example, Meng Yuan Lao notes the presence of shadow-theatre tents on the street corners of Kaifeng (once the Chinese capital). Zhou Mi describes the practice of inviting shadowplay troupes to perform at the birthday celebrations of new-born sons or elderly men. This tradition survived in Beijing until the early twentieth century, and still is found in villages today.

Stalberg (1984:86-87) describes parallel forms of shadowplay during the same period: the *qiao-ying xi* and the *da-ying xi* (“theatre of large shadows”), in which human actors, probably mimicking the movements of shadow puppets, cast their silhouettes on the screen.

Later on, the Mongolian conquest of China and the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) resulted in the wide diffusion of shadowplay. Troupes were sent to entertain soldiers in remote parts of China and even in foreign lands – Persia, Turkey, Arabia, and Egypt – subdued by the conquerors. It has been suggested (Berliner 1986:133) that shadowplay developed in these countries under Chinese influence. It was brought to Europe in the seventeenth century by missionaries who had travelled to China. In France it was known as *les ombres chinoises*, and it was also familiar in England and Germany; in 1774 Goethe arranged for a shadowplay production of *Faust*.

The expansion and development of both live theatre and shadowplay continued under the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1911). Shadowplays were given in the market-places and tea-houses, and, as before, commissioned for celebrations or simple amusement at home. These domestic performances were especially relished by the women, who, owing to the strict moral code, were not allowed to attend public shows. Reiniger (1975:16) even suggests that the origin of shadowplay in China was due to this social stricture: since women were prohibited from entering the theatres, operas were converted into shadowplays and enacted in their quarters.

By the end of the nineteenth century, foreign invasion, internal revolt, and the competition of the cinema forced puppeteers to search for new forms of employment. Leopold Laufer, arriving in Beijing in 1901, found traditional shadowplay on the verge of extinction (or so he thought). He was able to locate just one living craftsman-puppeteer, from whom he bought a collection of 500 shadow puppets, musical instruments, stage curtains, and dramatic texts, preserved today in New York in the Museum of Natural History. Fortunately, Laufer's prognosis proved incorrect, because there was still a small number of family troupes and active performers. Nevertheless, with the fall of the Qing Dynasty in the Republican Revolution of 1911, shadowplay went into further decline. By 1949, however, the Communist authorities revived it as a means of disseminating doctrine and criticizing foes. Plays and puppets became more naturalistic and technical improvements were introduced. Later, during the Cultural Revolution, there was an attempt to suppress shadowplay as a relic of the past, but the new climate of freedom that emerged in the latter 1970s restored the traditional puppets and their themes, based on history and legend, testimony that the ancient art still appeals to today's audience (Stalberg 1984:8-9).

Repertoire

As with folk art generally, the scripts of the traditional shadowplay tales are mostly of unknown authorship. Some were written down, others

transmitted orally from one generation of puppeteers to the next, carefully safeguarded within the family, being their source of livelihood (Stalberg 1984:6). As a rule, the script comprises a rough scenario which the puppeteer elaborates by improvisation, according to the situation and the public (Blackham 1960:13). Since these stories are well known to the audience, the plots are unalterable, the main characters are fixed, and the crucial events are indispensable. The success of the performance depends upon the puppeteer's wit and invention, which makes each presentation unique, and contributes to the art's enduring appeal (Wimsatt 1936:43-49; Blackham 1960:13-17; Erda 1979:10; Stalberg 1984:6).

The repertoire, comprising the traditional works of live Chinese theatre plus others original to puppetry, can be broadly classified into histories, popular dramas, Taoist and Buddhist legends, Confucian parables, comedies, and burlesques. Often the themes are combined. Some of the most popular plays present episodes from the following cycles:

- *The Tale of the Three Kingdoms*, a historical drama concerning the intrigues and military clashes attending the downfall of the Han Dynasty (220 CE) and the founding of the rival kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu (221-589 AD). It provides the framework for a series of fantastic epic plays, full of battles, which stress dexterous puppet acrobatics – a favorite of children and adults alike.
- *The Journey to the West*, based on the folk novel of the same name, relates the adventures of the young monk, Xuan Zhuang, who travels to India in order to bring the Buddhist scriptures to China. His more or less loyal servants were indentured by the gods as punishment for various transgressions: the Monkey King, the central figure, a trickster *par excellence*, beloved for his cleverness and daring; Chu Pachieh, the pig; Sha Ho-shang, Sandy; and the White Pony.
- *The White Serpent*, the classic tale of Bai Suzhen, the snake who disguises herself as a beautiful woman, falls in love, and marries Xu Xian. But Fa Hai, the evil monk of Golden Mountain Temple, knows the truth and tries to

destroy the couple's happiness by revealing her true identity to Xu. After many tribulations and a great final confrontation with Fa Hai, Bai Suzhen prevails, and the couple is reunited. In earlier interpretations, the White Snake appears as an enchantress, that is, a devious character, struggling against the forces of faith.

- *Feast of the Peaches*, a Taoist drama that presents the gods and goddesses in all their glory. The Western Queen Mother has an orchard whose fruit confers immortality, but which takes three thousand years to ripen. When this finally occurs, she holds a banquet for the chief Taoist gods. The main characters are the Eight Immortals – a Courtier, a Hermit, a Youthful Student, a Hermaphrodite, a Sage inhabiting the body of a beggar, a Strolling Minstrel, an Octogenarian Wizard, and a Beautiful Lady – who collectively symbolize leisure, freedom, and spirituality. After the festivities, flying homewards over the perilous Sea of Life, they are assailed by the stratagems of the Dragon Princess, which results in a confrontation between the forces of heaven and the rebellious demons (Wimsatt 1936:51-59).

Many of the legends illustrate the Chinese conception of heaven and hell, which, in turn, replicates the imperial bureaucracy on earth, with various courts and officials. The Laufer collection includes several figures suffering typical punishments in hell: criminals being sawed in half, victims writhing in kettles of boiling oil or on flaming beds (Erda 1979:10).

The Communist regime presented propaganda plays with contemporary themes: e.g., tales of peasants oppressed by evil landlords, the crimes of America during the Korean War, and so forth. After the hiatus of the Cultural Revolution (when, as mentioned above, shadowplay was forbidden), the village troupes returned, and the old dramas were revived, confirming the predilection of the Chinese people for their classical legends. At present, new and old plays coexist and are equally popular.

The Puppets: Styles and Iconography

The earliest shadow puppets were probably made of paper, as still today in the poorer rural districts. Later on, paper was replaced by leather, which is more pliant and durable. In fact, the Chinese for shadowplay is *by yin shi*, “theatre of leather shadows”. The hide of diverse animals – calf, sheep, pig, etc. – was used, depending on the region. Ass is preferred, as it is highly transparent after processing, absorbs paint well, and can easily be cut into elaborate patterns. Puppets are also regionally distinct in terms of size, hew, and design; the finest and best-known being those from Beijing and the province of Shaanxi.

The puppets are generally made of eleven separate components: head, torso, hip, and two upper arms, forearms, hands, and legs. With the exception of the head, they are permanently joined by strings, affording flexibility both for large movements, such as walking, running, sitting, turning somersaults, engaging in swordplay, and for delicate movements, such as holding a teacup. The separate head allows a “change of costume”, and the same character can exhibit different moods and aspects of his or her personality; it also facilitates realistic scenes of decapitation. The head is usually shown in profile; there are also three-quarter views; devious types and special characters (like deities and saints) are sometimes presented frontally. The feet are in profile, the legs in three-quarter. This combination of different perspectives gives the puppet the illusion of three-dimensionality.

The puppet is attached to three wire rods with bamboo or reed ends to enable easier manipulation: the central *rod of life* is connected to the neck, the others to the wrists. The puppeteer holds the central rod with his left hand and manipulates the two others with his right hand. Skilled puppeteers might hold two puppets at a time, sometimes even more. Battle scenes, however, require two manipulators. During the performance, the inactive puppets are laid against the screen, which is slanted towards the audience. Now and then the puppeteer nudges them in order to “keep them alive”.

The iconography of Chinese shadowplay is the same as that of live theatre. The puppets are normally divided into the following categories, recognizable by their heads:

Sheng – male, usually scholars or officials

Jing – male, with painted faces

Dan – female, cultured, martial, or menial

Chou – comic, male or female

In addition, there are the *Mo*, secondary roles – supernatural beings, including gods, demons, and spirits. Each of the categories includes a wide range of subtypes. The word *Wu*, for example, preceding the label of a certain class, indicates fighting and acrobatics. Thus the *Wuchou* are clowns adept at fighting, and *Wudan* is a warrior woman.

Each type is recognizable by specific traits and symbols, familiar to the audience. The nobles, for example, both men (*Sheng*) and women (*Dan*), have their faces completely excised, except for the graceful outlines of the eyebrows, eyes, and lips. Usually *Chou* and *Jing* have solid faces, rounded foreheads, and protruding ears, eyes, and nose.

As in Chinese Opera, *Jing* has intricate face painting, as well as incisions for light, in order to emphasize the mask-like expression. Similarly, the *Chou* often have an open area surrounding their eyes to simulate the white patch smeared on the face of the stage comic.

Again, as in the opera, personality and rank are conveyed by explicit conventions, such as colour, beard-type, costume, and ornament. The colours have symbolic meaning. In dress, red designates good characters of high rank; green is for men of high virtue; yellow is the Emperor's hue; white is for the very old or the very young, as well as for mourning; black is worn by men of fierce disposition; it also serves for informal daily wear. In make-up, colours have additional character symbolism: red on the face implies good, virtuous, loyal, courageous; white is

wicked and cunning; black is integrity and boldness; green is the hallmark of spirits and demons.

The theatre is generally an enclosed space surrounded by cloth or some other material designed to conceal the puppeteers and the musicians. It is fronted by a screen of cotton, silk, or paper measuring about 1.5 m in length by 1 m in height. The sides of the screen usually have festive red curtains with designs signifying happiness and good fortune. A lantern or electric bulb hangs above the head of the shadow-master. The puppets to be used during performance are suspended on wires to the sides or in the rear for easy reach.

Puppeteers

In the past, scholars who failed the exam affording entrance to the imperial bureaucracy sometimes took advantage of their knowledge of history and literature to become storytellers or puppeteers. Retired actors, too, familiar with the traditional tales from their experience on the stage, resorted to puppetry. In rural areas, it was not uncommon for farmers who were also puppeteers to pass down the necessary skills, such as knowledge of the tales, manipulation, and improvisation, to their sons. Even today, during the winter months of slack work, these farmer-puppeteers perform shadowplays in order to supplement their income (Berliner 1986:147).

A typical shadow-puppet troupe has a puppet-master, the “upper hand”, and several assistants, the “lower hands” (Obraztsov 1961:29). Four or five musicians, who play the prelude and musical interludes, sit behind the puppeteer

with the traditional Chinese instruments: the two-stringed *uh-er*, large and small drums, brass finger cymbals, flute, and wooden clapper.

The close similarity of Chinese shadowplay to Chinese Opera in terms of plays, characters, costumes, stylized movements, music, and so on, has suggested to some scholars that the latter derived its conventions from the puppetry tradition – a theory which cannot be confirmed. Obraztsov (1961:29-32) mentions a long-standing discussion concerning the priority of the respective forms of art. Although shadowplay allows for greater possibilities, e.g., tricks, magic, supernatural characters (gods travelling in the air on clouds), etc., which cannot be replicated in live theatre, it is undeniable there was reciprocal influence. Actors in Chinese Opera copied the gestures of the shadow puppets, whereas the painted faces and costumes of the latter derived from the symbolism of the theater (Erda 1979:9).

Shadowplay in the West: The *Chat Noir* Cabaret⁶

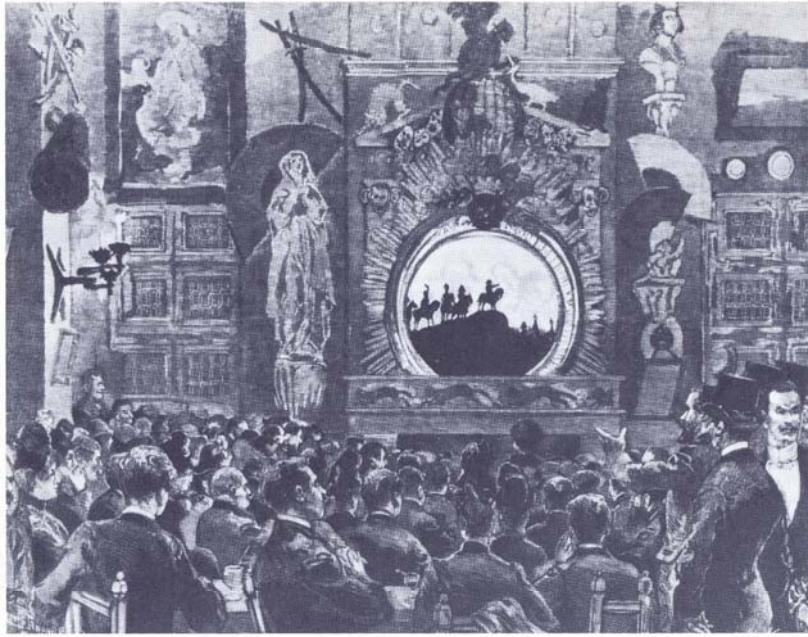
Shadowplay came from the Far East, probably via the Silk Road, to the Middle East, giving rise to the Turkish *Karagöz* (Black Eye) and (considerably later) the Greek *Karagioz*. It reached Europe by the seventeenth century. In France it was called *les ombres chinoises*, reflecting the assumption that it was Chinese in origin. Some believe that Western travellers to the Levant and Far East brought its practice home; others that it was introduced by Gypsies or other itinerant artists (Simmen 1975:84).

In Europe, shadowplay became a form of entertainment with a distinctly artistic cast. In France, François-Dominique Séraphin (1747-1800) established a theatre in Versailles combining marionettes and silhouettes (Bordat and Boucrot 1956:77). Shadowplay continued to be cultivated well into the nineteenth

⁶ Fig. 3, p.76

century. Historically, its most important European venue was the Chat Noir Cabaret (1881-1897). *Fin-de-siècle* interest in this art can be understood within the context of the avant-garde's enthusiasm for minor or marginal theatrical forms associated with popular culture: puppet and marionette shows, pantomime, and shadowplay. These offered the additional advantage of being small-scale, and thus easily adapted to the usually modest stage at the disposal of the average cabaret.

The Chat Noir's owner was Rodolphe Salis, a one-time aspiring painter, who opened his concern in Montmartre, a downtrodden and peripheral neighbourhood, due to meager funds. He associated himself with the bohemian circle of the Hydropathes, who abandoned their fashionable haunts in the Latin Quarter, and turned his cabaret into the period's avant-garde centre. The Chat Noir already featured an ordinary puppet theatre, and the idea of introducing shadowplay seems to have originated with the musician Charles de Sivry. The first piece, *Madame Garde-Tout*, was written by the caricaturist Henri Somm. Salis asked the twenty-years-old Henri Rivière, a Chat Noir habitué, to take control of the production. Rivière was a painter and graphic artist, and his functions extended from designing and making the puppets to sets,



3. Caran D'Ache, view of the interior of the Chat Noir during a shadowplay, 1887 (Appignanesi 1976:22).

lighting, and directing the amateur puppeteers. It was his idea to revive the Séraphim's shadowplay tradition, and it met with great success. With time, other artists joined in the enterprise. It seems that *les ombres chinoises*, unlike their Asian and Levantine prototypes, barely involved manipulation, but rather consisted of tableaux – complex but essentially static pictures. Nevertheless, Rivière's innovations were brilliant. The figures themselves, initially simple cardboard cutouts, became increasingly sophisticated. Later, he used zinc cutouts and even glass panels on which he painted figures. Manipulation was subordinate to the ingenuity of the designs and the method of presentation. As the productions became increasingly ambitious, he discovered that it was possible to achieve more dynamic effects, especially in the crowd scenes, by attaching the figures to one another and parading a multitude across the screen in a broad band, instead of, as heretofore, moving them one by one along its base.

In the use of lighting, Rivière experimented with the placement of the figures relative to the screen. The customarily appeared as black silhouettes, but, drawn back, they turned grey – the further away, the lighter they became. Afterwards, entire scenes were painted on glass panels, creating the impression of stained glass. In a sense, this anticipated colour film.

Rivière used both music, generally improvised by a pianist, and speech. Salis reserved for himself the right to introduce the shows and comment on them while they were being performed. He possessed a good voice and considerable wit. It is impossible to convey the Chat Noir shows adequately, as one of the elements of their success was Salis' improvisations, and even those that were recorded are incomprehensible today, their context being unknown. Maurice Donnay, a cabaret regular, described his comments as a "...mosaic of archaisms and neologisms, or slang formulas and literary citations; he had a bag of original expressions, of shocking words, of striking ideas, of jocular images and grandiloquence. He entered daringly into a phrase. We thought – he'll never get out of it! – And he always got out!" (Bordat and Boucrot 1956:159-161; my translation).

The themes of the shadowplays were varied, but they were frequently satirical and risqué. There were also poetical dramas based on religious and mystical

motifs reflecting the fashionable Symbolist movement of the turn-of-the-century. Some 40 shadowplay productions were given at the Chat Noir, the most famous being Henri Somm's *L'Eléphant* and Caran d'Ache's Napoleonic "epic", *L'Epopée*. Following Salis' death, in 1897, his cabaret closed.

But shadowplay had already achieved popularity, and was offered in various Parisian venues, either as part of other kinds of puppetry shows or by itself. The cabaret as an artistic institution spread all over Europe, and some continued the shadowplay tradition; notable among them is Els Quatre Gats in Barcelona (Segel 1987:66-83; Appignanesi 1976:15-22; Bordat and Boucrot 1956:151-173).

Conclusion

The cultural influence of India on the shadowplay of its neighbouring countries is obvious. Unfortunately, however, our knowledge of the diffusion process is very limited, since shadowplay is a popular art that left few documentary traces. Nevertheless, we can safely affirm that traditional shadowplay in Asia essentially served to preserve the history, legends, and religious beliefs of the various peoples. The characters are generally well-known: heroes who combat evil enemies and consort with

beautiful heroines, while being observed and protected by powerful and temperamental gods, and entertained by clever and mischievous clowns and jesters. Today, in both India and China, shadowplay is still performed, but no longer enjoys the wide appeal it had in former centuries. The same applies to the Middle East, where shadowplay offered lively and witty social commentary until the end of the Ottoman Empire. Attempts have been made to revive the art, mainly in Turkey, but it has remained so far at the level of innocent entertainment for children.

In the West, by contrast, it is a highly developed genre for both young and adult audiences, and has incorporated modern technology, with different modes of lighting, puppets, and human actors. There are several puppetry companies concentrating on shadowplay, notably *Gioco Vitta*, in Italy, and the duo of Augustin

and Amoros, in France. Shadowplay is also used by theatrical companies in occasional scenes within a larger opus, as is the case of the multimedia director Ping Chong, whose oeuvre forms part of this study.





5. Kayon (Gunungan) (Scott-Kemal 1970: Frontispiece).

WAYANG KULIT: JAVANESE SHADOWPLAY

Introduction

Javanese shadowplay, *wayang kulit*, is a traditional form of art reflecting a centuries-old praxis, and, if not as popular as once, it still seems to retain its importance as guardian of the ethnic heritage.

Wayang means "shadow" in Javanese, and today it designates either the flat, leather puppet employed in shadowplay or a dramatic performance. The complete generic name of the ancient shadowplay is *wayang kulit*, *kulit* meaning "skin" or "leather". *Wayang* followed by another qualifying term indicates some other dramatic form: *wayang wong*, for example, is a dance drama with live actors, *wong* meaning "man" (Holt 1967:128).

The performance of *wayang* is conventional in format. It starts in the evening, especially in the dry monsoon season, and lasts for about nine hours – until sunrise (Brandon 1993:1).

The relations and values in *wayang* are modelled on the Javanese court's elaborate etiquette, and expressed in its idiom of Old Javanese (*Kawi* – barely understood by the audience) and Sanskrit, except for the comic scenes, in which clownish and vulgar behaviour is allowed, and the characters speak in easily comprehensible Low Javanese (*ngoko*), and familiar topics, such as local gossip, are often raised (Brandon 1993:31).

A *wayang* performance is generally a social-religious affair, and normally occurs on family occasions and in the course of celebrations involving the community or (sometimes) institutions and associations. The most common family affairs concern the life-cycle: e.g., the birth of a son or marriage of a daughter. Singular circumstances, such as the fulfilment of a vow or the purification of a house or yard, might also warrant a performance. The community celebrations are similarly related to the cyclical episodes in its existence: the annual purification of

the village or the well, or the annual ceremony promoting the people's well-being. As a rule, the nature of the occasion determines the choice of the story (*lakon*). The celebration of a birth, for example, dictates that the theme concern one of the heroes who will serve the newborn son as model. In a community celebration, by contrast, the *lakon* might concern the return of the rice goddess, Dewi Sri, since, by tradition, the performance is meant to convey the wishes of the populace to its invisible guardians (Groenendael 1985:112-132). The spiritual importance of the event also influences the choice of story. Some plays are believed to be dangerously potent: *Murwakala*, for example, a ritual purification to avert evil, in which Batara Kala (Shiva's wrathful emanation) and Batari Durga (the destructive form of Uma, his consort) appear (Holt 1967:125).

The family that sponsors a wayang performance enhances its prestige; the community ensures its concord and prosperity; and an institution or association confirms its image as a pillar of society. In sum, wayang brings honour to its sponsors and pleasure to the audience and, as such, is intrinsic to Java's social life (Keeler 1992:43).

Origins

The origins of wayang are uncertain. The first actual records of its existence date to the tenth century (Holt 1967:128), but, being described as an established art, one can posit a much older history. It is commonly assumed that Javanese shadowplay arose in China or India in the rituals surrounding the ancestor cult. Claire Holt (1967:125) conjectures that wayang's traditional function was related to exorcism, propitiation, and the invocation of fertility. She cites its many similarities to the shadowplay of Kerala, South Indian, basing herself on Harding's eyewitness account (*ibid.*:129-130): its aura of sacredness, the themes, the puppet types, chanted recitation, and the role of commentators. There are also divergences, however: in Kerala, more than one performer manipulates the puppets; instrumental music, as well as spoken narration and dialogue, are absent; and the puppets are notably different in appearance. The Chinese connection is also tenuous. It is even possible that shadowplay was imported to China from Java, as there was sea traffic

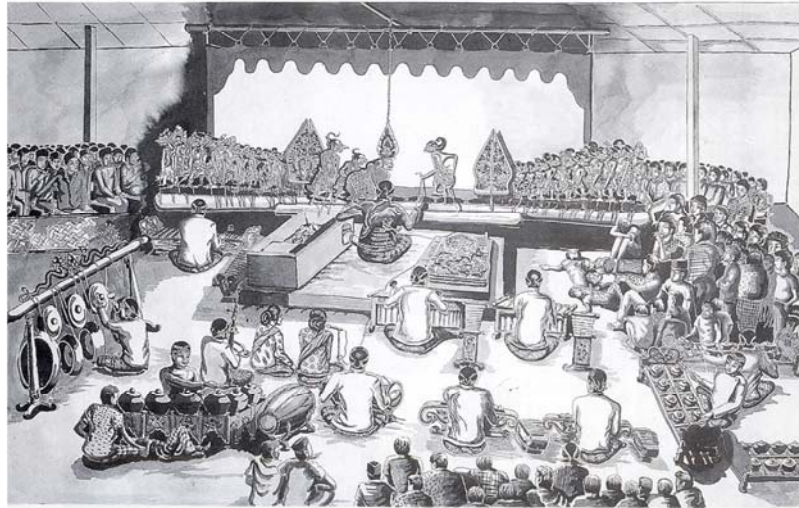
between the two countries in the tenth century. Holt (1967:130) raises the issue of "parallel invention or diffusion". A few authors have argued that the shadowplay of Java is an indigenous invention. Most prominently, G.A.J. Hazeu (1897, cited by Rassers 1982:100-101) proposes that it evolved out of animistic ancestor worship: the souls of the dead were invoked as shadows in order to solicit advice and magical assistance. Rassers (*ibid.*:95-215), developing Hazeu's thesis, observes that all the wayang equipment has Javanese, not Indian, names. He contends that Indian shadowplay promoted the development of the ancestor worship ritual into a sophisticated art form.

Thus, owing to the lack of adequate documentation, the origins of wayang remain speculative.

The Stage

Wayang is singular in that the audience can either sit facing the screen (as is customary in shadowplay), watching the shadows of the puppets, or behind the puppeteer, watching him manipulate the actual puppets. According to nineteenth-century accounts, the women only beheld the shadows; today, however, both sexes can watch the puppeteer (fig.6, p.85). Brandon (1993:36-37) affirms that true connoisseurs of wayang prefer the screen perspective. The screen (*kelir*) is of white fabric bordered by a red strip and stretched across a wooden frame. The bottom strip represents the floor of the stage. Traditionally, the light source is a flickering oil-lamp (*blencong*), often shaped like Garuda, the mythical sun bird, but electric bulbs have been introduced in more contemporary settings (*ibid.*:37). The lamp, symbolizing life, cannot be extinguished during the performance (Bordat and Boucrot 1956:20). Below the screen there are two banana-trunk logs (*debog* or *gedebog*); they are laid horizontally, one raised slightly over the other. The two-dimensional puppets, when not in use, are stuck by their pointed handles into these logs – those of the just party on the right, those of the unjust party on the left. The highest-ranking puppets are inserted into the upper log. The central space is left open for the performance, and the puppets on the logs, facing outwards, are arrayed by size, from the smallest, adjoining the centre, to the largest, on the fringes (Keeler

1992:7-8; Brandon 1993:37; Djajasoebata 1999:77). The sole puppeteer (*dalang*) sits



6. Wayang stage - Drawing by Suharso (Keeler 1992:12).

between the light-source and the screen, and relates the stories while manipulating the puppets. Seated behind him is the *gamelan*, an orchestral ensemble of twelve to twenty percussion instruments. In their middle is one or two female singers (*pesinden*). Important performances can involve half a dozen *pesinden*, and male singers may also join in for certain scenes (*ibid.*). The *dalang* also utilizes three implements for sound effects: two wooden tappers (*tjempala*) and a set of four or five hanging metal plates (*keprajak, keprak, or ketjerek*). He sits cross-legged with the *kotak*, the wooden puppet box, on his left. He holds the large *tjempala* in his left hand and the smaller one between the large and index toes of his right foot. He taps the *kotak* with either *tjempala* or the metal *keprajak* in order to transmit signals to the *gamelan* or to produce sound effects (Brandon 1993:37; Djajasoebata 1999:77).

Near the *dalang* are ritualistic objects: a bowl of incense (*padupan*), lit at the beginning of the performance, and a food and flower sacrifice to the spirits (*sajen*) (Djajasoebata 1999:77).

The Dalang

The *dalang* is crucial to the existence and continuity of the wayang tradition (Holt 1967:131). The word "dalang" itself has been variously construed. According to Hazeu (1897:23), it means "itinerant", in reference to his vocational wandering. Moerdowo (1982:51) derives "dalang" from *ngudal wulang*, the "spreading of education", which betokens the *dalang's* function as teacher. Kern (1940: 123-124), by contrast, relates it to the notion of invention and ingenuity: the *dalang* is a man of wisdom and creation who inspires respect. He has to possess immense self-discipline in order to obtain the knowledge and skill demanded by his art, with its precise and intricate rules governing his behaviour and mental disposition, as well as the vast corpus of material and the manner of its presentation. In the area of language, for example, the *dalang* has to speak High Javanese and to be conversant with each character's status, which dictates his conduct and idiom in interacting with the other characters (Holt 1967:131-133; Groenendaal 1985:21-43;

Keeler 1987:180-201; Brandon 1993:68-69). During the performance, the dalang is the absolute authority, "the king": he crafts the story; improvises narrative and dialogue; manipulates the puppets and simulates their voices; sings the *suluk* (mood songs); and directs the gamelan – the musical ensemble that accompanies the wayang performance (Keeler 1987:15). But this is only part of his professional responsibility. He is not merely a performer, but the intermediary between the people and the invisible spiritual forces – gods and ancestors. He possesses esoteric knowledge, consisting of special spells, incantations (*mantras*), and codes of behaviour that confer upon him special powers. This combination of "profane and esoteric knowledge" comprises the *padhalangan*, "the science or art of the dalang" (Groenendael 1985:2).

Groenendael (*ibid.*) observes that traditional Javanese society is hierarchic, with status determining the proper mode of conduct. It is universally believed that ignorance or dereliction of duty will exert a disruptive influence on the cosmic order. At the pyramid's apex is the ruler, who has the power of controlling and granting life. Thus he and the dalang are both mediators between God and man.

The dalang's training, formerly transmitted from father to son or master to apprentice, was usually commenced at an early age. As a boy, he attended performances and was gradually assigned small tasks. It was not systematic, but oral and informal. The novice normally studied with a number of different dalang, learning from each, according to his personal needs and abilities. At the outset of the twentieth century, schools for dalang were established; these have modified his role in society, without, however, diminishing his importance and authority. Critics claim that the standardization of training has impaired his creativity, as well as reducing wayang's ritualistic dimension, turning it more into secular entertainment. This study is not the proper forum for a discussion of these issues, but one should note that the schools have succeeded in raising the level of the dalang's education and, above all, in preserving the wayang (i.e., Javanese) tradition, in spite of modern, mostly Western, influence and the introduction of cinema and television. The dalang's role maintaining Java's culture is recognized, which renders him a respected

member of the community (Holt 1967:133).⁷

Wayang Puppets: Iconography and Characterization

The puppets, of cured buffalo leather, intricately perforated and painted, represent stylized human figures, with exaggeratedly wide shoulders and very long arms, generally with moving joints in both the shoulders and elbows. Claire Holt (1967:123) observes that the "wayang's shadow – sharp and steady or diffuse and fluttering – is a shadow of a shadow". She suggests four possible reasons for the deformation of the puppets (*Ibid.*:135-136):

1. The Islamic prohibition against human representation.
2. Aesthetics – the distortions produce finer shadow effects.
3. In the Indian conception, aberrations from the natural are considered "signs of good fortune", and thus these distortions in the puppets have a mystic rationale (Stutterheim 1925:200-201, cited by Holt 1967:135).
4. For the contemporary Javanese, the elongated features and other exaggerations serve to enhance the expressiveness of the staging.

However, there is no conclusive evidence in support of any of the above suggestions, which thus remain hypothetical.

The characters are well-known, and their inner qualities are revealed by their physical features: stature, posture, facial colour, shape of eyes, nose, torso, etc. Costumes, headdress, and ornaments betoken social status. The *dramatis personae* span a continuum from refined (*alus*) through intermediate to crude (*kasar*). The *alus*, i.e., the noblest (including deities, demigods, and seers), are slight and narrow-waisted, with small, fine facial traits, and embody the virtues of purity, righteousness, compassion, self-mastery, dedication to duty, wisdom, and

⁷ A detailed study of the dalang was made by Victoria M. Clara Van Groenendael who

Wrote *The Dalang Behind the Wayang*, Foris Publications, Dordrecht-Holland/Cinnaminson-USA, 1985.

transcendental knowledge. The largest puppets are usually villains, sometimes resembling savage beasts, with salient features; they are associated with physical power and violence. Generally, they are giants, foreigners, ogres, and monsters. A separate group comprises the *punakawan*, the clown-servants, each with his distinctive appearance, function, and behaviour (Fig.7, p.90).

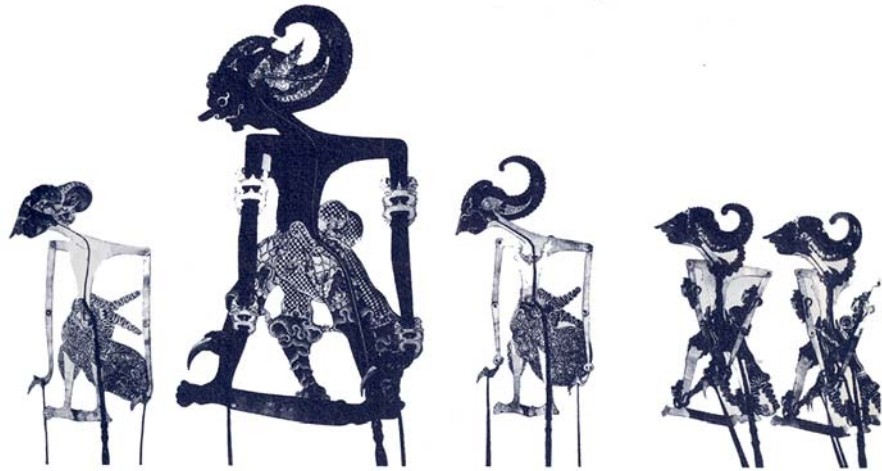
Social status determines the conduct of each character: his bearing and how he relates towards others of the same or different rank and age. There are, however, means of escaping the constraints of type and status. To begin with, an artifice called *alihan*, which Ward Keeler (1987:207) explains as "the capacity of one character to take on the appearance, manner, and voice of another, often entirely different sort of figure." Only the very powerful – the gods, the Pandawas (Fig.8, p.91), and a couple of the *Kurawa* allies – possess this ability. In order to dispel the disguise, the opponent has to be of superior standing. Another mean is *subservience* (*ibid.*:208), as exemplified by the *punakawan*, the above-mentioned servant-clowns attached to the Pandawas. Their position is so low that they have no claim to status; their social context consists solely of themselves and their masters, to whom they are totally submissive, and from whom, in return, they receive protection. But because they have no independent status to maintain, they can act quite freely. Their situation at the bottom of the social hierarchy is ideal: they enjoy the privileges of the supreme figures, but are also comfortable and secure (*ibid.*:208-210). The *punakawan* will be discussed in greater detail below.

The most important wayang puppet is the *kayon* or *gunugan* (Holt 1967:134; Brandon 1993:40) (Figs.4-5, pp.80-81). The word "kayon" is possibly derived from *kayu* (tree), and "gunugan" from *gunugung* (mountain). It is a large, symmetrical leaf-shaped figure, a combination of tree and mountain. Each *kayon* is an original creation, but represents a variation on a theme. Its opposite sides have different Illustrations. One features the carving and drawing of a tree, its branches spreading up and out, and tenanted by different animals: birds, monkeys, serpents, tigers, and so forth. At the bottom is a gate – to a sanctuary or to heaven – flanked by two fierce ogre-like creatures bearing arms and a pair of garuda birds. The other side

is painted with leaping flames. At the opening of the performance, the kayon is set in the centre of the horizontal banana-tree log, its flames facing the screen; it will reappear there again at the end of the performance. It has many further functions. Its positioning on the right of the



7. The Punakawan: Semar, Petruk, and Nala Gareng (Djajasoebata 1999:67).



9. The Pandawa: Judistira, Bima, Ardjuna, Nakula and Sadewa (Scott-Kemal 1970:15).

log indicates the opening of a scene (as opposed to that of the overall performance); set in the centre but inclined to the right or left signals the closing of a scene. In the *gara-gara* interlude, it is initially set on the left of the log, and then agitated violently across the screen to represent nature's turmoil. It is also used to represent a mountain, a forest, or a palace gate. During the performance, it is rarely absent from the screen (Holt 1967:135). Holt suggests that the kayon-gunungan has mythological and mystical connotations (*ibid.*:134-135), being the Mountain of the Gods and the Tree of Life. In other words, it represents the cosmic order, whereby the shadowplay is placed within a sacred world; it creates the "divine setting for the play" (*ibid.*:135).

The Wayang Plays – *Lakon*

The dalang derived his plays from the literary tradition. Some, becoming well-known, were absorbed into the standard lakon repertoire (Brandon 1993:33), and passed from one generation to another. Initially, their transmission was purely oral, but already some centuries ago they began to be written down. Nevertheless, the lakon differ from the usual Western script; they are closer to the *commedia dell'arte* scenario in comprising just an outline of the play. The written lakon, or *pakem* ("performance guides") have several levels of complexity. In performing, the dalang only needs the shortest versions, sometimes just a page or two, in order to remind him of the sequence of the scenes (*ibid.*:34).

According to Holt, the performances preserve the ancient myths. In the wayang kulit, "old Indonesian motifs alternate, intertwine, or merge with the mythology of India which in turn is expanded and embroidered often beyond recognition" (1967:124). There are probably hundreds of lakon, which Holt (*ibid.*) divides into three main groups (not including variants of merely local interest of brief duration):

1. *Wayang Purwa*⁸ (*purwa* = primeval, original, ancient)

This group includes the repertoire of four mythic categories:

a. "Pre-History" – comprising both the *Adiparwa* (the prelude to the *Mahabharata*), and ancient Indonesian mythology. The lakon include the animist myths of Dewi Sri, Goddess of Rice, and the *Murwakala*, the Birth

of

Kala, which are performed for purposes of exorcism and propitiation.

b. *Ardjuna Sasra Bau* myths. These concern the origins of Kresna and of certain

figures in the *Ramayana*. Kresna, like Rama, is an incarnation of Vishnu,

so

that these stories establish the link between the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

c. *The Ramayana* – Rama's quest to liberate his captive wife from the ogre Rawana.

d. *The Mahabharata* – the epic of the Pandawas and Kurawas.

2. *Wayang gedog* – including the East Javanese Pandji and Damar Wulan legends.

3. *Wayang madya* (*madya* = middle) – based on the nineteenth-century epic of the poet Kanggawarsita concerning the reign of the East Javanese prophet-king Djayabaya. It is rarely performed.

The lakon thus depict the successive periods of Javanese history – from the myths of the *wayang purwa* era through the age of the kings to modern

⁸ J. Kats in *Het Javaansche Toneel, I: Wajang Poerwa* (Javanese Drama, vol. I, Wajang Purwa), Weltevreden (Batavia): Volkslectuur, 1023. Compiled 179 lakon from Javanese

court records. J. Brandon considers the oeuvre "The single most important book on

wajang dramatic literature" (1993:379). Kats' lakon only include the wayang purwa ones from Holt's grouping.

times. Those taken from the *Mahabharata* are by far the most numerous and popular. In the original epic, there is merely a brief mention of the reign of the Pandawa brothers in the newly established kingdom of Amarta. In the wayang kulit, by contrast, the majority of lakon transpire during this period, which is considered “the Golden Age of the Pandawas, a time of youthful confidence” (Brandon 1993:12). As a result, the struggle between the five Pandawas and their ninety-nine cousins, the Kurawas, is not in the gist of the drama. Instead, the plays are full of romantic episodes, royal audiences, fearsome battles against ogres and giants, and philosophical and mystical discussions. The Pandawas are invincible heroes, favoured by and consorting with the gods. The third Pandawas brother is the modest and refined Ardjuna, a wonderfully handsome warrior with supernatural powers; he is the model of *alus* – the Javanese ideal of refined behaviour. A considerable portion of the lakon centre on him and his almost equally attractive sons, Abimanju and Irawan. Others focus on Bima, the second Pandawa brother, strong and blunt; the twins Nakula and Sadewa, the youngest of the Pandawas; and the *punakawan* (clown-servants) – Semar and his sons, Gareng and Petruk (*ibid.*:11-13). In this study the plays cited as examples are all from the *Mahabharata* repertoire.

There is a distinction between lakon based on epics or other court literature and those created by the dalang. The former are called *pokok* (“trunk”), the latter *tjarangan* (“branch”) lakon. Brandon affirms that “the true essence of wayang lies in the invented tjarangan plays” (*ibid.*:14).

The Structure of the Wayang Performance

The vast lakon repertoire was memorized by the dalang with the help of a regular sequence of scenes. Furthermore, as generally in orally transmitted literature, there were stock phrases and formulae that were reused over and over (*ibid.*:34), like the *lazzi* in *commedia dell'arte*, the set of familiar scenes and tricks to which the actors had recourse whenever the action slacked (Towsen 1976:73).

According to Brandon (1993:20-27), the performance has a traditional format: it is divided into three parts: *patet nem*, *patet sanga*, and *patet manjura*, each

lasting some three hours. *Patet* is a musical "key" or "mode", while *nem*, *sanga*, and *manjura* refer to particular keys. Music and shadowplay are closely connected.

The wayang performance is typified by a fixed sequence of standard scenes, each with a specific name. Some are obligatory, others can be added or omitted at the dalang's discretion. The play invariably opens with the *djejer* ("major audience scene"), set in the main hall of a palace; it presents the prince and his retinue in all their glory. The following scenes, in the palace or on the road, can be called *adegan*. *Perang* ("battle scenes") occur with increasing frequency throughout the play: two in Part One, two or three in Part Two, four or more in Part Three. Each scene is identified by its locale and nature: e.g., *djejer Pandawa* means "the Pandawa audience scene", while *adegan wana* means "forest scene". The standard scenes possessing fixed names appear in regular order, and comprise about half of a play; the others can be added or omitted as the dalang sees fit; Brandon (*ibid.*) has identified some eighteen scenes:

Patet Nem (Part One)

1. First Audience Scene (*djejer*)

The dalang offers his public an extensive description of the palace and its riches. The scene occurs in the main audience hall, where the king or prince receives his family and courtiers. It can be in the Kurawa's palace or another belonging to an ally of the Pandawas; it is rarely in Amarta itself. According to common practice, the Pandawas appear only after a third of the performance; the hero's entrance is delayed as much as possible, in order to make it more impressive. In the present scene, the sovereign asks about the state of his kingdom, which introduces the problem of the play: e.g., a marriage to be arranged, an envoy to be sent abroad, a foreign emissary who conveys an unacceptable demand, etc. The king issues orders, concludes the audience, and retires to the inner palace.

2./3. Gate Scene (*gapuran*) and Inner Palace Scene (*kedatonan*)

In the Gate Scene, the king pauses to admire the Gate, which assuages his disquiet at the news he has received. He proceeds to the inner chambers, where he meets his queen or queens, informs them about the latest events, and enters the

temple to pray. Both are minor scenes and can be omitted. They have little dramatic function, but their delicacy serves as an interlude between the formality of the preceding and following audience scenes.

4. Outer Audience Scene (*paseban djawi*)

The plot unfolds. A prince or minister enters the outer audience hall to convey the king's orders to the officers and warriors. Accompanied by the gamelan, the troops assemble, march in review, and depart on their mission.

5. Chariot Scene (*adegan kereta*)

If the plot requires a king or prince from the First Audience Scene to travel to another state, it is here that he mounts his chariot, which departs...but not before an elaborate description of its magic powers. (Not obligatory.)

6. Road-clearing Scene (*perang ampjak*)

The army confronts an overgrown forest, symbolized by the kayon. It is toppled by the Marching Army Puppet to the rhythm of music in imitation of chopping down trees. After clearing the road, the army passes by triumphantly.

7. Foreign Audience Scene (*djejer sabrangan*)

An obligatory scene, which introduces the second kingdom involved in the plot. In the classic format, it is usually a non-Javanese kingdom of ogres (but occasionally humans). Even if the kingdom is located in Java, it is deemed "foreign". This scene is like the First Audience Scene, but briefer, and ends with the king giving orders.

8. Foreign Outer Audience Scene (*paseban djawi denawa*)

Optional. Similar the first Outer Audience Scene.

9. Opening Skirmish Scene (*perang gagal* = "Inconclusive Battle")

The two armies encounter one another and fight. Generally there are no casualties, but one side is overpowered and retreats. Sometimes the armies meet by chance, in which case the scene can be called *perang simpagan* ("Battle on Crossing Paths"). Usually, however, this distinction is not drawn, and the initial title remains in effect.

10. Second Foreign Scene (*djejer sabrang rangkep* = "Repeat Foreign Scene")

A very brief audience scene. As a rule, Part One ends with the previous scene, but sometimes there is a third kingdom, which is seldom outside Java, since a foreign country would have been introduced earlier in order to participate in the Opening Skirmish Scene.

Patet Sanga (Part Two)

11. Nature's Turmoil and Clown Scene (*gara-gara*)

In a narrow sense, the name refers just to nature's disturbances, but usually the scene also includes the god-clown-servant Semar and his sons.⁹ Natural and human calamities are incurred by the meditation of the hero, who has not yet appeared on the screen. In Hindu and animistic belief, a person can obtain magical and spiritual power by intense meditation.

The standard clown scene is the most flexible in the wayang. At the *dalang's* discretion, it can last one or even two hours. Nevertheless, it regularly consists of two parts:

- a. Semar's sons enter quarreling. They imitate and mock their master's noble class. They fight over some issue, whereby the younger Petruk prevails over Gareng, and then exit.
- b. Semar enters looking for his sons. He sings a risqué song in order to attract them. Gareng appears, silences his father, and complains about his younger brother, who cheated him. Semar summons Petruk, and listens to his version of the story, which is very different. The brothers again quarrel, but are interrupted by Semar, who reminds them of their duty to follow and protect their master – usually Ardjuna or one of his sons.

12. Hermitage Scene (*djejer pandita* in Surakarta) / Meditation Scene (*djejer petapan* in Jogjakarta)

⁹ In the Surakarta wayang tradition, Semar appears with his two sons Gareng and Petruk. In the Jogjakarta wayang, Bagong, a third son also appears.

This scene usually features a religious teacher or seer receiving Ardjuna or one of his sons at his hermitage in the depths of the mountains. It sometimes takes place in a different locale, but retains its name. In Jogjakarta wayang, the hero makes his first entrance here. He asks for a blessing and advice from the seer, who is generally his grandfather.

If there is no gara-gara, this scene opens Part Two, whereby the clowns (punakawan) also appear for the first time, and introduce their jokes whenever possible.

13. Forest Scene (*adegan wana*)

The hero and the punakawan descend the mountain and enter the forest, where they encounter the ogres – the same who fled before the army in the Opening Skirmish Scene.

14. Flower Battle Scene (*perang kembang*) / Flicking-arms Battle (*perang gendiran* in Jogjakarta)

The meaning of "flower" is disputed. Some believe that it refers to the hero's refined martial movements; according to others, it refers to the unfolding scene in which the hero wages his first battle and the "crisis start to flower" (Brandon 1993:25-26).

15. Battle of Part Two (*perang sampak sanga*)

This scene appears if the plot calls for another battle. From here to the middle of Part Three, the structure of the performance is very flexible. Additional scenes appear if the dalang deems them necessary. After that, there is a return to standard scenes.

Patet Manjura (Part Three)

16. Battle of Part Three (*perang sampak manjura*)

This scene appears by the middle of Part Three; it is an important preliminary battle that ensures the defeat of the opposing king. It can be followed by certain optional scenes, but when news of the rout reaches the enemy, the next scene necessarily ensues.

17. Great Battle Scene (*perang amuk-amukan* or *perang ageng*)

Amuk is the root of "running amok", and *ageng* means "great". This scene features a fierce and clamorous battle involving a multitude of warriors. The ruler of the enemy kingdom generally takes part in the fighting and is vanquished.

18. Final Audience Scene (*djedjer tatjeb kajon* = "Planting the Kayon Scene")

The Pandawas thank the gods for their victory and assemble to celebrate. The kayon is planted in the centre of the screen, betokening the end of the performance. Sometimes this action is preceded by a short dance performed by a wayang golek (wooden and three-dimensional) doll-puppet.

Wayang's Meaning – Some Interpretations

The wayang cosmos is governed by immutable laws, both simple and universal. Its dynamic order is a constant interaction of positive and negative antinomies; its stability is based on conflict. The stories are clearly polarized between good and evil, but the antagonists themselves are not so clearly polarized – they are complex beings possessed of contradictory impulses, which "lend poignancy to any total conflict, add subtle shades of grays to a black-and-white situation" (Holt 1967:140). Brandon (1993:19) notes that the only purely "evil" creatures are the ogres, like Tjakil, who reside in foreign lands and "embody every trait detestable in Javanese eyes."¹⁰

Brandon discusses alternative interpretations of wayang. One, of particular importance, avers that it represents the Javanese ancestors from the earliest gods across some sixty generations of kings until the twentieth century. Its underlying contention is that the wayang purwa stories are linked to the later

¹⁰ K.G.P.A.A. Mangkunagoro VII states that one of the symbolic elements in the wayang is the colour of the characters, the *ksatriya*, the hero, has a white face, while the *raksasas*, the enemy giants, have different colours according to his hierarchic place. The leading one is black, the second red, the third yellow, and the fourth is either green, violet, or brown. The most popular demonic figure is the yellow raksasa Tjakil (translated by Claire Holt, (1957:8-9).

shadowplay cycles, such as those deriving from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, whereby these epics of Indian origin become part of Javanese history. Brandon further notes the centrality of mysticism in the Javanese experience; this has induced numerous occult interpretations of wayang. According to one, the screen is the symbol of heaven; the banana-log stage is the earth; the puppets represent the different aspects of man's psyche; and the lakon describes the tripartite parable of his life-cycle: in youth he is immature and irresponsible; in middle-age he seeks the right path and overcomes external evils (personified by Tjakil and his ogre companions); in old age, having mastered his sins, he achieves spiritual harmony. In another mystical interpretation, the Pandawas and Kurawas dramatize man's inner struggle (*ibid.*:18); each puppet betokens a different facet of his personality: "Judistira is selflessness; Ardjuna, introspection; Bima, pure will; and so on."

Clifford Geertz writes (1976:11) that wayang has two different meanings in Java, depending on the social and religious group concerned. To the *abangan* (mostly peasants who have a syncretic animistic-Hindu-Islamic view of life) it is an adjunct of the *slametan*, the local version of the communal feast, symbolizing the mystic and social unity of the participants. Wayang is, in itself, not distinct from popular entertainment, but its occurrence within the context of the *slametan* invests it with protective significance: i.e., whoever attends is safe from harm during the performance and probably longer. The fact that the audience is not necessarily paying attention to the show indicates that its importance lies, not in the story, but in its ritual efficacy. To the

prijaji (the white-collar elite, faithful to Hinduism), by contrast, it is a refined art reflecting their outlook and ethics (*ibid.*:267). Geertz contends that, having lost most of its ritualistic traits and becoming more secular, wayang approaches the religion of the *prijaji*, for whom art provides a "material form for an essentially spiritual content, an outward symbolization of an inward *rasa* [meaning-feeling]" (*ibid.*:269). He quotes from a conversation with a *prijaji* draughtsman (*ibid.*): "...from the *dalang* side the *wajang* figures show their bodies, their outside, but from the shadow side they show their souls, their inside." The *Mahabharata* thus provides material depicting man's inner life. There is not the clear dichotomy characteristic of morality plays in the

West, since neither "good" nor "bad" is absolutely so. The battle between the Pandawas and Kurawas is endless, and human values and emotions are subsumed by the timeless and ultimately amoral background against which it occurs. The feudal virtues of courage and duty resolve themselves into the religious virtues of renunciation and compassion "by an invocation of the cosmic-comic inevitability of human actions given the divine context in which they are set (*ibid.*:270)". That is to say, one proceeds from a sense of duty to divine command, and peace is achieved by dispassionate action. The battle is internal, and pits, not good against evil, but *kasar* (base animal passion) against *alus* (detached, effortless self-control). A teacher interviewed by Geertz (*ibid.*:271) averred that the hundred Kurawas represent the various instabilities (plagues, wishes, etc.), while the five Pandawa brothers (also construed as the five senses) and Kresna, the incarnation of Wisnu (Vishnu), represent self-control. Thus the wayang stories are actually about man's struggle in his *batin*, "the inner realm of human experience" (*Ibid.*:232), to reach the ultimate "meaning-feeling" *rasa*. The heroes are continually fighting and overcoming ogres and giants, i.e., the passions and lusts, which are killed but revive, demanding constant reinvocation of the *alus* impulses.

Mangkunagoro VII also considers the battles in wayang as symbolic of the individual's inner struggle. Ultimately, it is the confrontation between good and evil – the desires and passions represented by the *raksasas*, the demonic ogres and giants, who are always defeated by the *ksatryias*, the heroes. As a result, almost all lakon contain a moral lesson (1957:10).

Field researchers have stressed how wayang's influence permeates everyday life in Java. Ward Keeler (1992: 56) agrees with Mangkunagoro VII in insisting that its meaning lies not in the origin of the stories or in their historical reality, but rather in their moral message. The lakon represent the individual's ethical development, and the performance is analogous to the course of his life: from pregnancy to birth; the travails of youth in battle against ogres; and virtue's final triumph, both within the hero and between the play's competing parties. In such an interpretation, the stories are interchangeable; their importance resides in their fixed structural division and unfolding (*ibid.*:56). Further on, Keeler stresses (*ibid.*:60) that

wayang reinforces the Javanese belief in the hierarchic ordering of relations and in everyone's obligation to perform his proper role.

Wayang Today

In spite of certain innovations – the use of electric lamps and microphones, radio transmission, and the schools for dalang which regulate teaching and tradition – shadowplay remains a central manifestation of traditional Javanese culture. Its heroes are still models to be emulated.

With the introduction of television and cinema, wayang's popularity is certainly not as great as formerly, but the determination to keep it alive and relevant is apparent in the diverse attempts to adapt it to contemporary issues and interests. One example is *wayang planet*, in which modern heroes like Superman and Batman and creatures from outer space are inserted into traditional wayang performances, or in which the punakawan are fused with the Teletubbies (characters from a television programme for children). This approach, developed by Ki Enthus Susmono, from Tegal (a city on Java's northern coast), has proven very successful. He claims that it does not affect the wayang's moral purpose; it is just a bridge between the past and the present, and if the dalang wishes to practise his art effectively, he must accommodate the tenor of times (Nashir 2003: no page numbers).

Although some contemporary Javanese argue that wayang has become mere entertainment, several observations suggest that it retains its original ritualistic character. As aforementioned, it is still performed on special occasions: e.g., the birth of a child, a wedding, a funeral, or public event. And the dalang invariably makes his offering, lights incense, and prays to the gods and spirits both before and after the performance (Holt 1967:125; Groenendael 1985:102-103). Sometimes he holds a few puppets over the incense's rising smoke and intones an incantation to propitiate the potencies the puppets represent – for it is dangerous to summon celestial spirits to earth! Thus wayang's sacred nature and magical efficacy are still acutely felt by both the dalang and the people (Holt 1967:125).

The Other in Wayang

Jesters in Wayang: the *Punakawan*

Introduction

The generally serious character of wayang is allayed by interludes called *banyolan*, meaning “making a fool of yourself” (Ras 1978:452; Groennendael 1985:180), which are not integrated into the main play, and offer comic relief in the all-night performance.

The figures that appear in the *banyolan* belong to the lowest level of the social order – the servant-clowns accompanying masters of the highest status (seers, *satrijas*, and kings). They are essentially dependents of the latter, to whom they are totally loyal. Associating mainly with them and their own kind, they exist as virtual pariahs on the margins of society, and, as such, are not constrained by the normal rules of conduct; they are free from the code that binds their masters, whose patrician manners they often mock outrageously. Their idiom is utterly irreverent. Instead of the high Javanese customary in wayang, they speak *ngoko*, low Javanese, among themselves, even employing foreign (English, Dutch, Portuguese) or Indonesian words, which is not allowed to any other character. Their appearance is also singular. The individual servant-clowns have identifiable traits, but ugliness and grotesqueness are common to all. Their attire is simple and unadorned. They are, in sum, the diametrical opposite of their masters.

The Punakawan

At the beginning of many wayang plays, two maids may appear: the very skinny Cangik and her obese daughter Limbuk. Serving at the royal court as handmaids to princesses, they joke and discuss current events. They are always

preening themselves; their puppets show them holding a comb (Raden Harjowirogo 1958:46). Later, if there is an ogre king, his servants will be Togog and Saraita, who are ugly, unreliable, and disloyal. Their appearance is usually brief, and their jokes dull and conventional. Both the maids and servants of the ogre king are minor servant-clowns (Ras 1978:452). Of greater importance are the *punakawan* (“attendants”), who serve the Pandawa. They appear in the second part of the performance, just after the climactic opening of the *gara-gara*, which signifies “ominous manifestations” (Mangkunagoro VII 1957:11) or “nature’s turmoil” (Brandon 1993:386), and provide the main comic interlude: they trick one another and offer comments on current affairs and gossip that the dalang has overheard. Their malformation, plebeian language, and the jocularities they introduce form a decided contrast to the drama’s otherwise serious and fantastic character, creating something of a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* by transposing the audience from the illusion and magic of the play to the everyday world. The scene with the *punakawan* can last as long as the dalang desires if there is good interaction with the public, but is generally about an hour.

The *punakawan* comprise Semar, the main figure (Fig.9, p.104.), and his sons: Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. They – especially Semar – are the subject of this study.



9. Semar (Scott-Kemball 1970:44).

In wayang convention, as mentioned above, physical traits and apparel reflect personality. Each trait has its clearly defined meaning, and their combination “describes” a character: the hero Ardjuna, for example, is slim of build, his eyes are small, his nose is fine – signs of delicacy, nobility, and beauty; his gaze is downwards, indicating modesty, and so on. Largeness, by contrast, of eyes, nose, and mouth is indicative of roughness and violence. The punakawan, however, do not fit into these standard categories; they are mishapen, and each one is unique. Their puppets, modelled in strong and simple lines, lack the ornaments and lacy open-work of their masters. Semar’s face has swollen cheeks, a flat, upturned nose, a protruding jaw, weary, watering, and downward-slanting eyes. He is fat and heavy, with a large rear, a bulging pauch, and short legs. He is hermaphroditic (Ulbricht 1972:v), with full, almost feminine breasts. He is given to flatulence. His voice is heavy and blurred, and he sings risqué songs.

Stories about the origin of the sons of Semar have many variations. One of them affirms that Gareng and Petruk were conceived by Semar through *puja* (meditation and offerings), whilst Bagong came out of his shadow. All three are also ugly and grotesque. Gareng (or Nara-Gareng) is short and fat. He is unskilled in conversation, and suffers from a speech defect that distorts the meaning of his words. He is cross-eyed; his hips are out of joint; his arms are crooked, the result of being broken and wrongly reset; his legs are full of yaws, and he has a clubfoot, causing him to limp. Petruk is tall and entirely elongated; he even moves with long steps. He is also cross-eyed. Unlike Gareng, he is a good speaker, bright and humoristic, but mischievous by nature; he steals and cheats. Bagong, who does not appear in all the plays, is the “spitting image of Semar”; disproportionately fat, he talks in a loud voice, interrupting others, and is childishly boastful (Raden Harjowirogo 1968: 33-34; Ras 1978:454).

The punakawan violate all the major precepts of the aristocratic *prijaji* etiquette: they lack fortitude, self-restraint, and control of their emotions. They use direct speech and common language. In confrontations with enemies, they employ any means, no matter how unheroic. Their general behaviour is casual, offhand, and humorous. Ward Keeler (1987:209) compares it to that of Javanese youth, “who need

concern themselves with their dignity and obligations far less than their elders". Except for Semar, their main concerns are practical – essentially food and money. This is an immemorial attribute of comic characters (Farwell 1994:79). As such, the punakawan can be likened to *Vidusaka*, the clown of South Indian drama, whose interest in life is reduced to eating (Shulman 1985:157-158). According to Keeler (1987:209), this combination of preoccupation with basic needs and release from status constraints and responsibilities represents the unobtainable ideal desired by the Javanese commoner. The audience, as stated above, consider the punakawan more akin to themselves, in looks and demeanour, than the semidivine heroes. In fact, Holt (1967:145), citing H. Overbeck, contends that they represent "the people", which is why they are outside the palace hierarchy; they are "the voice of the simple village folk, with all their strength, misery, and wisdom".

The punakawan's freedom of speech was exploited by the authorities to introduce propaganda for social and political purposes. But this procedure was generally not popular, and the dalang who co-operated with the powers-that-be risked losing his public, which expected the clown to serve the opposite function, namely, to comment critically on the authorities, not serve their interests (Groenendaal 1985:185-188; 194-195).

It is important to stress that, in spite of their freedom and irreverence, the punakawan never subvert the values of the system. Keeler points to their subservience and dependence as elements permitting them to contravene the rigid status and behaviour constraints of Javanese ethics. Nevertheless, they defer to the establishment and "know their place" (1987:210). – They are liminal in Turner's sense: outside the mainstream, marginal, non-structural...not, however, anti-structural. They confirm the normative structure by their absurd contrast to it. So, ultimately, the punakawan's mundane and cowardly attitude serves to "highlight the courtly code of honour of their superiors" (Keller 1992:29). I will return to this issue further on, and consider it from another perspective.

J.L. Peacock (1978:216-217) states that the punakawan are not merely characters for the Javanese, but symbols of traditional social categorization and cosmology; they reverse the duality of "high-low status". He also notes that the

clown “mocks or transcends the attributes of his master, but he never appropriates these attributes”. It is not the mockery that impresses the Javanese, since the patrician values signify the ideal to all classes; it is rather that the clown, toying with the set categories, shuffles and recombines the high and the low, and it is the surprising results that amuse the audience. But ultimately the process stresses and clarifies anew the cosmic unity that underlies the basic oppositions. Even the extent of transgression – as in status roles – is circumscribed; beyond a certain point the audience would consider it improper. For example, the behaviour of Gareng and Petruk, who are scandalously rude to their father, Semar, is a source of unfailing entertainment. Their conduct violates all notions of respect for the elderly in Javanese society. Their impudence, however, never exceeds critical limits, and Semar always succeeds in prevailing over his sons (Keeler 1987:212). Below are two examples of their irreverencies:

As Semar enters in scene he is singing some risqué song and is scolded by his son:

Gareng: ...What a crazy old man! Paw! You'll get us all arrested! (Remembering the song, **Semar** chuckles to himself.) I don't know what you're laughing about. Your sons desert you, but instead of feeling sad you jump around like an overweight grasshopper singing a song about newlyweds.

From *The Reincarnation of Rama*, Brandon 1993:121

In the play *Irawan's Wedding*, the holy Kanwa meets Irawan, who is accompanied by the servant clowns; their salutations are as follows:

Kanwa: ... Brother Semar, welcome. I pray your journey finds you well?

Semar (*smiling contentedly*): Oh, yes, all is well. May your holy blessing plug up the holes in my faulty character (*Chuckles, makes the sembah*¹¹)

¹¹ *Sembah* is a greeting by an inferior to a superior, indicating respect. The hands, with palms pressed together, are brought up to the face until the thumbs touch the nose (Brandon 1993:393).

Gareng (*over his shoulder to Petruk, but loud enough for the others to hear*): He, he! Pa's an old fool. (To **Semar**, *importantly*) Paw, you're getting like a worn-out lopsided old broom. All these years you've served our Pandawa masters you'd think you'd have learned something about proper etiquette. Holes in my character!

Petruk (*laughing naughtily*): Papa is living proof that the theories of heredity are a bunch of trash, Gareng. The best thing to do with the old good-for-nothing is drop him in a well and seal the lid on tight! Heh, heh!

Semar (*chuckling*): Respect your elders, Sons. That includes your dear Papa! Now behave!

Brandon 1993:205-6

In spite of the irreverence of his sons, Semar has the last word. Their remarks are critical of traditional values – the usual attitude of rebellious youth. But Semar silences them as one does naughty children, which also reduces the importance of their criticisms, and restores the scene's serious tone.

Peacock (1978:213) cites a *ludruk* (popular transvestite and clown theatre) performance. In one scene, the servant is seated while the master sweeps the floor, whereby their usual roles are reversed. The audience reacted with loud protests. They were disturbed, I suspect, by seeing the master behaving like a servant, not the opposite. Barbara Hatley (1971:101) cites an interesting phenomenon that reflects Javanese ideals. Even though wayang is *alus*, while ludruk is *kasar*, both conceive of society as being divided into two distinct classes. In ludruk, the heroes are no longer nobles and princes, but rather government officials, doctors, soldiers, and policemen. Nevertheless, this new elite is still exclusive and totally beyond the reach of the peasants. Thus society's inner structure has survived the changes wrought by modernization.

In spite of Semar's *kasar* looks and behaviour, he is a *dhanyang*, a territorial spirit, indisputably the most beloved figure of the wayang world, and considered the "guardian spirit of the Javanese" (Geertz 1976:264). Of native provenance, he was incorporated into the Hindu epics. J. Kats (1923:55) conjectures

that he and his sons were ancient Indonesian deities who were demoted to servant status with the ascendancy of the Indian gods and the semidivine *ksatria* heroes.

The fact that Semar was introduced into the *Mahabharata* and incorporated into wayang as a central figure, has aroused considerable interest and discussion. There is a general consensus regarding certain aspects of his origins. Semar is the eldest son of Sang Hyang Tunggal and the brother of Batara Guru and Togog. Batara Guru became king of the gods, while Semar and Togog assumed ugly human form, descended to earth, one to serve heroes, the other, foreign adversaries (Keeler 1987:2n). C. Geertz (1976:276) reports that Semar is considered the “father of us all”, the primordial ancestor – a sort of Adam. Some claim that he still resides in some Javanese cave and, more than any other character, crosses over from the realm of wayang to the everyday world (Keeler 1987:211). Ras (1978:453) cites the eighteenth-century Javanese cosmogony of *Manikmaya*, in which Semar’s origins are described. The god of creation, Sang Hyang Wisesa, produced an egg by dint of meditation from which the three primordial couples issued: heaven and earth; sun and moon; Manik (the “jewel”) and Maya (“delusion”). Manik, of beautiful and shining appearance, was made the godly ruler and called Batara Guru – the teacher, and main deity of the Javanese pantheon. Maya, who was blue and black and ugly, was sent to earth to maintain the balance of the universe. His complexion signifies night, and he is an ambiguous figure. His alternative name, Semar, is a variation of *samar*, which means “hidden” or “unknown”. That is why, in spite of his lowly status and unbecoming looks, he is very powerful. Power, in this context, refers to spiritual energy, possessed in proportion to one’s status (Anderson 1965; Keeler 1987). Semar is actually the god Sang Hyang Ismaya in permanent *alihan*: “...the capacity of one character to take the appearance, manner, and voice of another, often entirely different sort of figure” (Keeler 1987:207); only puissant spirits are capable of this. As an external sign, he wears a checked hipcloth, which betokens sacredness. In one story, Ardjuna is bewitched by Shiva into killing Semar. When the time comes, however, the warrior is unable to fulfil his promise, so Semar solves the dilemma by building a pyre and jumping into it; when the flames cover his body, he assumes his beautiful form of the god Ismaya (Geertz 1976:277-278).

Semar is thus an ambiguous and paradoxical character, in which such oppositions as god and clown meet. He is also considered man's guardian and mentor. In the set structure of the wayang performance, the punakawan encounter their master, generally in a dense and strange forest, when the latter is burdened and discouraged by the weight of the difficulties to be overcome. The jesters console the heroes, giving them support and advice, while entertaining the audience with their pranks. Semar in his *kasar* form reminds Ardjuna of his human origins. Semar represents the down-to-earth view of life, counterbalancing Ardjuna's idealism (*ibid.*:276-277). He "calls him [Ardjuna] back to everyday humdrum existence, cheers him up in his despair, and blunts the edge of his pride in his triumph. He tries to moderate the *satrija's* rigid sense of cosmic justice in terms of comic reality" (*ibid.*:277). As an important image of paternal power, Semar is similar to Batara Guru, despite their different natures and support for rival camps. Batara Guru is conniving and lustful, and sides with the Kurawa. Physically and spiritually potent, he is nonetheless drawn into machinations that consistently eventuate in disgrace and rout (Keeler 1987:211). Semar, by contrast, offers consolation and advice to his master (Geertz 1976:277).

Geertz (*ibid.*) suggests an analogy between the relationship of Semar and Ardjuna and that between Shakespeare's Falstaff and Prince Hal: Semar and Falstaff can both be construed as surrogate fathers – fat, ugly, and wise...worldly clowns who speak the common idiom and caricature the nobles who declaim in elevated tones about honour, justice, and duty. They dominate and "motivate" their respective dramas, at the same time providing criticism of the very values affirmed: absolutes prove inadequate in view of human nature.

The relationship between the hero and his servants has an additional facet: they are complementary in the sense that a hero without servants is seen as lacking honour. Together they form a unity. In this connection, there are two noteworthy interpretations. According to one, their association conveys the notion of the unity of opposites – that is to say, opposites are merely the extremes of the same unity. For example, the Kurawas ("bad") and the Pandawas ("good") merely represent the two components within man – his passions and his virtues; and he has

to find the balance between or within them (Geertz 1976:271). Another conception of this unity is described by K. Foley. She cites the myth, common to Java, Bali, and Malaysia, of the “four siblings”. It considers the four components of birth (equivalent to the four cardinal points) – the afterbirth, the water, the blood, and the umbilical cord – as the four brothers with the child-hero in the centre forming an unity, the self. If one is lacking, the unity is broken. Foley (1987:71-75) believes that Semar and his sons represent the four siblings, whereby Semar is the afterbirth, the most important.

The Otherness of the *Punakawan*

As mentioned above, the punakawan’s Otherness is obvious by virtue of their iconographic and behavioural singularity, in sharp contrast to the other wayang types. The further facets of their Otherness are derived from or related to this principle.

The punakawan are characteristically ugly and grotesque – the opposite of their satrija masters – and distinguished by their earthiness: pranks, loud speaking, flatulence, rudeness, sexual jokes, risqué songs, and the like. (Nevertheless, their attitude towards their masters is lovingly respectful, and their loyalty is total.) They occupy the bottom of the social scale – so low, in fact, that they lack status altogether. As such, they are exempt from the usual conventions, and their breaking of the rules is the cause of much laughter, which signifies audience acceptance and approval. The fact that their outrageous and unethical behaviour does not shock, but, on the contrary, is considered droll, is probably directly related to their marginal position. In Semar’s case, his divine origins and popularity may also be a factor.

The night-long wayang performance reaches its climatic crisis by midnight in the *gara-gara* – the moment of cosmic imbalance (at the outset of the second part). The dalang cites all the elements affected by disaster and destruction; and it is at this juncture that two punakawan enter – generally Gareng and Petruk.

“The world erupts! The earth shakes and volcanoes spew out fire. The oceans’ waters boil and tidal waves inundate the land as if to drown the world. Crops cannot grow. Animals starve. Wild beasts, reptiles, and poisonous insects invade men’s homes. On earth, men flee in panic, seeking shelter. Plague sweeps thousands away. They appeal to their seers but their seers cannot meditate and are helpless. They turn to their Kings but their Kings have no power. The world is dark as dust-clouded night. Lightning streaks and dragons roar. The violence reaches as high as the chambers of the Gods themselves, breaking the horns of the sacred cow Andini, fluttering Anantaboga’s dragon-tail, and cracking the gates of Heaven askew. Boiling mud and molten lava vomit from the cauldron of Hell. The nymphs take flight, seeking the protection of the Supreme One. In the midst of nature’s upheaval, there appear two funny creatures, seemingly unconcerned, the followers of the Prince Ardjuna. One is Gareng; one is Petruk. The two begin to quarrel, thereby intensifying the natural chaos.”

The Reincarnation of Rama
James Brandon 1993:115

During the gara-gara, temporal-spatial references vanish. Lysloff (1993:49) calls it “a wrinkle in time”, and applies the term invented by Madeleine L’Engle: *tesseract* – the cessation of the space-time flow, which, folding back upon itself, results in alternate time and place. In the performance, as Lysloff observes, this is variously conveyed. Firstly, the wayang normally describes events from Java’s mythical past in the narrative third person; in the gara-gara, this convention ceases. Secondly, the normative court language turns into colloquial Javanese, and issues of politics and daily life are raised; there are references to the sponsor, the musicians, and even the dalang himself (via his puppets). Thirdly, the classical gamelan performed hitherto is mixed with regional music and even popular contemporary tunes. Thus there is a shift from the time and space of legend to that of the audience (*ibid.*:67). It is this “wrinkle” that permits the entrance of the servants, who interrupt the seriousness of the epic with joking and buffoonery. Lysloff conjectures that if Victor Turner had visited Java, he would have been amazed to discover a highly developed dramatic expression of social and sacred transition, and, following Turner, he defines the gara-gara as “liminal time” (*ibid.*:69), in which the narrative of

the performance is suspended and the punakawan enter. They are neither here nor there, but in limbo, betwixt and between. The above-mentioned elements – language, themes, and music – transfer them from the ancestors’ mythical world, full of symbolism, to the mundane reality of the audience. But, if the scene is liminal within the context of the performance, the clowns remain liminal even when the narrative resumes; they are in permanent liminality, which is the basis of their Otherness. Their behaviour resembles that of a neophyte who is separated from society in an initiation rite. They, too, are ambiguous and paradoxical, and there is no bound to their playful experimentation: elements are inverted and rearranged, resulting in new combinations. Theirs is the realm of the subjunctive, of unlimited possibilities. Also of consciousness, awakening: their combinations bring a reflexive element that makes the audience apprehend the familiar in a clearer light. – Lysloff further notes that the wayang division into three major parts has an “eerie” resemblance to Turner’s stages in the rite of passage: separation, liminality, and reaggregation (*ibid.*; Turner 1965:94).

The punakawan’s comicality is expressed in various ways. One, commonly employed, is the mocking of their masters’ upper-class manners, as in the following scene from *The Reincarnation of Rama* (Brandon 1993:116-7):

Petruk (*poking with his long ungainly arms*): Ho! Brother Gareng! Welcome to the audience hall.

Gareng (*slower than his clever brother*): Heh! (*Looking out at the spectators*) I see an audience. But where’s the hall?

Petruk: Stupid! [...] Oh, for God’s sake, ‘Reng! I was trying to act refined, like our Pandawa masters, and you don’t even recognize it? [...] You have to *practice* being dignified. Don’t you want to better yourself? [...] Remember! Be refined, stupid! (*They move toward each other.*) Ahem! Welcome into the audience hall, honorable Brother (*They bow to each other, cracking their heads.*) Ouch!

Gareng: What’d you do that for, ‘Truk?

.....

Petruk: Well, never mind! Let's go on. Ahem. I extend to you my exalted prayers, elder Brother.

Gareng (*beginning to like it*): Hah! Er . . . revered Brother . . . I revel . . . ha, ha, ha . . . in Your Majesty's glowing presence, bask in your Kingship's glorious glory, and extend to your Deliriousness this humbleship's exquisite delight and anticipa-cipita-anticipica-

Petruk: Anticipation!

Gareng: Hehh! 'Truk, this is fun. Let's do another one!

Petruk: All right. Ho ho! What a surprise, elder Brother, to see you arrive behind me unannounced. (*Turns his back on Gareng and farts.*) Welcome into my presence, honored Brother.

Gareng (*holding his bulging nose in both hands and gasping for breath*): Gaah!

Petruk (*hopping about, laughing*): Heh-heh-heh! Do you look funny!

Gareng: You did that on purpose, 'Truk. You know I have a sensitive nose! (*Pouting*). I'm not going to play any more.

Their violation of etiquette rules and low Javanese put the punakawan closer to the audience; in fact, some wayang scholars, as mentioned above, affirm that they represent the people. It is the punakawan, one recalls, who introduce subjects, including gossip overheard by the dalang, of interest to the village. Furthermore, they entertain and amuse the audience by mocking the formality of their masters, and outside observers might be tempted to infer that they provide an outlet for the villagers' resentment of the social order. However, many researchers contend that, albeit critical, the punakawan are not reformers or revolutionaries, for, in the final analysis, they do not challenge the establishment norms. It can be said that their irreverence has a function closer to that of the jester as guardian of these norms.¹² The punakawan release tension and maintain interest in the performance by "coming down" to everyday language and to subjects with

¹² See discussion of Mitchell on *The Jester's Otherness*, p.41-47; the ritual clown as preserver of the culture is generally found in rigidly structured societies, of which wayang is exemplary.

which the audience can readily identify, and thus it can be said that their inversion of behaviour actually serves the status quo. Barbara Hatley (1971:91) contends that, while the mythical stories of wayang represent the Javanese ideals, the precepts are difficult to translate into real life. The clowns' demystification of the symbols is cathartic; it releases tensions and anxieties caused by the unattainable wayang values. So the punakawan are not provoking rebellion; on the contrary, they comprise a "mode of adjusting" to them, "a humanizing counterpoint" (*ibid.*). The wayang cosmic conceptions becomes closer and more relevant to the Javanese everyday.

Nevertheless, despite the consensus that the punakawan are actually guardians of traditional precepts, one cannot fail to notice that many scholars are troubled by the meaning of their mockery and try to "explain it away". Since it is difficult to measure the extent of the clowns' often quite radical infringements, I would venture to suggest that – sometimes, at least – the dalang employs the punakawan to voice his criticism of the status quo, which, however, is so powerful that only comedy results. (But wit, as one knows, is a weapon of those who are otherwise impotent!) In fact, James Peacock (1978:214), in examining the historical background of the symbolic inversion of both transvestites and punakawan, cites Sardjono (1947:20), who calls attention to the fact that the clowns, like the more established dalangs, are called teachers (*kijai*), owing to their ability to view reality in a wider perspective than that posited by conventional norms. They inherited this epithet from isolated intellectuals of the past who promoted mystical ideas that threatened the established order. Thus it is conceivable that the punakawan have assumed the role of these subversives. If one is prepared to give serious consideration to such a conjecture, the punakawan can be interpreted as potential revolutionary provocateurs – which is a key function of the Other.

In sum, the Otherness of the punakawan results from the combination of the various elements enumerated above: their individuality, which is generally *kasar*; their servile status; their low idiom; their basic, vulgar behaviour – all in sharp contrast to the *alus* looks and conduct of their masters, who represent the ideals of the culture. The punakawan dare to break the wayang ethical frame, but they are

generally acceptable to the public, who identify so closely with them (Holt 1967:145; Geertz 1976:277; Hatley 1971:89; Peacock 1978:212). The punakawan are simultaneously both within and without the play. Within, they are servants, and complement and support the heroes. But their role as comedians, critics, and commentators, as well as their ability to move between the wayang world and that of the audience, exemplifies their permanent liminal status. They serve the functional role of spokesman for the dalang, who utilizes their ability to “come out” of the classic frame, translating the universal of the wayang ideals into the particular event celebrated by the public. This duality or ambiguity is crucial to their function. Within the context of the lakon, the punakawan are not comical, either for their masters or for others in the drama; in this respect, they cannot be compared to the medieval court jester, who amused the king and his retinue. The punakawan are comical for the public only, both by looks and manners, as well as in their asides, which are addressed to the villagers, for whom their comicality is an intrinsic trait.

The Wayang Gods

Introduction

The gods are integrated into the wayang hierarchy, being of the highest order, above king and commoners, all-powerful and eternal. If, however, one considers wayang not literally, but conceptually, then the gods represent the idealization of virtue and the spiritual life. These two levels (and others, as well) exist concurrently, just as, in a popular Illustration of Gestalt psychology, the chalice in the centre of a page can also be perceived as two faces confronting one another in profile. That is to say, the wayang gods can be appreciated either as characters with a specific superpower, such as Bayu, the God of the Wind, or as emblems of a virtue, such as bravery. Whether one aspect or another is stressed can depend on the occasion: in birth celebrations, for instance, the character is more relevant; in a purification ritual, by contrast, the symbolism is foremost. In practice, the Pandawa heroes are usually preferred as models; it is possible that the divinities are too

remote from mortals. That one's son will be as strong and assertive as Bima, the second of the Pandawa brothers, is conceivable; but not that he will possess the powers of Surya, the Sun God.

In most lakon (the exceptions being those reflecting ancient Javanese agrarian and exorcist traditions), the gods are peripheral to the main plot, but their intervention is generally fundamental and redirects the course of events.

The Javanese Pantheon

In wayang, the realm of the gods is Suralaya, the "Quiet World" or the "World Between", located atop Mahameru, the "World Mountain" (Brandon 1993:148). In the gunungan-kayon puppet, heaven is represented by a closed gate (Scott-Kemball 1970:Frontispiece, see Figs.4-5, pp.81-82). As in traditional Javanese society, the pantheon is also hierarchical. Batara Guru presides over a host of gods, celestial nymphs, and other supernatural creatures (Fig.10, p. 118). Despite his authority, he is not the Supreme God, but the "god of the gods" for earthlings. Some of the deities are of Hindu provenance (Batara Guru himself, for example, and Batari Durga, his previous consort), but they gradually acquired Javanese traits, and were absorbed into Java's culture and religion by being given local mythical origins and looks (Fig.11, p. 119). A number of indigenous gods, surviving from the earlier animism, retain their original character, such as Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Rice (Fig.11, p. 119). Owing to the paucity of documentation, the derivation of the gods is usually difficult to trace. Generally there are diverse versions, according to region and tradition.

The wayang pantheon commences with Sang Hyang Tunggal, the All-Comprehensive One, who, as a purely spiritual power without corporeal manifestation (Ulbricht 1972:17), does not have a puppet. His two sons were born simultaneously: Ismaya, the "dark light", and Manikmaya, the "bright light". Since darkness existed before light, Ismaya was deemed the elder, and since light penetrates darkness, Manikmaya was more powerful. Sang Hyang Tunggal made Manikmaya (Batara Guru) the god of gods, reigning in heaven. Possessed of a

beautiful and radiant countenance, he was made responsible for man's spiritual life. Ismaya (Semar) was given an ugly appearance and sent to earth to serve and guide mankind (*ibid.*:23-24).

As for the other gods, their origins are explained as follows in a Javanese text by Tanoyo (n.d.:36) cited by Brakel-Papenhuyzen (1997:1-2): after the disappearance of Sang Hyang Tunggal, the Supreme Being, Batara Guru creates his own consort, Dewi Uma, and next, "all the 30 gods and their spouses"; he separates the earth from the sky, and appoints the nine deities who "will fix the world".

The gods have supernatural powers, but are not perfect; they display physical or character defects and limitations similar to man's; they have passions and jealousies, and can behave deviously, often interfering in mortal affairs. In one story, for



10. Batara Guru in meditation on his mount, the bull. The rainbow arches over him, ending in two deer heads, represent the sky and the Suralaya (Djajasoibrata 1999:97).



Batari Durga



Dewi Sri, the rice goddess



Batara Narada

11. Wayang Gods (Djajasoebata 1999:98-99).

instance, the Sun God, Surya, was unable to resist the lovely maiden Kunti, and sired Karna. And sometimes the deities' erroneous behaviour is punished. Various gods have ugly or fierce looks as result of punishment, just or not, for some misconduct. Sometimes the punishments are temporary, pending the arrival of someone who breaks the spell. Examples are numerous. In the lakon *Pandhu Crowned King*, Pandhu shoots an arrow at an attacking elephant, which, wounded, reveals itself to be Bayu, the God of the Wind, who was punished for blowing aloft the skirts of the heavenly nymphs (Keeler 1992:30). And, in another story, Bima, the powerful Pandawa brother, is battling two giants; in a climatic moment he strikes their heads together, and they immediately turn into gods. "Sometimes the gods themselves do evil, and these two had done something wrong and had been incarnated as giants by Batara Guru (Geertz 1976:273-274)". Bima's action frees them. But sometimes the deformations are permanent, as in the case of the two important figures, Batari Durga and Narada (see below). Thus Javanese deities resemble those of Ancient Greece in that they are often kin to humans and become involved in demeaning intrigues.

The Principal Gods

Most individual gods have supernatural powers and reign over the world, looking after men's interests. However, as mentioned above, their behaviour can also be selfish and mean, directed by (amusingly human) passions. It can be stated that most of the gods of the Javanese Pantheon are not completely virtuous; their "sins" range from occasional slips to serious aberrations that sometimes warrant punishment – even amounting to permanent deformation.

- *Batara Guru* is the god of the gods, enormously powerful and beautiful, but proud, for which Sang Hyang Tunggal afflicted him with three curses (Ulbricht 1972:24): The first, stains on his neck, acquired after drinking and vomiting poisonous water – to remind of his ignorance. The second, lameness. Having scorned a baby for being unable to walk directly after birth (unlike the gods), his

own left foot became immobile. (According to another version, he found it amusing that Jesus Christ, in spite of his divine descent, could not walk as a baby.) Finally, four arms – after Guru had laughed at a praying man who, wearing his coat over his shoulders, looked as if he had four arms. – Albeit the Supreme Teacher, Batara Guru often chooses to side with the “bad” Kurawa or interfere unjustly in human affairs. As a god, he cannot descend below his level, except through *alihan* (transformation), which is an ability only the very powerful – the gods, the Pandawas, and one or two of the Kurawas – possess. A god should be impartial and disinterested, but such a transformation allows him to pursue his aims in disguise, “without sullying the image of a god” (Keeler 1987:207). In one lakon, Batara Guru changes into a priest (*pandhita*), generally a most respected figure, ostensibly in order to mediate between the Kurawa and the Pandawa; his ulterior motive, however, is lust for a Kurawa daughter (Keeler 1987:207-208). But his act is revealed by some stalwart warrior or a god who outranks him, like Semar, and he returns in shame to his abode. In his study of Greek religion, Guthrie (1955:39) discusses Zeus’ total supremacy over all other beings or gods, although, “from the moral point of view, Zeus might stand no higher than the lowliest of his human subjects”. This observation could also be applied to Batara Guru and the other Javanese deities.

- The god *Narada* (Fig.11, p.119) often appears together with Batara Guru, serving as his messenger. Originally he was Batara Kanekaputra, a handsome and powerful god, and, in a dispute with Batara Guru concerning supernatural knowledge, the latter recognized his superiority, and acknowledged him as “elder brother”. Batara Kanekaputra was taken to Suralaya as the senior of all the gods. He was humorous, full of jest, and quick to master any situation, but his unruly behaviour often enraged the others, and once Batara Guru was so vexed that he struck Batara Kanekaputra, making him short and ugly; he was henceforth called Narada (Harjowirogo 1958:5; Brandon 1993:148). He also has characteristics of a jester, being cunning and extremely clever, and thus one could compare him with Hermes, who was also Zeus’ messenger.

In the lakon, *The Drama of the Abduction of Princess Surikanti*, which transpires in the earlier days of the epic, Ardjuna (as the young Pamade) encounters Karna for the first time and, supposing that he, Karna, is about to abduct the beautiful Surikanti, enters into a fierce contest with him. But Narada, whose intervention at this juncture is positive and impartial, reveals to Pamade that Karna is his half-brother and destined to wed Surikanti (Ulbricht 1972:8-13).

An illustration of Narada's arbitrariness is provided by *The Death of Karna*, an important play concerning the period of the Bratayuda, the Great War in the *Mahabharata*, which concludes with the death of most of the Pandawas, as well as their enemies and cousins, the Kurawas. Karna is the Pandawas' half-brother, but, being rejected by them, he was warmly received by Suyuduna, the Kurawa king.¹³ When the war erupts, Karna sides loyally with the Kurawas against his own kin, despite efforts by Kresna, their ally, and his mother, Kunti, to convince him to join them. The lakon, concerning the war's seventh day, is very poignant. Most of the Pandawas and Kurawas are dead, and Karna and Ardjuna are about to enter into battle. Guru and Narada fly low over the

¹³ It should be noted that Karna is an Other in the context of wayang society; in spite of his semidivine origin, he does not fit into the hierarchy, being ostracized by his mother and brothers. De Bruin and Brakel-Papenhuyzen (1992:38-68) compare Karna's self-confrontation in battle in two different theatrical traditions: *kuttu* (north of Tamil Nadu) and *wayang wong* (Central Java). The differences reflect local mentality: the Tamil players emphasize the issue of Karna's low caste status, loyalty to his friends, and the consequences of his wife's position. While in Java the crux of the conflict is between the duty of brotherly love and loyalty to one's country. In wayang, Karna is not just opposing his half-brother Ardjuna, who fires the decisive arrow in Karna's disguise; the Javanese emphasize the likeness of the two heroes to such an extent that Karna can be considered as having shot the arrow himself. That is why the name of the play does not mention Ardjuna – only that Karna is opposed in battle, "he has found his match" (*ibid.*:65).

battlefield in order to admire it, but, having flown too close to the combatants, Narada is struck by one of Karna's errant arrows. Since the weapons are magical, not even the gods are immune to them. In anger, Narada curses Karna, proclaiming that he, too, should be struck by an arrow, thus sealing the warrior's fate (Brandon 1993:349). This is a *pokok lakon*; it derives from the epics and, as such, the outcome is preordained. In this instance, the course of events is already being guided by the hurt pride of Karna's royal father-in-law, who, ordered to drive Karna's battle chariot, swerves when Karna's otherwise straight arrow is aimed at Ardjuna's neck, thus sparing the latter (*ibid.*:348). This episode serves to display the capricious aspect of Narada's personality, human in its self-interest and partiality. But it is merely one link in a sequence whose dire conclusion was inexorable! – The gods also intervene directly in men's affairs, favouring some heroes over others. Later, in the same *lakon* (*ibid.*:350), Narada offers Ardjuna a helmet that will make him look exactly like Karna, thus confusing his opponent.

- Even *Kresna*, on the side of the “good” Pandawas, is not devoid of tricks, and lies to the Kurawas (*ibid.*:19).
- Representing the dark side of divine power is the fearsome and monstrous *Batari Durga*. She was not, however, always a *raksasi*. Statuary from the tenth to fifteenth centuries – the Hindu-Javanese period in East Java – depict her as a beautiful woman with long, loose hair standing on a buffalo (*mahisa*) (Santiko 1997:210-211). Written sources reveal that the cult of Durga was then similar to that of her counterpart in India, its purpose being to secure protection and victory over enemies (*ibid.*: 216). Nevertheless, there are also a few statues portraying her as a demoness with bulging eyes and fangs (*ibid.*:220). – She was once a very lovely woman called *Batari Uma*. She was *Batara Guru*'s first consort and ruled over all the goddesses in *Suralaya*. Once, on an outing, according to the myth, she refused her husband's sexual advances, and he, infuriated, cursed her so that she became a *raksasi*. In *wayang kulit* she is generally presented with hideous features and a fierce disposition (Fig.11, p.119). She is associated with

the spirit world, and her domain is Sétra Gandamayi – the ill-smelling place of decomposing bodies and cremation, filled with “malformed, naked creatures of weird appearance” (Harjowirogo 1958; Brakel-Papenhuyzen 1997:2). In spite of being feared, people appeal to her in extreme and desperate situations, but only when all other means have failed, because she also demands recompense. In *The Rape of Sumbadra*, Burisrawa desires Sumbadra, Ardjuna’s consort, but his situation is hopeless, as she loves her husband. Burisrawa is driven to Durga’s realm in the woods, and pleads for her help, which she consents to grant...but only if he will serve her in the afterlife. It is a shameful prospect, but Burisrawa is so frantic for Sumbadra’s love that he accepts the terms, after reflecting that nobody will know about it anyway:

Durga. Now, why was it that you left the royal city without telling anything to your family?

Burisrawa. It was because I was desperate. I’m desperately longing to marry my sister, Badra, but it’s not possible.

Durga. Hey, but this Sumbadra is already the wife of our friend, Ardjuna. How can it be that you want to marry her? Aren’t there enough women more beautiful than this black lady?

Burisrawa. Yes, but it happens that I love her, my divine Goddess. It’s true that she married Djanaka of her own free will. Nevertheless, I’m steadfast in my wish to marry her. If it can’t be on earth, then it will be in the afterlife. Oh! revered Goddess, I beseech you...Please give me, your humble creature, your love, and enable me to marry sister Sumbadra.

Durga. Well, well, well, dear Gods in Heaven! Yes, my boy, you’re really to be pitied! If you really desire her so terribly, there’s only one way. But, I don’t know if you’ll be able to do this.

Burisrawa. Oh, please! Which way is there, divine Goddess?

Durga. There’s one way. I can’t guarantee that you’ll marry Sumbadra, but I can bring the two of you together. And I can give you a spell to arouse love. On whomsoever you employ it, this person will do anything that you desire.

Burisrawa. Ah! That's what I need! Please, give it to me.

Durga. It's possible. But wait, there's something else! Are you ready...later, when they come to get you, to follow me as my bodyguard, like these men here?

Burisrawa. So, when I die, later on, I'll have to be your soldier? Oh! What a terrible thought! But if I don't wish it?

Durga. So you're not ready? Very well, I'm also not ready to do what you so much desire.

Burisrawa. Ai, ai, ai! OK, I agree, I'm ready, divine Goddess. OK, let it be! Once I'm dead, nobody will know about it.

Durga. If you really declare that you're ready, come a little closer, and I'll give you a magic love spell.

Burisrawa. Yes, as you say.

J.J.Ras 1976:157-158, translated by Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen

- The seed of Batara Guru, rejected in this version, by *Batari Uma*, fell into the ocean and generated the monstrous *Batara Kala*¹⁴. Thus Batari Durga is associated with Batara Kala. In order to appease him, Batara Guru allowed him to prey upon the *wong sukeita*, humans cursed by some wrong-doing or by birth, which is why the exorcising lakon *Murwakala* is performed (Harjowirogo 1958; Brakel-Papenhuyzen 1997:1). It is given in its entirety or as part of a ritual event in order to release a person from the state of taboo

¹⁴ The origin of Batara Kala in another version is given by Rassers (1982:47), who cites Hazeu's account of a dalang in Jogya: Guru is sexually aroused by the vision of a beautiful nymph (dewi Teñaga) in a state of ascetism in the middle of the sea. When he tries to capture her, she escapes, and the semen of the rejected god falls into the sea, whence a giant arises. Guru acknowledges him as his son, calls him Batara Kala, and allows him to prey upon the *wong sukeita*, humans who are cursed by some misdeed or mischance of birth (see list in Rassers *ibid.*:46).

(Rassers 1982:46-47). There are variations, but more in regard to details than the main points. Unlike traditional wayang, the *Murwakala* is presented during the day, apparently because of the many children born in taboo states who have to remain awake during the full performance. In this lakon, the gods descend from Heaven in disguise (*mahlin*), in order to prevent Kala from eating a human being (Sears 1996:235-6): Guru, taking Ardjuna's form, becomes the puppeteer; Brama becomes a *gender* (a gamelan instrument) player and Sumbadra, Ardjuna's wife; Narada, in the form of Semar, is the drummer. Kala searches for his victim, but is repeatedly tricked. In the end, after failing thrice, he either returns to his realm, or the dalang stuffs some rice into his mouth, which Kala mistakes for a child, and is conciliated. It is important to note that only a dalang of pedigree and much experience is allowed to perform the *Murwakala*.

- More powerful than Batara Guru is his elder brother, *Semar*, who, with his misshapen human form, is also far from perfect.¹⁵

Other native shadowplays about the gods are given during the agricultural festivals. Important among them are those concerning the origin of rice. One recounts in various regional versions the death and rebirth of the goddess *Dewi Sri*.

In most lakons based on Indian or native epics, the appearance of the gods has the function of altering the drift of the plot (cp. *deus ex machina*), e.g., *The Drama of the Abduction of Princess Surikanti*; or of proclaiming divine deeds, e.g., *The Reincarnation of Rama*, in which Guru and Narada descend to earth to meet the Pandawa heroes and Krishna, and announce that Wisnu and Basuki are destined to be incarnated into them.

¹⁵ Semar was extensively discussed in the *Jesters in Wayang* (p.108-110).

In sum, the gods are the highest entities in the wayang cosmos, and, amongst themselves, they replicate the hierarchy of society on earth. They are often akin, many being sons of Batara Guru and Semar. In spite of their status, they mingle with humans and interfere in their affairs, generally taking sides – which reveals them as subject to passions, precluding absolute “goodness” and “perfection”. This reflects the Eastern conception of Oneness as being composed of opposites (Campbell 1968:9-13). Sometimes their misbehaviour results in temporary or permanent punishment.

The Significance of the Gods in the Wayang World

The wayang world is so vivid and absorbing that one is liable forget that the puppets of the gods are ultimately meant to represent ideas in recognizable form; perhaps this is another reason why they are modelled on stylized human or semi-human figures. Scott-Kemball (1970:26) notes that Batara Guru is man’s “radiant spiritual force”; it is far from perfect, however, which explains why he exhibits deformities (the stains on the neck, etc.). His brother, Semar, sent to earth to protect and guide the Pandawas (the ancestors of the Javanese), becomes ugly in order to be closer to man.

J.J. Ras (1978:462) claims that Semar was anciently an agriculture and fertility deity, and he cites a report by a colonial administrator in 1933 describing a ritual in which puppets of Semar and a Punakawan were used to consecrate irrigation waters (*ibid.*:187-190). Concerning Semar’s fertility symbolism, Ras compares it to the role of the clown in more popular forms of entertainment, like the *tayuban* and *ludruk*, which serve as alternatives to wayang. *Tayuban* are parties in which one or more professional dancing-girls, accompanied by a gamelan, invite the (male) guests to dance. *Ludruk*, as mentioned above, is a popular comedy concerned with modern issues whose transvestite actors are solely men. The performance is normally opened by a *taledek* (a girl dancer hired from a local bordello) and two or three additional dancers – usually boys disguised as girls. The actual performance starts at midnight (when the wayang Punakawan appear) and continues till three or

four o'clock in the morning. In ludruk and tayuban, as in wayang, the clowns' jokes are explicitly erotic. The golek puppet dancer at the end of the wayang performance perhaps recalls earlier practices (surviving into the nineteenth century), where one or more *taledek pasinden* (prostitutes), trained in singing and dancing, were hired for the celebration. Ras (*ibid.*:461) argues that the crude and erotic jokes in wayang, together with the presence of the *taledek*, are not indicative of decadence, but reflect the original fertility rite.

Insofar as wayang represents man's inner struggle between Good and Evil, the aim is not, as in Christianity, the former's total victory, but the reaching of a balance, whereby Evil (signified by passions and desires) is subdued. That is why Batara Guru, construed as man's spirit, continually succumbs to sinful impulses. As beautiful and powerful as he is, he cannot resist passions – he is not absolutely perfect.

Semar and his sons, the main Jester-Others in wayang, have key functions both within and without the performance, as shown above. But Semar is also a god. This combination of Jester and God makes Semar wayang's pre-eminent Other. The convention whereby external appearance reflects the character's inner qualities is contravened in him – he combines the lowest social status with the highest powers. His looks and conduct violate all the norms of Javanese ethics, but he is the most beloved of the wayang figures for his protective and consoling role. He appears as the angel-saviour at the most critical moments. The oppositions inherent in his status and hermaphroditic appearance are explained by Mangkunagoro VII (1957:11) as the personification of the undivided whole, and thus he considers Semar the most significant figure in the kotak (puppet chest). He is the archetypal Other and the One – both forming a unity – and representing man's highest and lowest aspects: his self-idealization, as well as his acceptance of himself as human, with his imperfections and weaknesses.

The Otherness of the Gods

The gods are part and parcel of the wayang hierarchy, occupying its apex, of course. But the ascent from the lowest commoners to deities is not a continuum. By virtue of their supernatural powers and immortality, the gods are essentially different from humans – they are Others. Generally, they reside in Suralaya, where their characteristics and functions are clearly defined; occasionally, however, as seen, they cross the border into man's domain and interfere in his affairs. They are agents of action, that is to say, their intercession decisively changes the direction and outcome of events. In the aforementioned *Abduction of Princess Surikanti*, Narada, as *deus ex machina*, mediates between Karna and Ardjuna. But the gods can also capriciously choose sides, and twist things to their liking, as exemplified by Guru's preference for the Kurawas. During these episodes, it can be said that the gods partake of the human drama, but retain certain non-human attributes – they are neither completely mortal nor divine; they are *liminal*.

Aliens in Wayang

Introduction: Origins

The aliens in wayang are generally well-defined types. Issuing from lands beyond the borders of Java, they are foreigners, and the overseas kingdoms are usually inhabited by *raksasas* (ogres) or *butas* (giants), who enter Java with aggressive intent. One does not learn much about them. Their characters are undeveloped, and they lack a genealogy or specific homeland. In the various lakon they often appear in different roles, their main function being to oppose the heroes in battle; they are vanquished, and then expelled or killed; but they return in subsequent

performances, often with different names, and sometimes motivate the action, but invariably they are overcome. In other words, they exist to be defeated and die.

Brandon (1993:28) laments that the lack of data on the evolution of wayang leaves the origins of the ogres obscure. He conjectures that either they were created as antagonists for the Pandawas in the continually supplemented scenes of the Amarta (forest), and became so popular that, over time, the dalangs gave them a permanent place in the performance. Or, as an alternative hypothesis, that the ogres were introduced casually, but their popularity made fixtures of them, even if unessential to the plot, in the combat scenes that enliven the long performances. In a typical play, the conflict is not just between the Pandawas and the Kurawas, but includes a foreign kingdom, or is only between the Pandawas and the latter (in *The Reincarnation of Rama*, for example, the Kurawas are not even present). Most of these are “branch” plays (*tjarangan*); that is, they do not appear in the epics, but are newly invented (*ibid.*:27-29). In addition to the Hindu-Javanese epics, the foreign ogres are also present in the native Javanese animistic cycles and in those of Rama and Ardjuna Sasra Bau, which are derived from earlier myths and sagas (*ibid.*:28). It is notable, however, that they do not exist in the original literary form of the epics or in Javanese mythology, but only in wayang, where they have an important dramatic function. According to Brandon, the evolution of the ogres into indispensable figures in the classic play is an “example of the triumph of the theatrical art over literature” (*ibid.*).

The aliens are generally introduced in Part Two of the performance in the Foreign Audience Scene. Their first encounter with the heroes is in the Open Skirmish Scene – the inconclusive battle, in which no-one is slain. Later, they appear in succession, and each is defeated and killed (see “The Structure of Wayang Performance”, p.94). The wayang battles normally feature two combatants at a time, each introducing his rank and status, with the exception of the single large puppet (*prampogan* or *ampjak*), which represents an entire army. Although the outcome, i.e., the victory of the Punakawan hero, is known in advance, the dalang’s skill in manipulating the puppet can make the scene highly exciting.

The Aliens' Characteristics and Significance

The aliens' appearance is generally *kasar*: they are large, thick-set, fierce in aspect, hairy, and red, brown, or some other earthly colour in face and body; their manners are brute and rough, and they talk loudly (Scott-Kemball 1970:27-28; Brandon 1993:19-20). Size in wayang is a token of physical power (not of greatness¹⁶), also of violence and unbridled passion – the opposite, that is, of the desirable refinement (*alus*) and self-mastery towards spiritual power (Holt 1967:141). On the stage, the alien puppets appear on the left (“bad” or “unjust”) side. Still, their warriors and nobles exhibit loyalty towards one another, and their deferential behaviour towards superiors follows traditional wayang norms. Their attendants, by contrast, as mentioned above, can be quite unreliable. These are generally represented by Togog and his assistant Saraita. Their provenance is controversial: Scott-Kemball (1970:32.) introduces Saraita as a foreigner who speaks a mixture of languages and is a slow-witted braggart, whilst Brandon (1993:26) describes them as “supposedly Javanese”. But Togog, generally the chief attendant to a prince of the left, is identified as Semar's brother; he was also given an ugly form and sent to earth, but to serve a foreign sovereign: “...trickster, turncoat and a coward” (Scott-Kemball 1970:32). Both he and Saraita flee in the face of danger, abandoning their master.

Most alien puppets can be called “generic”, in that they assume different names and positions according to the lakon's need. Nevertheless, although belonging to a type, a few – Tjakil (Fig.12, p.132), Pragalba, Terong, and Galijuk – have personalized traits, like the Punakawan. Tjakil appears in every lakon; his name refers to the “fang” he has in his mouth, and he invariably dies by his own *kris* (Javanese dagger) in combat with a *ksatria* in the Flower Battle in Part Two. Terong receives his name from his nose, shaped like a *terong* (eggplant). The same character can assume different names in different lakons: in *The Reincarnation of Rama*, Tjakil is called Maritja, and he plays the commander of the ogre army, whereas Terong,

¹⁶ There are some notable exceptions, such as Bima and Hanuman.

called Lodra, has the role of an ogre warrior (Brandon 1993:82). In *Irawan's Wedding*, Tjakil is Bantjuring, an ogre official, and Terong is Montrokendo, another ogre warrior (*ibid.*:172). Some ogres appear with their own names in the aforementioned plays: Pragalba, for instance, who is killed by an arrow, being unapproachable because of his foul breath. The same is true of Galijuk and Saksadewa. Sometimes a foreign warrior is identified by his weapons and dress, such as Patih Seberang, a generic puppet for the prime minister of an overseas kingdom, who is dressed as a battle-ready warrior, wearing a typical costume called *baju* and bearing two *kris*es; or Penggawa Seberang, another generic puppet, representing an officer of an overseas country, who has a different *baju* and also wears a sword, indicating that he is not Javanese (Harjowirogo 1958:43). On occasion, a foreign sovereign is human in aspect, like Sabrangan Bagus, whose name means “a king from abroad who has a handsome appearance” (*ibid.*:42). In conclusion, the “main” ogres are known to the audience, and are easily recognized by their physical characteristics and uncouth behaviour. Often the ogres are slow-witted and mocked by the Punakawan – to the delight of the audience. *The Reincarnation of Rama* is a good example. The main plot concerns of divine gifts to the Pandawas of the spirits Wisnu and Basuka, previously incarnated in Rama and Leksmana. By this means, as mentioned above, the Rama and Pandawa epics are linked, betokening the continuity of kingship, so important in the Javanese cosmogony. The events transpire during early Amarta times, when Ardjuna is a youth wooing his first wife Sumbadra. It is a quiet and undramatic piece, its importance residing in its spiritual and philosophical message. It can be considered the starting-point of “the Pandawa’s glorious days at Amarta”, as “Authority and Truth



12. Tjakil and Ardjuna (Djajasoebata 1999:129).

have passed to Kresna and Ardjuna, setting the seal of the gods' approval on the Pandawa" (Brandon1993:70). Action is introduced in the subplot effected by the ogre king Dasasuksma, the spirit of King Rawana, Rama's demon enemy. The king sends his ogre warrior to abduct Sumbadra, the reincarnation of Sinta, Rama's wife, after whom he lusts. The ogres are guided by their master's servants, Togog and Saraita – two cowards who originally came from the Pandawa's territory. In the following scene (Part Two, Scene 4 – *In the Forest*), the army of ogres, commanded by Maritja (Tjakil), meet Ardjuna, who is accompanied by his three loyal servants, the Punakawan (Petruk, Gareng, and Semar):

(... Ardjuna enters from the right and stands quietly. Cautiously Maritja enters from the left. Seeing Ardjuna, he leaps with surprise. He circles Ardjuna, jumping in the air and waving his arms, growling, and roaring, trying to frighten his opponent. Maritja creeps up behind Ardjuna, but hastily retreats when the prince, without turning around, calmly rests his hand on the hilt of his dagger. After growling and making tentative feints at Ardjuna, Maritja turns and calls on Togog and Saraita for moral support. Gareng and Petruk enter from the right....)

Maritja: Hey, 'Gog, what the hell, is this the knight?

Togog: That's him, Master.

Maritja: Weakling' Eggshell! I'll crush you under my feet'

Petruk (*waving his arm*): Impudent ogre'

Togog: Because he looks delicate, don't think he's harmless.

Maritja: Haw, haw' Him?

Togog: You'll believe me when he splits your skull, Master.

Maritja: Watch your manners, fool! Haw! I'll handle him (*To Ardjuna*) Hey, you! Little Knight' What's your name before I kill you? Where are you from? Where are you going? Tell me, tell me' Are you dumb? Answer me' (*Turns to Togog*) What's wrong with him? He won't answer me.

Togog: Why should he, Master? You're rude, You shout. You wave your arms. He'll stand there and look at you until doomsday. He's a noble. If

you want to speak, you've got to speak politely first. Do as he does, Master.

Maritja: It's my nature to shout. I like to shout. I'll shout all I please. I'm not going to change my ways for this piece of straw! (*To Ardjuna.*) I demand to know your name' (*Leaping up and down in fury.*) Answer me, answer meeeee.

Ardjuna (*quietly*): Gods, has this ogre begun again? You annoy me, Ogre. Hear me, Ogre. What do others call you? Where is the hole you call your home?

Maritja: Ohhhhhh! I asked first! And what do you mean, "the hole you call your home"?

Ardjuna: Is this not so, that the noble has his country and the ogre, like a stray cur, his hole?

Maritja: Grrrrh! (*Jumps about, infuriated.*) I may be an ogre, but I happen to be a minister of the mighty King Dasasuksma'

Ardjuna: Cover yourself with pure gold, you will remain an ogre at heart.

Maritja: All right, you win, Knight' (*Proudly.*) Tremble as I speak! I come from the land Tawangantungan accross the seas! My name is Maritja I am called Tjakil! "Fang," the Super-Giant' Now, it's your turn. Tell me, tell me, tell me' What's your name?

Ardjuna: I have none.

Maritja (*thinking he's been tricked*): Aarrhhh! What?

Ardjuna: If you wish to address me, ask my title.

Maritja: Damn! What do you think you are, talking that way? A Prince?

Ardjuna: Are you blind? Can you not see that I am?

Maritja: A prince? Hah! All right, what's your title, then?

Ardjuna: I am named: "Champion in Battle," "Invincible Warrior," "Star Among the Excellent," "Paragon of Virtue," "Beloved of the Gods."

Maritja (*impressed in spite of himself*): Heeeeh! You could cover the world with those titles, Prince. Now, where are you going? How dare you travel through our forest and without an escort?

Ardjuna: I follow the sight of my eyes and the will of my heart.

Maritja: You talk riddles! You are rude, Knight, and shall not cross my boundaries.

Ardjuna: I see no barriers.

Maritja: Haw, haw' No barriers? Don't you see my army of ogres? Ho, ho, ho'

Ardjuna (*anger rising, but controlled*): Ogres? I can crack their heads with my feet. Out of my way, Ogre'

Maritja: Ha! You have the courage to fight me, little man? Haw, haw, haw!

Ardjuna: Should I fear you, foolish Giant?

Maritja: I am taller than you.

Ardjuna: I have not far to reach to detach your head from your body.

Maritja: I have magic powers.

Ardjuna: The sight of your corpse will not disturb my rest.

Maritja: Gnat' Louse! Flea' No bigger than my fist' I'll catch you, crush you, suck your flesh dry before licking on your bones! Haw, haw, haw' Fight! Fight! Fight!

Brandon 1993:132-134

Maritja's boorish manners and narrow mental compass reduce him to a clown, injecting comedy into the scene. It is difficult, as seen above, to classify the wayang heroes as totally "good" or "bad"; often their conduct is ambiguous, and has to be judged as "better" or "less good". The heroic Pandawas have weaknesses and the wicked Kurawas have redeeming qualities, and, in their confrontations, the moral correctness of their respective motives is not easily established. When, however, a Pandawa prince faces an ogre, "the conflict is unequivocally between good and evil" (*ibid.*:20). The aliens, unlike the Kurawas, are totally bad. In the

symbolic interpretation of wayang, the ogres and demons represent man's most basic passions, which have to be defeated at all costs.

The Aliens' Otherness

The wayang aliens are foreigners and outsiders, meaning that they do not belong to the Javanese context: they are Others.

They are liminal, but there is no ambiguity to their liminality; they are clearly a threat, and represent the purely destructive aspect of being different. Gilman's concept of the "bad" Other is clearly applicable here: the aliens embody all the physical and behavioural traits the Javanese deem detestable. They reflect all the stereotyped human weaknesses that are feared and need to be tamed.

One could say that by their very presence the ogres stress the "goodness" of the heroes, neutralizing or justifying many of their less positive facets – pride, indifference, coldness. The ogres epitomize the negative side of any otherwise ambiguous situation, creating a more definite polarity between good and evil.

Hans Mayer (1982:XIV-XVII) [see pp. 50-52] defines the outsider as one who belongs to a minority, and he further differentiates between two classes: intentional and existential. The former is the deliberate breaker of law and order, whilst the latter is a victim by dint of his birth: sex, origins, psychic or physical make-up. Both are regarded negatively. Once, however, the existential outsider was considered (by Rousseau, for example) a positive force, an innovator. He was seen, Mayer adds, as belonging to a minority group with specific characteristics: "the people who...". In Mayer's outsider paradigm, wayang aliens can be classified as existential outsiders; that is to say, they constitute a group, minority or not, who were born on the wrong side of the Javanese border with the wrong physical traits. As such, they are in permanent limbo. They might cross into Java, but they can never "belong"; there is no place for them in the local hierarchy. It is their Otherness that determines their purpose in the wayang performance: they motivate the plot and

furnish the indispensable battle scenes. Shallow in personality and invariably evincing “bad” behaviour, the ogres are not “real” characters in the wayang world of heroes and villains, but functional figures according to Van Laan’s classification [see p.268]. They are “puppets” in an otherwise animated (humanized) puppet world.

VI

KARAGÖZ - THE TURKISH SHADOWPLAY

Introduction

Karagöz is the puppet shadowplay of Turkey. Its title derives from the name of its main character. I consider it the theatre of the Other, because it offers a satirical reflection of Ottoman society. Initially, this study will review *Karagöz* in its general aspects; this will be followed by the text (in English translation) of the performance of *The Marriage of Karagöz* and its analysis; and, finally, by a synthesis and discussion of the Other – Jesters, Gods, and Aliens – in the context of Turkish shadowplay.

Karagöz is a “theater of laughter” (And 1979:47), famous for being aggressively crude and obscene, censorious of all social, political, and moral excesses. It flourished during the Ottoman era, but there is some evidence that it preceded the dynasty’s rise to power, and, notwithstanding its diminished influence, it is still performed today. Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil (1951:6) contends that the *Karagöz* performances offered in the court and in private domiciles were very different in character from those in the coffee houses, but, owing to their exclusivity, less was written about the former. The better-known and more common versions were those that were given publicly. They were presented, he avers, by “second-rate” puppeteers (*ibid.*), whose audience consisted of the masses (traders and workmen), and their level was simpler, more “popular”. Siyavuşgil speculates that the puppeteers invited to court were educated and cultivated men, who, in addition to satire, infused their performances with their literary, musical, and philosophical knowledge, while only the more plebeian genre was accessible to foreigners, who

then wrote about it in their accounts, publicizing them abroad. This is an attractive hypothesis, but we lack sufficient documentation of the court performances to substantiate it. The only evidence is circumstantial. For example, Evliya Çelebi, traveller and author of *Seyyahatname (The Book of Travels, Istanbul, 1898)*, relates that there was a bi-weekly shadow presentation in the court of Murad IV (1623-1640) by a puppeteer notable for his great knowledge of Persian and Arabic, as well as for being a superb composer of music, a fine calligrapher, and an excellent poet. Also, Çelebi reputedly had a repertoire (probably exaggerated) of some 300 pieces, and was able to prolong a performance for 15 hours, purely on the basis of dialogues between Karagöz and Hacivat, his companion (Siyavuşgil 1951:6; Martinovitch 1968:32-33; And 1979:41) (Fig.13, p.139).

Be that as it may, the best documented performances were those given in public locales. And even if the private performances were more refined and cultured, it seems that the comic element prevailed, for the traditional structure and main characters remained the same. It is difficult to imagine the earthy Karagöz behaving in a genteel manner without the genre's essential nature being altered beyond recognition.

And divides Turkish theatre into two geographical areas: Old Istanbul and the other cities. The tradition of popular theatre – comprising, in addition to *Karagöz, Ortaoyunu* (live actors theatre) and *Meddah* (storytelling) – evolved in the milieu of the urban middle class (1979:11). It was most active during the Ottoman Empire, when freedom of expression was most restrained. For many years, this free-for-all theatre somehow managed to escape the strictures of an absolutist regime. It is conceivable that, owing to *Karagöz'* reliance on situation impromptu, it was difficult for the authorities to pinpoint its transgressions. Furthermore, its mockery was sufficiently harmless for it to be considered – for some time, at least – a threat to the authorities. It is also conjectured that *Karagöz* survived their repression due to some mystical aspects of the performance (Siyavuşgil 1951:15-16; Tietze 1977:13-14).

In Turkish, *hayal* signifies “image”, “phantasm”. It seems that this term was used in the Ottoman period to denominate any kind of puppetry. Shadowplay was called *hayāl-i zill* and *zill-i hayāl*, meaning literally “phantasm of the

shadow" or "shadow of the phantasm." And the puppeteer was called *hayali*, an illusionist. This fictional status seemed to have made *Karagöz* acceptable to the authorities and favoured by the people. In Tietze's words: "In this dreamy world the illogical only produces a smile; cruel satire does not really hurt; stark obscenity does not revolt" (1977:14).



13. Hacivat and Karagoz (And 1979:49).

Karagöz is improvisation theatre, comparable to the *Commedia dell'Arte*. It has no elaborate script, and its plots are generally of minimal complexity. Of greater import is the presentation and satirization of a number of stock types – characters familiar to the audience of Old Istanbul, who invariably arouse amusement and delight. Originally the plots were transmitted orally; only later were the scenarios sketched in writing. However, being essentially *ex tempore*, the text serves merely as a point of reference, while the live situation and interaction with the public are crucial. Accordingly, no performance is exactly the same as another.

Origins

Because of its popular nature, there is no formal record of Turkish shadowplay's early form or development, and hence the date and place of its origins are unknown. There are many conjectures, but none is convincingly substantiated. It is believed, however, that by the seventeenth century *Karagöz* was already well-established.

There are numerous legendary accounts, all more or less variations on a central theme, that attributes the origin of the Turkish shadowplay to Bursa. The most popular (Siyavuşgil 1951:5; Martinovitch 1968:31-32; And 1979:32) refers to the reign of Sultan Orhan (1326-1359). A mosque is under construction in Bursa. *Karagöz* is a mason and *Hacivat* a blacksmith. Their dialogues are so diverting that the other workers on the site lay down their tools in order to listen to them, retarding progress. The Sultan is furious and orders them both hanged. After a while, however, the Sultan himself misses the two clever talkers, and repents of his deed. A resourceful retainer named Şeyh Küşteri devises puppets resembling the dead characters, and manipulates them behind an illumined screen, resurrecting them, so to speak. – This version (like the others) is pure legend, except that Şeyh Küşteri was apparently a real personage, originally from Persia. He was not inventor of the shadowplay, but rather, according to Evliya Efendi (cited by And 1979:34), of the *mizmar* – the pan-flute played in the earlier *Karagöz* performances. In the Ottoman period, all artisans were organized into guilds, each of which had a patron, historical

or fictitious. Şeyh Küşteri was the patron of the shadowplay puppeteers, and the screen was called *Şeyh Küşteri Meydani*, “Şeyh Küşteri’s space” (*ibid.*). This account, however legendary, is important, because it draws a connection between *Karagöz* and the ancestor cult, so fundamental to shadowplay in the East.

Efendi (1834, Vol. I:654-655, cited by Siyavuşgil 1951:6 and And 1979:33-34) offers a different, more prosaic, version of shadowplay’s origins. Sofyozlu Karagöz Bali Çelebi, a merry, mellifluent fellow, was a gypsy and messenger for the Greek Emperor, Constantine. Yokça Halil Hacı Ayvad (corrupted to Hacivat), by contrast, was a serious philosopher, who served as a courier between Bursa and Mecca. Once a year, Karagöz was sent to Alâedin, the Seljuk Sultan, in Konya, where he encountered Hacivat. On these occasions, Karagöz and Hacivat would engage in humorous word duels. These were later repeated and imitated in different forms, including shadowplay – the *hayâl-i zill*.

The actual records of shadowplay in Turkey date from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and derive both from accounts by Western travellers and from those of important celebrations in Ottoman society. It is not presumed, however, that the genre of shadowplay originated in Turkey, and the inspiration for *Karagöz* has been sought in various lands already in its possession: China, India, Java, even Western Europe. In the following, the main theories concerning the possible origins of *Karagöz* will be briefly surveyed:

And (1979:29-32) believes that Turkish shadowplay most likely originated in Java via Egypt; he bases his position on written testimonies¹⁷ dating to the sixteenth century. Gradually, he argues, shadowplay acquired Turkish characteristics. He speculates that Egyptian shadowplay derived from Java, with which the Arabs conducted regular trade, even establishing small colonies in the coastal cities of Southeast Asia. He observes that vestiges of Javanese influence can be found in *Karagöz*:

¹⁷ “The Egyptian Chronicle.”

The plays are presented by a single professional puppeteer well-versed in the high culture of his nation: in Turkey, the hayalci or hayalî; in Java, the dalang. Both puppeteers start the show with a kind of invocation in which there are references to animism and Sufism (*ibid.*:30).

At the opening of the performance, a central figure appears on the screen the *göstermelik* in Turkey (Fig.16, p.169), the *kayon* (or *gunugan*) in Java. In Turkey, the *göstermelik* fills the empty curtainless screen before the play begins. It is a show piece, generally without any relation to the themes elaborated later: a decorative object like a vase of flowers, copied from a nineteenth-century European book or magazine, a ship, an ornamental tree, a group of musicians, a stalking lion (Tietze 1977:26). Some of the *göstermelik* are composite figures, influenced by Ottoman folk art and also by Islamic and Indian iconography: a camel consisting of various animals; a djinn made almost entirely of human faces (in one, two of these faces are on the knee caps, two on the calves, and one is suspended from the hands). Very typical is the *vak-vak-ağacı* ("talking tree"), a kind of Tree of Life, whose fruit are human heads and bodies; according to And (1979:30), it originates either in Madagascar or Sumatra. *Göstermelik* only appear in the beginning of the *Karagöz* performances. The *kayon* is a composite of the Tree of Life and other symbols, and it has many functions throughout the performance, as described in the section on Wayang.

And submits other points of comparison between *Karagöz* and Javanese shadowplay, but, owing to their lack of substantiating data, there is no need to enumerate them here.

Speculating further, And suggests that the Turks inherited the technique of shadowplay from the Mamelukes of Egypt, but that the movement, postures, and costumes of *Karagöz* were derived from the Ottoman jesters and grotesque dancers, both of whom were already established long before shadow puppetry. He justifies his position by referring to the Ottoman miniatures of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, whose portrayal of these entertainers bears a striking resemblance to *Karagöz* in terms of garb, headgear, and carriage. Later on,

the process reversed itself when actors began imitating shadowplay (And 1979:35-36; Petek-Şalom, undated manuscript).

Some researchers believe that *Karagöz* originated in China. Petek-Şalom cites Selim Nüzhet Gercek (Türk Temasas I – *Meddah, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*, Istanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1942, p.44), who affirms that the first shadows in China were shown through paper windows. G. Jacob ¹⁸(cited by Tietze 1977:16, note 2) contends that

Karagöz was brought from China to West by the Mongolians and Turquic peoples of Central Asia. Martinovitch also believes that *Karagöz* most likely came from China. In addition, he refers to the central role of the Gypsies in popularizing shadowplay in Turkey (1968:29-30). Initially, he suggests, *Karagöz* was portrayed as a Gipsy, speaking Romany (the Gipsy language) and plying the trade of a blacksmith, which is common among the Gypsies.

India is also considered as the place of origin of shadowplay, by R. Pischel who also believes that it was brought to the Near East by the Gypsies¹⁹ (cited by Tietze 1977:16, note 2). Nureddin Sevin proposes that shadowplay was spread from India, with the dissemination of Buddhism, to Central Asia, and later brought to Asia Minor by the Turks²⁰ (cited by Tietze 1977:16, note 2).

There are other theories concerning the possible origins of *Karagöz* in the West. Reich²¹ (cited by And 1979:38-39; Petek-Şalom, undated:14-16) argues that a link such as that obtaining between the Roman *mimus* and *Commedia dell'Arte* can also be identified in Turkey. The Greek mime, he argues, introduced during the Byzantine period, inspired the Turkish *Karagöz*. But his hypothesis is quite dubious, there being no evidence that shadowplay ever existed among the ancient Greeks.

Another thesis traces *Karagöz* directly to *commedia dell'arte*, since, during the Ottoman period, there was trade and artistic contact with Italy.

¹⁸ *Geschichte des Schattentheaters im Morgen-und Abendland*. 2. völlig umbearbeitete Auflage, Hannover, 1925, p.108.

¹⁹ *Die Heimat des Puppenspiels*, Halle a. S1, 1900, p.20f.

²⁰ *Türk gölge oyunu*, Istanbul, 1968, passim.

²¹ *Der Mimus*, Berlin, 1903, p.616.

Furthermore, there was a large Italian community in Constantinople even before the Turkish conquest (And 1979:39).

There is more concrete evidence enabling one to ascribe the influence of Italian theatre on *Karagöz* to the Jews, who came to Turkey via Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, after their expulsion from Portugal and Spain. Some 20,000 Jews, including physicians, buffons, jugglers, Ortaoyunu actors, and shadow puppeteers

arrived during the reign of Sultan Selim II (1566-1576). Jews were closely connected with the popular culture of Turkey until the nineteenth century, and were in demand during festivals for their skill as puppeteers and conjurers. It is conceivable that the Spanish Jews were acquainted with the form of shadowplay called *sombras chinescas* – perhaps from the French *ombres chinoises* (*ibid.*:39-40).

Finally, And speculates that the Moorish *juglares* could have brought shadowplay to Turkey. Certainly they influenced much of the entertainment idiom, many of whose terms are in Spanish (*ibid.*:40).

Theoretically, Ancient Rome, Egypt, India, China, Europe or Turkey, all are possible places of origin of the shadowplay. But they remain conjectures! Nevertheless, however and wherever *Karagöz* came into being, it can be affirmed with confidence that by the seventeenth century there already existed an original form of shadowplay in Turkey that reflected the singularity of its culture.

The popularity of *Karagöz* is witnessed by numerous historical references in which shadowplay performance was part of the celebration of grandiose court marriages and circumcisions. Siyavuşgil (1951: 7) cites a number of sources:

- The historian Naîma (mid-seventeenth century) records that in 1648 Hezar Ahmed Paşa included shadowplay in the lavish wedding celebration of his son.
- Abdil relates that shadowplay was performed at the the circumcision of the two sons of Mehmed IV (1648-1687), which is confirmed by the detailed description of the contemporary French traveller, de la Croix.

- Seyyid Vehbi records that during the wedding of the seven-year-old Sultane Emetullah, daughter of Ahmed III (1703-1730), to the Osman Paşa, the high-point of the festivities was the shadowplay performance with screens in four different places.

Further on, Siyavuşgil (*ibid.*) stresses the persistence of shadowplay into the nineteenth century, during the reigns of Abdulaziz (1861-1876) and Abdulhamid II (1876-1909). In spite of competition by live theater, *Karagöz* retained its privileged position and provided entertainment on numerous occasions. And it was “*comme toujours, le clou des soirées du Ramadan, le spectacle le plus attrayant des fêtes de circoncision, l’attraction principale des cafés de plein air*” (*ibid.*).

By 1908, following the proclamation of the second Constitution, *Karagöz* experienced a new phase of development: the publication of the classic repertoire was supplemented by a throng of new brochures by inventive puppeteers; a satirical and humoristic journal called *Karagöz* was launched; technical innovations were introduced, e.g., an enlarged screen, gas illumination, a blind in imitation of a theatre curtain, scenery and properties in order to enhance the illusion of reality; a ticket office outside the hall (“*oh, sacrilège*”); adaptations of modern Turkish romances, and so forth. These innovations, however, did not suffice to arrest the decline of shadowplay, and after a period of struggle it succumbed (*ibid.*).

Occasions and Locations of Performance

Gokalp (1986:185-186) notes the paradox of *Karagöz*. Its irreverent performances are mostly given on occasions of religious observance, such as during the month of Ramadan and circumcision rites. In the evenings (except for “The Night of Power”), after the day-long fast of Ramadan, the pious relax in the coffee-houses, entertained by jugglers, storytellers, and shadowplay. This combination of fasting and abandon is found in many cultures, notably in calendric rituals, such as Lent and its counterpart, Carnaval (*carne vale*), when all social values are inverted

and freedom obtains – but these events are limited in time and respect certain boundaries.

Historically speaking, shadowplay's development and increased popularity coincided with other "sinful" and worldly distractions. It was generally performed in coffee-houses, the first of which is said to have been opened by two Syrians in 1554 (Tietze 1977:19-20). The consumption of coffee increased, in spite of the objections of the Islamic clerics; and, to compound this ill, the habit of tobacco-smoking entered via Europe about half a century later. The coffee-house remains until today the hub of social life for the lower classes.

It was mainly here that shadowplay evolved, although it was also offered in more socially respectable environs, e.g., during circumcision celebrations, in order to distract the young celebrants – usually groups of boys from five to eight years old. And cites sixteenth-century accounts, both Turkish and European, of the circumcision ceremony of Sultan Murad III's son; they include detailed descriptions of public shadow shows – not yet a whole *Karagöz* performance, but short sketches. The traveller Evliya Çelebi cites the shadowplay *Sünnet (The Circumcision)*, given to entertain the newly circumcised children in the court of Murad IV (1612?-1640). In this show, a play-within-a-play is performed with tiny shadow puppets to distract Karagöz, who was circumcised in place of his fugitive son (Tietze 1977:21). Çelebi also mentions the puppeteer and jester Hasanzade Mehmed Çelebi, who performed bi-weekly in the court of Murad IV. One can assume, Tietze submits, that the court presentations were different from the more popular ones, perhaps more literary in content.

The Play's Structure

The *Karagöz* performance is divided into three parts and an epilogue, each independent of the others, and not necessarily related. It is likely that the original performances were not composed of three parts, but of one or two, the third being added later. Each can vary in length and content, as determined by the puppeteer either before the show or during its course. However, not everything is

improvised; there are certain standard poems, speeches, and scenes that obey a traditional pattern.

The performance parts are as follows:

1. *Mukaddeme* – Prologue or Introduction.
2. *Muhâvere* – Dialogue
 - Sometimes there is also an *Ara Muhaversi* – Interlude.
3. *Fasil* – the Main Play.
 - *Bitiş* – brief Epilogue.

At the start of the performance, when the screen is first lit, there is a shadow figure, the aforementioned Göstermelik, in its centre (Tietze 1977:18, Note 6; And 1979:44). At the shrill sound of the *nareke*, a whistle, the Göstermelik vanishes and the performance begins.

1. The Prologue (*Mukaddeme*) is fixed both structurally and content-wise. Generally, the centre of the screen represents a street. To its left (from the public's perspective) is Hacivat's house; to its right, Karagöz'. Hacivat enters from the left singing a *semâi* (a song), and introduces himself, as in the following example:

While kissing the skirt of your garment I fell at your feet,
 While watching for its arrow I fell a prey to the bow of that brow.
 They called me, O Gubari [*the poet who composed the song*], elixir of
 preciousness;
 I fell down (like dust [*i.e., Gubari*]) at thGate of Honor of the Sublime
 Palace.
 Oh God! (*Hak!*)²²

²² The word here for *God* is not *Allah*, the usual Muslim term, but rather *Hak* ("The

From *The Muddleheaded Night Watchman* (Abdal Bekçi,
translated by Andreas Tietze, 1977, p. 31)

Hacivat next recites a *gazel* (a poem). In most cases he offers a prayer to God and to the Sultan, or to the patrons who commissioned the performance. He explains the nature of the presentation, which is not mere shadowplay, “but mirrors faithfully the world we live in and teaches much” (And 1979:44). The *gazel* pays homage to the creator, and also contains a philosophy of life, giving the shadowplay a mystical and religious character (Petek-Şalom undated:69). The following example is also taken from *The Muddleheaded Night Watchman*:

To the eye of the uninitiated this curtain produces (only) images.
But to him who knows the signs, symbols of the truth.
Sheikh Kūshterī has founded this curtain, making it a likeness of
the world.
He made the pictures resemble the various creatures, what a
power of observation!
To watch it amuses those who are looking for entertainment,
But those who behold the truth learn a lesson from it.
No one knows what is behind the curtain but this is the truth:
It relates the reality of the world through a language of symbols.
If one carefully watches Karagöz and Haji Evhad,
To an understanding person who has attained the state of
perfection this will mean something quite different.
Behold the meanings which are hidden under this (play)!
It is a show of subtlety intended for the expert ones to
understand its subtle points.
When the candle goes out, at once the pictured persons cease to
exist, a symbol of the world’s transitoriness.

Truth”), used by the Sufis – a mystic Islamic order which was highly developed in Turkey.

(Tietze 1977: 31-32)

Hacivat then announces that he is searching for a companion of exalted character and intellectual distinction: agreeable, humorous, knowledgeable in Arabic and Persian, science and the arts. In short, he is looking for a companion possessing his own personal qualities. And he finishes with some couplets. – Karagöz has meanwhile been peering in with his head, from stage right, interspersing Hacivat's fine speech with his mocking remarks. Karagöz now appears on stage, and an argument ensues; Karagöz parodies his speech, imitating its tone, but replacing the exalted and pretentious terms employed by Hacivat with gibberish, all the while raining blows on his head or slapping him. Hacivat then leaves the scene, with Karagöz lying on his back, still parodying his companion, and bewailing the other's maltreatment in comic *prose rimée*. Hacivat re-enters several times, only to be chased out by Karagöz. This opening is quite standard, with minor variations. When Karagöz finally calms down, he exits, and the next part begins (And 1979:44-45; Petek-Şalom undated:70).

Petek-Şalom (undated:71) relates that, in the sixteenth century, during the first shadowplay performances, the Prologue was totally different: it was a scene without words in which animal figures appeared on the screen in order to convey a simple theme, often revolving around the supremacy conferred by greater size – a cat devouring a mouse, for instance.

2. The Dialogue (*Muhâvere*) varies in terms of its theme (the puppeteer has a large store from which to choose) and duration in each performance. It comprises a confrontation between the two main characters, and, in essence, represents an encounter between two extremes: Hacivat's pose and superficial knowledge and Karagöz' common sense and boorishness (which is sometimes feigned ignorance for the sake of mockery). Each reproves the other for his defects; sometimes they exchange rhymed remarks called *gel-geç-muhaversi* (come-and-go dialogue); at others, the dialogue proceeds in riddles.

The dialogue's main characteristics are illogic, derision of false politeness and fossilized conventions, and false syllogisms. It offers an occasion for Karagöz to indulge in *tekelerme* (linguistic parody): "...*acrobatie verbale durant laquelle, le discoureur fait preuve de sa virtuosité à enchaîner expressions et images extravagantes et cocasses*"²³.

Tietze (1977:25) states that the Dialogue is "basically a funny conversation between the two main characters". Of the many themes, two are most often presented:

- Hacivat wants to display his superior knowledge by teaching Karagöz something, but the latter's boorishness and impatience drives Hacivat off the screen. As often in traditional slapstick, the humour lies in the confrontation between two levels of speech: Karagöz misconstrues Hacivat's meaning and distorts his vocabulary.
- The second category is more a "continually interrupted monologue" (*ibid.*) than a dialogue, as one of the characters relates an event which afterwards turns out to be a dream, and it is probably rooted in the tradition of *meddāh*, professional storytelling.

This section ends with a few brief lines in which Karagöz invites the spectators to seek further diversion from the other offerings in the park; it is possibly a remnant from earlier times, when the performance was presented within a wider setting, as evinced by this citation from *The Muddleheaded Night Watchman*(*ibid.*):

Karagöz: Instead of having your eye on my wife's greediness, why don't you rather observe your wife's and daughter's loose conduct, you pander! (Hits him).

²³ Pertev Naili Boratav: *Turcica e Fundamenta* II, p.116; cited by Petek-Şalom, undated: note on p.71.

(Hajivat runs away). If you go, do I have to stay here? I'll go to the amusement park, to the ferris-wheel to watch the fair dolls. Let's see what pictures they show in the peep show.

(*ibid.*:36)

Sometimes a further dialogue is introduced here, the Intermediate Dialogue (*Ara Muhaveresi*), its purpose being to afford a preview of the main play, or simply to prolong the duration of the performance.

3. So far, only Karagöz and Hacivat have appeared; in the Main Play (*Fasil*) other characters are introduced. The plots are generally casual and contain few complexities. Often events having scant connection with the central theme are inserted, simply in order to facilitate the entrance and exit of a number of stock characters who never fail to arouse the public's gaiety.

The plays of *Karagöz* comprise mere scenarios, general outlines. The plot contains little intrigue, and action is only incidental. And describes their structure as having an "open" or "flexible" form, since the episodes are independent, allowing the puppeteer to manipulate them at will. He can change their order of presentation, subtract some, or add new characters or elements (e.g., an allusion to some event of current interest, an adaptation to contemporary life, etc.) which, he believes, will elicit an audience reaction. There is thus always some degree of improvisation (And 1979:76-83). – It is in this part of the performance that the puppeteer can demonstrate his skills and knowledge by imitating and caricaturing the wide range of provincial and cosmopolitan types embraced by the Ottoman Empire and familiar to the natives of Istanbul.

The themes are diverse and their categories quite inclusive. Generally, it could be said that they portray – or rather parody – customs. Karagöz is almost always the central character, sometimes in partnership with Hacivat, and he is continually getting into trouble – fomenting some intrigue, interfering in someone else's affairs, or trespassing on forbidden grounds. Other frequent themes involve cuckolding; some are based on popular stories and legends, but their romantic and

tragic aspects are replaced by humour and farce, since *Karagöz* is fundamentally comic. A more detailed description of the main repertoire will follow.

Tietze observes that the technique of *Karagöz* is dictated by limitations of space and the tradition of a single puppeteer. There are no crowd scenes, but rather a sequence of episodes, each being a variation on the same topic. He also stresses that the plays never abandon their droll tone, as distinct from the modern Greek *Karagiozis* (derived from the Turkish original), which presents heroic and patriotic themes. Turkish shadowplay never developed a “high style”; even when adopting stories from more sophisticated genres, it “daintified” and assimilated them by including the two stock characters in the plot (1977:26). Tietze speculates that *Karagöz* initially arose from other puppetry forms, in which the show consisted exclusively of short sketches (*ibid.*:17). The puppeteer could only manipulate two puppets at a time, one on each hand, and performed on the streets or in fairs. That would explain why the Dialogue concludes with the announcement of other entertainments. Later on, the Main Play was added, creating a full performance. But the parts were not correlated thematically. All this, however, remains speculative, as documentation is scant.

After the Main Play, all the characters leave the screen, and only Karagöz and Hacivat return for the Epilogue (*Bitiş*), which includes apologies and an announcement of the next performance, as exemplified by the *Muddleheaded Night Watchman*:

(Hajivat and Karagöz enter)

Hajivat: Hi Karagöz! Aren't you glad it's over?

Karagöz (hits him): May the devil get your whole tribe!

Hajivat : Let's thank God that he has given us life!

Karagöz: Thank God that he hasn't given you my wife! (Hits Him).

Hajivat: You have broken the screen, laid waste the scene. I shall go and tell its Master at once. (Exit).

Karagöz: O Hajivat, don't miss your chance! May we be excused for all slips of the tongue! And tomorrow night, Hajivat, in the play..., if I catch you by the collar, you will see what I am going to do to you. (Exit).

(*ibid.*:54)

The Epilogues differ slightly, but always have the same general format and content. The two heroes try to derive some lesson from their recent adventures. But they resume their altercation, and Karagöz again rains blows on Hacivat, who accuses Karagöz of ruining the screen, and states that he is going to denounce him to the Master (God?). Thereupon he leaves the scene, and Karagöz addresses the audience directly, apologizing for anything in word or deed that offended them, and announcing the title of the next performance; then he exits (Petek-Şalom, undated, p. 75).

Tietze (1977:28) argues that the issue of the origins of Turkish shadowplay should be considered not just from the point of view of its technique, but from that of its totality. The present structure was already established by the seventeenth century, and he believes that it developed in three stages. Initially there was the showpiece (*Göstermelik*) and the unprovoked blows in the Prologue, as described in sixteenth-century sources. In the second stage, the Dialogue was introduced, with the two characters already clearly defined and the comedy in narrative form. The Dialogue's conclusion reveals that it once brought the entire performance to an end. In the third stage, the Play was introduced; it was adapted from a more developed theatrical tradition, very likely from another puppet genre (or *Ortaoyunu*), one possessing a plot and a larger cast of characters. In order to close the performance, the Epilogue was added. Tietze believes that, having evolved into a self-conscious art, the invocation, blessings, and the curtain *gazel* were added. If this reconstruction is correct, then *Karagöz* transmits old indigenous traditions in a more recent shadowplay mode. It also sustains the Turkish predilection for farce, deriving respectability from its symbolic-religious character.

Characters

The Ottoman Empire, with Istanbul at its centre, spanned Asia, Europe and Africa, and many of its ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse peoples are represented in *Karagöz*. The characters, both Turkish and foreign, are not individualized, but rather stereotyped and caricatured according to local preconceptions. In addition, certain types are associated with distinct professions (And 1979:67).

The city of Istanbul comprised an agglomeration of quarters, each with its own social order, whose structure, organization, and communal code regulated the lives its inhabitants down to the minimal details. Each quarter was guarded by a pack of dogs which excluded canines from other quarters; by the nightwatchmen who marked their passage with the blow of a walking-stick on the pavement; and by a collective conscience, always on the lookout for events, and vigilant of the honour and the happiness of its own. These quarters, however, were not diverse in character; all of them were similar in their social complexion, which was sustained and confirmed by the orders of the Sultan and the *fetwa* of *Şeyh ul-Islam*. Their inhabitants, furthermore, were not isolated from the city, the court, and the outside world. News was constantly being introduced by those who went to work beyond its borders. Significant or paltry events were absorbed by the popular mind, which, possessed of common sense, gave its opinion – frequently in the form of a satirical anecdote (Siyavuşgil 1951:10).

This is the milieu that provides the model of the Old Turkish quarter appearing on the screen of *Karagöz*. The characters are credible renditions of figures likely to be found in any of the quarters a century ago. They are commoners, as the puppeteer would not have dared, out of fear or reverence, to display the shadow of the Sultan, the Vizir, or any of the Empire's dignitaries – civilian, military, or religious. Which does not mean that certain symbols of authority, such as the fierce *Tuzsuz* (Siyavuşgil 1951:9-10), were absent in the depiction of the quarters.

Because of the nature of the theatre, one can say that virtually all the characters in *Karagöz* are Others in one way or another; each is presented as a

deviation or an exaggeration. The main characters are Karagöz and Hacivat, the others can be grouped into four broad categories (*Taklitler* – Imitations):

1. Neighbourhood types
2. Provincials
3. Foreigners
4. Supernatural figures, such as witches and jinn.

Karagöz and Hacivat are so antithetical that, considered together, they can be seen as the unity of opposites. Despite all the accounts purporting to explain their origins, they seem basically legendary; there is no way to authenticate their historicity. One can surmise that they represent a collage of different persons whose behaviour and adventures aroused the people's interest, while imaginative storytellers and puppeteers gave them their final form.

- Karagöz is the main character. His name means "black eye", accounted a mark of beauty, suggesting that he thinks of himself as very handsome (Reiniger 1975:26). His slightly hunchbacked puppet has thick-set traits, a large black pupil, a prominent round nose, a thick curly beard; his arm is long and heavy. His appearance is of a rough, plebeian kind. In plays in which he disguises himself, his basic traits are never totally concealed. In the *False Marriage*, for example, he disguises as a woman and wears a veil, but omits to hide his beard. Ordinarily, he dons the colourful dress typical of middle-class Turks until the nineteenth century: a red coat with a rounded collar and long sleeves, and decorations in yellow and green; knee-length trousers in blue or green; long stockings; and low-heeled shoes decorated with a small bow. He also wears a hat which is frequently knocked off, revealing his bald head – invariably occasioning laughter among the audience (Martinovitch 1968:30; Petek-Şalom, undated, pp. 84-85). The hat with its round top and broad sides is called *Işkırak* in Turkish. Scholars have discussed the origin of Karagöz' and Hacivat's hats, looking for traces of the genre's source. According to Sakisian Armenat Bey, Karagöz' hat is similar to the skull cap typifying the religious

Bektaşî order and Hacivat's to the cap of the Nakşî, adepts of a Sunni sect²⁴ (Petek-Şalom, undated, p. 84). Petek-Şalom speculates that the hats could have been hallmarks of "acting profession", citing Turkish miniatures from the reigns of Ahmet I (1589-1617) and Ahmet III (1673-1736), in which the actors and dancers wore a similar headdress.

Karagöz is sometimes referred to as a gypsy. Some scholars deem this his actual origin, and, albeit unprovable, it is notable that in certain plays he plies the profession of blacksmith – characteristic of gypsies in Turkey. But generally he has no trade. He is usually idle, and therefore unable to provide for his family. He is stupid and gullible; nevertheless, he is constantly scheming, ordinarily with Hacivat, and deceiving others. He is impulsive in behaviour and speech, saying what he thinks, which often confounds his plans. His language is vulgar. His voice is hoarse and rough, and his behaviour is crude and tactless, owing to his lack of education. His simplicity leads him to disappointments. He is maltreated by his wife, and almost always punished when committing a misdeed. Although his defects are manifold, being lazy, a coward, and a liar, he can get angry and even fight if he sees injustice (in the *Country Contest*, for example), and he can be generous when he has the means. Dynamic and energetic, he is always eager to try out new devices. But his approach is always irreverent; he misbehaves and mocks the authorities (Martinovitch 1968:30; Petek-Şalom, undated, pp. 84-86; And 1979:68-70). Gérard de Nerval, who visited Turkey ([1851] 1956:488), wrote that:

Caragueuz a son franc-parler; il a toujours défié le pal, le sabre et le cordon.

Karagöz is a man of the people, and is beloved by the Turkish audience, perhaps because it identifies so closely with his unluckiness, his readiness to criticize and mock, his struggle to survive. But mostly because of the laughter he provokes. In the fictive world on the screen, however, he is known as unreliable, and

²⁴ "Conférence sur le Karagheuz," in *Bulletin de l'Association des amis de l'Orient*, no. 14-15, Paris, 1933.

is despised, insulted, and threatened by all; he is the *tête de Turc* in his own country. He is malicious, but not completely wicked, and, in the end, he generally has the last word, prevailing over his adversaries and adversities.

- Hacivat is totally different. He is trusting, well-mannered, and eloquent. His knowledge of languages and etiquette make him the most likeable and appealing figure in the neighbourhood, and he often assumes the role of local headman or councilor. The distressed and helpless look to him for advice, and depend upon his machinations to provide them with money, employment, or lodgings. At first sight the puppets of Karagöz and Hacivat resemble one another. Both are dressed colourfully in the traditional middle-class garb of the late Ottoman period (Petek-Şalom undated:87). But Hacivat has finer traits than Karagöz, a pointed, turned-up beard, and his movements are slow and deliberate. His full name is Hacivat Çelebi – çelebi means literally educated, well bred gentleman. He is also *Hacı* – pilgrim, that is why green is dominant in his clothing, the colour of the pious man (*ibid.*). He is erudite, recites famous poems, and is widely versed in music. But his knowledge is superficial! He is motivated by opportunism, and readily accepts the establishment and status quo. He copies the refined and artificial manners of the aristocracy, and feigns their moral principles. But he caters to them and is not completely honest, which makes him the butt of their jokes. Sometimes he serves as their foil when they need a scapegoat. Karagöz, in spite of his stupidity, never takes Hacivat seriously, and continuously mocks him. Hacivat's erudite speech, laced with Arabic (which, in Turkish, gives an impression of false elegance), is incomprehensible to the unschooled Karagöz, and bores and vexes him; he imitates Hacivat's elocutions, turning them into indecencies and puns, which are readily constructed in Turkish, and which provide an excuse for the numerous blows he rains on his companion. But Hacivat also struggles to survive, and is often Karagöz' collaborator in various schemes; he locates the clients and shares in the profits. But he is always concerned lest his partner's tacklessness and boorish demeanour spoil his dealings with the upper class (Martinovitch 1968:41-42; Petek-Şalom, undated, pp. 83-113; And 1979:68-70).

The following are some of the most popular neighbourhood characters who appear on the screen:

- *Çelebi* is the young dandy (Fig.14, p.158), always attired in the latest mode. Siyavuşgil (1951:11) observes that it is possible to follow the evolution of Turkish dress through him. The fashion might be a well-fitting Western suit, a pince-nez, a cane, and patent leather shoes; only his *fez* reminds us that he is Turkish. He is generally rich and has polished manners; he is a Stambuline of old stock. Fairly well-educated, he speaks (with an Istanbul accent) a poetic and precious idiom, laced with Arabic words. He is gallant, and women are charmed by him; his love for a courtesan or a girl of good family often provides the theme for a play (And 1979:70-71). He offer poems that celebrate the beauty of the women of his heart:

*Ta joue est la rose la plus fraîche,
Dans ce jardin de roses que'est ta beauté.*

Petek-Şalom undated:93

Çelebi appears in diverse roles: as *fils à papa* (the son of a rich family), a frivolous young man, or an unfaithful husband. He can also be generous and pay for the



Beberuhi



Zenne



Tiryaki



Matiz



Celebi

14. *Karagoz* characters (And 1979:53,54,57).

circumcision of the quarter's destitute boys; he can organize a poetry contest, and award prizes to the winners, just for the love of the art; at other times he appears as a pauper or "as a rascal living from the generosity of the women of many hearts" (Siyavuşgil 1951:11).

Petek-Şalom (undated:93) considers Çelebi a separate category with a different function in *Karagöz*. His role is not unusual, but his importance within its social context of *Karagöz* is to bring a certain balance to the extreme types presented. He mocks Karagöz subtly, and treats him with certain condescence, finding him strange.

- *Zenne* represents all women in *Karagöz* (Fig.14, p.158). Literally, her name means "women's clothes" or an "Ortaoyunu actor who plays a woman's role"²⁵. Her various appearances differ as to age, skin colour, and manners, but she is generally dressed in traditional attire (a kind of a cloak with loose sleeves), and sometimes her face is concealed – partially, at least – by a very thin veil. The clothing and ornaments vary according to her standing of the moment: *i.e.*, they are modest in women of lesser means, such as Karagöz' wife, and sumptuous in wealthy ladies, who also sport befitting paraphernalia – an umbrella or a fan, for instance. Courtesans expose their breasts partially or totally. *Zenne* is "flighty, quarrelsome, only just faithful and always prone to gossip" (And 1979:70). Siyavuşgil (1951:12) goes so far as to say that "the true *Zenne* is a Messaline of the quarter, sly and shameless." In *The Sanguinary Nigâr (Kanli Nigâr)*, she entices all kinds of suitors to her house, where she and a partner proceed to undress them; but, instead of granting them their favours, send them naked out into the street. According to Petek-Şalom (undated:91-92) young women are chaperoned either by shameless godmothers or aged go-betweens. The godmother type is represented by the respective wives of Karagöz and Hacivat. The former is never seen on the screen, but her shrew voice is heard, threatening her husband, whom she also betrays. The latter is demanding and sly, known for her fierce tongue. Hacivat has a daughter who is

²⁵ Langenscheidt Standard Turkish Dictionary.

ready to elope with the first man who appears and frequently makes trouble to her father. In addition to Zenne proper, there are other female figures of lesser importance, such dancers and servants.

- *Tuzsuz* (Saltless) represents authority (Siyavuşgil 1951:12-13; And 1979:71-72). He is the guardian of public morality, and assumes the function of gendarme or *deux- ex- machina*; in the critical moments of the plays, he suddenly appears to re-establish law and order. His costume reminds one of a fantastic Janissary or an eccentric Levend (sailor); he is armed to the teeth, and generally holds a long sword in one hand and a bottle in the other, being continuously drunk. Tuzsuz is the terror of the quarter, and his entrance in a scene is announced by a roar. He has a sadistic streak, proudly describing his past homicides, of kin included. However, in spite of his fierce aspect and loud, bravado manners, he is harmless. But nobody dares to contradict him, except Karagöz, and Tuzsuz, generally lenient with others, is vindictive towards him, constantly accusing him of crime. As it happens, the guardian of morality also has interests of his own; he is an old acquaintance of the quarter's courtesans. In *The Sanguinary Nigâr*, after ordering Nigâr (i.e., Zenne) to return the clothes of her naked suitors, he sends them away with his roar, while reserving to himself the lion's share.

To exemplify this character, below are excerpts of a scene of Tuzsuz Bekir (the Drunkard) and Karagöz in *The Muddleheaded Night Watchman* translated by Tietze (1977:38-41):

(Drunkard enters with the song in Shehnaz mode)

.....

 I've emptied the full cup of love:
 The beloved is with us today!

.....
Karagöz (off stage): I hear something in the street. Let's see who that may be!
 (Looks out from the window) Ah, it's the booze peddler.

Drunkard: I've never before seen a sheep dog looking our of a window like a

person. If it were a lap dog, that would be more in place.

Karagöz (from the window): The sheep dog is your own father, shut up!

Drunkard: Oh...you are a person?

Karagöz: What do you think: A scarecrow?

Drunkard: Come down, kindred soul!

Karagöz: I am coming, stinking hole! (Enters)

.....

Drunkard: Last night I had a dream about my father.

Karagöz: God's blessing on your dream.

Drunkard: He said to me: 'O son, so far you have accomplished 999 murders; kill whomever you come across tonight so that the number will be exactly 1000.'

Karagöz: I shit on your father's bones, and on your mother's too.

Drunkard: I shall carry out my father's legacy.

Karagöz: Can you produce his will?

.....

Drunkard: Listen to me! Sit down here, kneel down, get a handkerchief from your pocket and tie it around your neck!

Karagöz: Why should I tie a handkerchief around my neck?

Drunkard: Do you want your head to fall on the ground and get all full of dust?

Karagöz: Go to Hell with your thoughtfulness!

.....

The pot is starting to boil. Don't put it on too much, you'll be sorry!

Drunkard: I'll make it come off.

Karagöz: And I'll not let you! (He slaps the drunkard)

Drunkard: Hell! In all my life never anybody has given me so much as a pinch, let alone a slap. What boldness, what audacity!

.....

Let me press a kiss on your brow!

Variations of Tuzsuz include *Külhanbeyi* (Hoodlum) and *Efe* (a village hero, a swashbuckling village dandy) or *Zeybek*, from the Western Coast – not a drunkard, but also a lawmaker possessed of fierce looks. Siyavuşgil notes that Tuzsuz had already appeared by the seventeenth century (as Evliya Çelebi mentions) in a play resembling *The Turkish Bath (Hamam)*, as Gazi Boşnat, who had the airs of a Janissary or a shameless Levend. It is not too far-fetched, Siyavuşgil submits (1951:13), to suggest that Tuzsuz is a satirical version of the Janissaries, who, already in the sixteenth century, terrorized the populace of Istanbul with their mutinies. Initially, they were honourable and well-trained soldiers, but later, at the apogee of Ottoman power, they betrayed signs of decadence and anarchy. At the time of Evliya Çelebi there was a Beri Mustafa, an elderly Janissary, who was a drunkard, but also a guardian of morality. It is possible that the combination of the arrogant Janissary and Beri Mustafa gave origin in the popular mind to Tuzsuz, the drunken defender of the law.

- *Matiz*, the Drunkard (Fig.14, p.158). Often the companion of Tuzsuz, likewise fond of drinking. Their costume is also similar. Matiz has a hat askew, a dagger at the ready in one hand, and a bottle of wine in the other. Loquacious, he is brave in his speech but not in his actions (And 1979:71-72).

- *Tiryaki*, Opium Addict (Fig.14, p.158). Displaying a high humped shoulder, he holds a pipe and a poppy flower. He occupies himself smoking opium or dozing in the neighbourhood coffeehouse. He feigns seriousness and speaks with the air of an educated man, but often falls asleep in the middle of a phrase, and proceeds to snore loudly. He reacts in a vociferous and extravagant way to small things. Tiryaki is a popular comic figure in the Karagöz cast of characters (Siyavuşgil 1951:12; And 1979:71). The last verses of his entrance:

Quel dommage pour mon jeune âge

*Je suis triste et pleure du sang
Je me vêts de deuil et pleure.*

Petek-Şalom undated:103

• *Beberuhi*, the Dwarf, also called *Alt Kulaç* (Six Fathoms)(Fig.14, p.158). He has a big nose, a hunchback, and often wears a tall, pointed hat. The lamp occasionally hanging from its tip is a sign of his stupidity; it serves to illuminate his way. He is often mistakenly compared to the court jester because of his looks, but he lacks the latter's wit. He is the quarter's simpleton – misshapen, gluttonous, talkative, and boastful. *Beberuhi* does odd jobs, and can be accounted among the outcasts found in every neighbourhood, and who are sometimes pampered by the locals out of pity. He has a speech defect: he is unable to pronounce *r*, and his *s* sounds like *y*, inevitably causing laughter in the audience. He asks the same question tirelessly over and over, and frequently *Karagöz* has to beat him in order to get rid of him (Siyavuşgil 1951:12; And 1979:71). He defines himself singing:

*Personne ne peu atteindre ma taille
Je suis un concombre tout joufflu
Le vieux tailleur m'a mesuré
Je fais un endâze²⁶ et demi.*

Petek-Şalom undated:102

Turks from the provinces come to the capital looking for work and fortune. They have specific vocations, and their dress, manners, speech, and mentality are typical of their places of origin. These characteristics are stereotyped in the minds of Istanbul's populace, which is how they are presented in the world of *Karagöz*. They represent the peasantry; they are simple and ignorant, and, as such, have difficulty understanding and communicating with one another. They reflect the heterogeneity of the Turkish population in Ottoman times. Some of the more popular types (according to Siyavuşgil 1951:13, Petek-Şalom undated:94-96; And1979:73-75) include:

²⁶ *Endâze* = ancient measurement of 65 cm.

- *Baba Himmet*, the gigantic woodcutter of Anatolia (Kastamönü) (Fig.15, p.167). His is the tallest puppet, also recognizable by the axe he carries. He is ignorant of social graces, and speaks a rude language full of blasphemy (unpardonable to a Stanbulite), but is naïve and good-tempered. He provides an easy target for Karagöz, who has to climb a ladder to talk to him, and who taunts Baba Himmet on account of his speech. But, owing to his mild disposition, the latter is not angered by Karagöz' derision. He is representative of the provincial who came to Istanbul to earn his living and return rich to his village, where his sweetheart is awaiting him. In *Karagöz, the Public Scriber (Yazıcı)*, he dictates a letter to his beloved in these terms:

*Light of my eyes, spoon of my mouth, tableware of my heart,
My beloved, my dear, my precious and beautiful Gezban²⁷.*

Kudret 1970 vol. 3:401

- Immigrant from Kayseri, seller of *pastirma* (salted meat), grocer, painter, or shoemaker. He wears a high fez, a short red jacket, baggy red pants, and carries weapons on his belt. He is very strong.

- From Bolu, generally a cook. He and the immigrant from Kayseri are better acquainted than Baba Himmet with the capital's ways, but lack social finesse.

- From Laz (on the Black Sea coast), a boatman, a wool-beater, or a tinsmith. He wears a yellow vest, a *zipka* (pleated knee-length pantaloons creased in the back), and a *sargi* (hood). He speaks swiftly and uninterruptedly with a strong regional accent, and does not listen to others. He is quick to anger, and moves with tense and jittery movements; the puppet trembles, kneels suddenly, and straightens up again.

²⁷ My translation.

- The *Rumelili* or *Muhacir*, from the Balkans, a wrestler or carter. He is proud, tries to appear intelligent, and is boastful of his successes; in actuality, however, he is a loser.

- The *Kurd*, the neighbourhood night-watchman. His speech is filled with Kurdish words, and he tries to assume a haughty manner. He wears a conical felt cap, a sleeveless half-coat, a motley woollen vest, blue *şalvar* (baggy pants), and raw-hide sandals, and he carries a long staff that he regularly bangs on the ground during his nightly rounds.

In the world of *Karağöz* there are also members of other ethnic groups from various provinces in the Ottoman Empire, but resident or transient in Old Istanbul (Siyavuşgil 1951:13-14; Petek-Şalom, undated, pp. 97-100; And 1979:73-75)

- The *Acem* or *Persian* (Fig.15, p.167), in reality a Turk from Azerbaijan (the Turkish region of Persia). He is a trader of rugs or women's clothing, or a money-lender. He arrives with large a retinue of servants and exaggerates his riches; in fact, he merely possesses "*le bureau de tabac du coin*" (Siyavuşgil 1951:13). Proud and boastful, he does not brook any irreverence towards himself, and becomes very irritated when *Karağöz* mocks him. *Hacivat* flatters him by calling him the "Rose of Iran". He knows poetry, which he declaims with great affectation. *Acem* can appear riding a horse, and he wears a high black lambskin hat, a blue or black *cübbe* (a robe with short sleeves open at the front), a white shirt, trousers, a vest that reaches to the knees and is fastened by a white belt.

- The *Arab* is a baklava merchant, a coffee-grinder, or a beggar (Fig.15, p.167). He has comical names: *Hacı Kandil* ("Pilgrim Kandil" – Kandil is one of five holy nights in Islam, when the minarets are illumined, or an oil-lamp); *Hacı Fıtıl* ("Pilgrim Wick"); *Hacı Şamandura*. He wears the traditional shawl over his head, a red linen *şalvar*, and sandals with straps. He speaks Turkish with a heavy Arabic accent. He is slow of understanding, and his conversations are punctuated by

question marks (Who? Where? When? What?). As a Hadj, he is asked for prayers (blessings), which he mumbles in a guttural and incomprehensible dialect; they are, in fact, disguised imprecations. But Siyavuşgil (1951:14) remarks that, *À part ces traits peux avantageux, il se conduit toujours honnêtement, et il enchante le public par ses yalèls interminables.* – Another type of Arab is the Negro (“Arab” in Turkish also means “Negro”), generally a eunuch and slow to understand (And 1979:74).

- The *Albanian (Arnavout)* is a seller of *boza* (a drink made of fermented millet), a gardener, a game-keeper, or a cattle-trader (Fig.15, p.167). His unrelenting effort to speak politely in his heavy Albanian accent is always cause for laughter. Illiterate, he dictates his letters to scribes with exalted salutations. He likes music, but his singing is so monotonous that Karagöz believes the costermonger has arrived. His stern appearance belies an amiable and naïve disposition, of which Karagöz takes advantage.

But in moments of ire, he can reach for his pistols and shoot. His clothing is characteristic: a white skull cap, a wide linen shirt and vest, white baggy trousers gathered at the ankles, and a colourful and voluminous sash around the waist.

- The *Armenian* was initially the major domo of a rich household or hotel, or a waiter – a serious and faithful servant. Possessed of limited intelligence, he aspires to rise in society, but is unable to speak properly, and continually mistakes the meaning of words, thus proving an easy victim of Karagöz’ mockery. In his servitor role, he wore a red fez or pointed hat, a black *şalvar*, a black jacket with short sleeves, a red girdle, and a red apron. Over the course of time, however, he developed into a jeweller or fancy draper, and, while continuing to wear his fez, he assumed a long black gown, trousers, and an umbrella with a broken handle.

- The *Frenk* is a composite type, combining the European with the Levantine of Galata (Fig.15, p.167). He can be a physician, merchant, tailor, or tavern-keeper. He enters the scene dancing the polka, and speaks the worse Turkish of all the

diverse types. Nevertheless, he seeks to mock Karagöz, who puts him in place with a few blows. The Frenk sports European dress, including a hat and cane. He is a cowardly and by no means sympathetic character. In *Karagöz, the Cook (Aşçılık)* he speaks a fantasized French that sounds like “Jur Bale la lang Fransez?” (“Do you speak French?”) (Petek-Şalom undated:98)



Baba Himmet



Frenk



Arab



Acem (Persian)



Arnavut (Albanian)

- The *Jew* is a money-lender, a dealer in second-hand goods, or a peddler. His personal qualities are almost entirely negative: haggling, vulgar, malicious, miserly, and cowardly. He is always at odds with Karagöz. His dress comprises a black hat with a blue turban, a black *şalvar*, a *cübbe*, and a *kamza*, and he carries a sack on his back. His speech is an amalgam of languages, like Ladino and Turkish, as in the following example from *The Swing (Salıncak)* (*ibid.*:99):

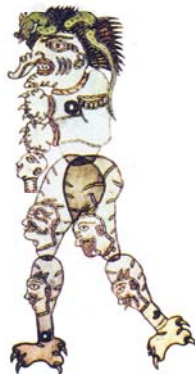
*Ande vamos elde aki
Yo kero por ak
Kamin vamo el Balata
Cümbüş kon salata
Ande ande el Balata.*

Besides the neighbourhood characters, the various Turks from the provinces, and the different ethnic types from the Ottoman Empire, there are some additional figures in *Karagöz*, notably the supernatural creatures: jinn, witches, etc., who appear in certain plays. They possess magical powers, and can hover or fly in the air. (They might be residues from local pre-Islamic beliefs) (Fig.16, p.169). More rarely, there are the teratological characters – monstrous or abnormal creatures that are butts of cruel jests.

These are the main *dramatis personae* of *Karagöz*, which provides a satirical socio-political commentary; it entertains and exposes by distorting and exaggerating the traits of its types; nobody escapes its criticism.



Witches



Jinn



Gostermelik



Gostermelik
Mansion house and garden

16. *Karagoz* characters (And 1979:58,59,64).

The Repertoire

A few plays were transcribed by various persons, mostly in Turkish, but the most substantial collection dates from the twentieth century: three volumes of 28 plays were published in German by Helmut Ritter²⁸. Their texts in the original language

are not extant, but the plays were later translated back into Turkish by Cevdet Kudret, who added a few more²⁹. And (1979:77) calls these texts “dead plays”, since they were not taken from actual performances, but rather the puppeteer apparently recited his plays to the foreign visitor, who wrote them down, perhaps via the intermediary of an interpreter. Furthermore, due to the nature of the scenarios, they provide only bare outlines, and no performance is ever exactly the same as another. Nevertheless, one remains greatly in Ritter’s debt; his documentation is extremely important for posterity, as the *Karagöz* tradition has ebbed over the years.

Karagöz scholars have attempted to classify the plots, but due to the wide variety of themes no comprehensive scheme has found general acceptance. The various approaches include And’s, which, as noted above, stresses the satirical portrayal of costumes and sexual adventures. Jacob (1907:46-54) divides the plays according to their basic situations into four groups:

1. Karagöz finds a new profession or occupation.
2. He enters a forbidden place or gets involved in what is not his concern.
3. He finds himself involuntarily in a ridiculous situation or in trouble.
4. Themes taken from legends and popular tales.

Still, this classification omits a few important plays with social themes and those that include sorcery. Since the traditional repertoire is composed of barely

²⁸ *Karagöz. Türkische Schattenspiele*. Vol. 1, Hannover, 1924; vol. 2, Istanbul und Leipzig, 1941; vol. 3, Wiesbaden, 1963.

²⁹ See Bibliography on *Karagöz*.

40 plots, it seems reasonable to describe some of them here succinctly. They represent the classic repertoire, as enumerated by Petek-Şalom, and based on Cevdet Kudret's three volumes of texts dating from the seventeenth century until today. They have a set structure, but can vary in their details, since the stories were formerly passed orally from the master puppeteer to his apprentices:

1. *The Muddleheaded Watchman (Abdal Bekçi)*. A sexual theme involving concealment and cheating. Characters include Zenne, Matiz, Çelebi, Tiryaki, Arab. In the end, Karagöz barely escapes.
2. *Karagöz, the Landowner (Ağlık)*. Hacivat convinces Persian to employ Karagöz as a clown. Karagöz imitates animals amusingly, and is given a generous reward. He becomes a rich landowner, and hires Hacivat as his foreman. Çelebi as servant; Turk as cook; unusual respect from his wife. The theme is optimistic and the ending is atypically happy.
3. *Karagöz, the Cook (Aşçılık)*. The theme involves impersonation and farce. Characters: a famous cook, a debt collector, Tiryaki, Zenne, Bekri (her brother). In the end, Karagöz barely escapes.
4. *The Garden (Bahçe)*. Hacivat guards Çelebi's garden, and denies Karagöz entry. Karagöz plays the *zurna* (a kind of clarinette), which pleases Hacivat, who finally agrees admit him. But Karagöz drinks too much *raki*, makes a scene, and is expelled.
5. *Karagöz, the Grocer (Bakkalık)* or *The Fire (Yangın)*. A man from Kayseri rents a grocery shop from Çelebi, hires Karagöz, and absents himself. Two Zennes rent the adjacent house, also belonging to Çelebi. Kurd delivers goods. Karagöz was instructed by the shop's owner to eschew honesty, e.g., to add salt water to the olives, and never sell on credit. The Zennes charm Karagöz, who desobeys the owner's orders and sells merchandise on credit. Realizing

that they will never pay, he proceeds to their house with the aim of tricking them. Instead, he diverts himself in their company and forgets about the shop, which burns down.

6. *The Fisherman (Balıkçılar)*. Çelebi goes fishing with Zenne. Each time a fish bites, she cries for joy and the fish escapes. Karagöz, who observes the scene, catches strange creatures: a shark, an octopus, a sea-monster, even a mermaid. He rejects all the edible ones. His wife, preparing a large pot on the stove, cries in horror when she sees the mermaid he has brought home for supper.
7. *Leyla from Bursa (Bursah Leylâ)*. The plan is to carry out a “brave” kidnapping at Leyla’s behest. Karagöz is helped by the Albanians.
8. *The Grand Marriage (Büyük Evlenme)*. Karagöz, having quarrelled with his wife, decides to remarry. Hacivat finds him a suitable mate. Her family comes to meet Karagöz, approves of him, and sends the dowry. But surprising discoveries ensue! The bride is very ugly. Furthermore, on the eve of the marriage she gives birth to a son, who speaks as soon as he is born, and she abandons him with Karagöz, who considered himself very clever, but turns out to be gullible.
9. *The Acrobats (Canbazlar)*. This play is basically designed to exhibit the puppeteer’s manual dexterity. Karagöz, who challenges the acrobats, assays dangerous acts, but falls and dies. As his coffin is being carried off, he rises, and everyone flees.
10. *The Witches (Câzular)*. Sorcery theme. Two lovers, Çelebi and young Zenne, both children of witches, get into a dispute. The girl’s mother changes the boy’s head into a goose’s. In revenge, Çelebi asks his mother to change the girl’s head into a mule’s. Karagöz laughs at the

scene, in spite of Hacivat's warning him to keep still. The lovers are reconciled, and Karagöz is punished by the witches, who transform his body into that of an ass. Hacivat now laughs, and his body is changed into a goat's.

11. *Karagöz Bewitched (Cincilik)*. Similar to *The Witches*.
12. *The Fountain (Çeşme)*. An especially popular play owing to the reportee between the two main characters. Because Karagöz' wife has a lover, Hacivat's wife wants him to end contact, in order not to harm hers and her daughter's reputation. Hacivat tells Karagöz that his wife has betrayed him. Karagöz inquires of several persons – Tiryaki, Baba Himmet, Arab, Beberuhi, and Matiz – who confirm the account. On the pretext of taking a trip, Karagöz hides in his house in order to spy on his wife, and she, without delay, receives Çelebi. After seeing them, Karagöz feigns an early return, and his wife hides Çelebi in a jar. In the meantime, Hacivat's daughter has also hidden her lover in a jar. Karagöz, witnessing this scene, places both jars next to one another, and provokes Hacivat into a fight, in which the jars are smashed. The two illicit lovers are forced to emerge from the jars. For once, Karagöz teaches Hacivat a lesson.
13. *The Pharmacy (Eczahane)*. Hacivat and Karagöz become pharmacists and prescribe fantastic medicines.
14. *Ferhad and Şirin (Erhad ile Şirin)*. Adapted from the tale of the same name. It is a less representative piece in the Karagöz repertoire. Ferhad and Şirin are in love. He is a poor wall painter. Her mother, a rich widow does not want the union. With the help and counseling of the witch Bok Ana (Foul Mother), Şirin's mother will agree with the marriage with the condition that Ferhad will bring water from a

nearby mountain using a pickaxe. Karagöz, who is a blacksmith, helps Ferhat who succeeds to bring the water. Still, the widow tries magic and other ways to separate the lovers. By killing the witch, the lovers are finally together.

15. *The Treason of the Intendent (Hain Kâhya)*. Karagöz foils the scheme of a farm intendent to murder his master, seize his property, and marry his daughter. Karagöz makes him drink the poison he prepared for his master, and becomes a hero.

16. *The Turkish Bath (Hamam)*. A popular story with an erotic theme. Hacivat is in charge of a hamam owned by Çelebi. Two lesbians are hired for the women's section. They fight and leave the hamam. With Hacivat's help they reconcile. Karagöz wants to get in, but is expelled. Quid pro quo. The place burns down. Women scream and men run out in their underwear. Karagöz is distressed because there will be no more costumers for his spice shop that is opposite the hamam.

17. *Karagöz, the Doctor (Hekimlie)*. Theme of impersonation, inspired by Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui*. Karagöz quarrels with his wife. In revenge, she tells the Rumelili and the Albanian, who are seeking help for a girl who has become mute, that Karagöz is a doctor, but refuses to practise unless compelled. They take him by force to the girl's house, where Çelebi reveals to him that he and the girl have feigned her malady in order to foil her father's marriage plans for her. Karagöz cures the false sick, and convinces her father to accept Çelebi as his son-in-law.

18. *The Blood-stained Poplar (Kanlı Kavak)*. Theme with supernatural elements. The son of Hasan, famous minstrel, was imprisoned by the

jinn of the bewitched poplar tree. The father implores the spirit to return his son. Karagöz was rude to the tree, is transformed into an animal by the jinn. Hacivat rescues him, arranges to have Karagöz back to his normal shape. Karagöz wants to revenge by chopping the tree, which foresters stop him. In another version, the jinn had previously kidnapped a number of passersby.

19. *Nigâr the Bloodthirsty (Kanlı Nigâr)*. A sexual satire. Çelebi cheats two Zenne cortesans out of their money. Some time later, one of them lures him to her house and throws him out after being stripped of his clothes. A number of characters of the neighbourhood pass by and volunteer to bring the young man's clothing, including Karagöz, Hacivat, Matiz, Arab, and Beberuhi. But each one is stripped of his clothes by the two women and thrown out to the streets. Soon there are a number of naked men in the doorway. All is solved, thanks to the intervention of the Soldier from Bursa (*Bursali Efe*), a *deus-ex-machina* with ulterior motives, the clothes are returned but Efe with a roar keeps for himself the lions share.
20. *Karagöz Smokes Opium and Becomes Crazy (Karagöz'ün Esrar İçip Deli Olması)*. A play with a moral. Karagöz smokes opium, gets sick, goes to a doctor, takes medicine, and swears never more to smoke.
21. *The Boat (Kayık)*. Karagöz and Hacivat are unemployed, and are deserted by their wives. They decide to work as boatman, crossing the Bosphorus from side to side. They go through many difficulties and funny episodes with their costumers, including: Çelebi, Tiryaki, Turk, Arab, Jew, Zenne.
22. *The Offended (Kırgınlar)*. The theme is money. Karagöz kills Hacivat in a dispute over money, and hides his body in a vat. Hacivat's wife

searches for him and asks his three brothers to help. Karagöz kills them, too, and put them all in the vat, and sits on it. Hacıvat's son manages to lure Karagöz from his seat and discovers the bodies. Tuzsuz comes to avenge the widow, but finds everyone alive, and forgives Karagöz.

23. *Country Contest (Mandıra)*. Karagöz's wife abandons him after a quarrel. He meets a girl and takes her to his house. After a complex intrigue, in which Karagöz succeeds in winning the young woman he loves by making fools of all her suitors: Himhim (who speaks through his nose), Stammerer, Jew, Matiz.
24. *The Coffee House (Meyhane)*. A little intrigue based on quid pro quo and obscenities. A large *dramatis personae*.
25. *The Forest (Orman)*. Karagöz opens a coffeeshop, and is threatened with death by robbers. He saves himself by colluding with them, and whenever a customer arrives – Baba Himmet, Armenian, Jew – he whistles, whereupon the robbers attack. Finally Karagöz repents, and asks Tuzsuz to punish the thieves. Karagöz is both a victim and a hero.
26. *The False Slave (Salite Esirci)*. Through Hacıvat's agency, Karagöz becomes valet to a rich couple. The master of the house introduces a servant girl he bought at the slave market, and absents himself. She makes Karagöz so drunk that he falls asleep. In fact, she is a man in disguise, and promptly summons robbers who empty the house and kidnap the mistress. The master returns, gives a rifle to Karagöz, and they go in pursuit of the thieves. All ends well, the robbers are killed, and the lady is saved.

27. *The Swing (Salıncak)*. A popular piece concerned with money. Karagöz and Hacivat install a swing for hire. Hacivat absents himself for a while, and the first customers arrive: Çelebi, Zenne, Tiryaki. When Hacivat returns, Karagöz claims that nobody came. Hacivat slips out and returns in disguise. Meanwhile, the Jew hires the swing, falls, and dies. He is taken away by his friends. Karagöz exposes the Jew's scheme: he pretended to be dead in order not to pay. In the end, Hacivat swears never to associate with Karagöz again.
28. *The Circumcision (Sünnet)*. A piece with a play within a play. Karagöz' son, about to be circumcised, absconds, and his father is circumcised in his stead. There is a performance of little puppets to distract Karagöz from his suffering.
29. *Karagöz and the Poets (Sairlik)*. Use of *tekerlemen*, which is a speech formula whereby separates the phrases from the coherence of causality and logic. Karagöz competes with the poets by reciting impromptu verses, wins the contest not by his poetic abilities, but by his violence.
30. *Tahir and Zühre (Tahir ile Zühre)*. Based on a traditional love story. Zühre is the daughter of a rich man. Tahir is the nephew, and the couple is in love. But the step mother of Zühre is also in love with Tahir, resolves to stop the marriage with magic. Advised by Hacivat, the rich man hires Karagöz as his majordomo. The step mother uses Karagöz to put an amulet with magic properties on her husband, so when he awakens will not allow the marriage. When the husbands wakes up the magic works, and he separates the lovers. Later, Karagöz repents and reveals the truth. The lovers are reunited and Karagöz is rewarded by marrying a girl from the rich household.

31. *The Coffee Roast (Tahmis)*. A play of scant interest, except for the repartee between Karagöz and Beberuhi.
32. *The False Marriage (Ters Evlenme)*. A popular piece. Theme of disguise and a moral lesson. Çelebi wants to find a wife for his brother, who drinks to excess, hoping to heal his vice thereby. Hacivat's wife advises her husband to disguise Karagöz as a woman, and earn some money while making a fool of Çelebi. The wives of both Karagöz and Hacivat disguise Karagöz, rename him "Snow Ball", and present the "bride". The prospective mother-in-law and sister-in-law see "her" from afar and consent to the match. Once the marriage is formalized, Hacivat's wife receives presents from the bride. The groom wants to see her face, and, discovering the farce, swears never to drink again.
33. *The Insane Asylum (Tımarhane)*. An absurd and fantastic situation. Karagöz is incarcerated with three madmen: the first has an impossible speech defect, the second repeats every phrase thrice, and the third embraces Karagöz so close that he finishes by biting Karagöz's tongue. Karagöz seems crazy to Hacivat, who ties him up. A number of curious visitors come to check on Karagöz. Hacivat summons Frenk, an Italian psychiatrist to examine Karagöz. But the latter is himself so abnormal that Hacivat decides to take his friend out of the asylum. One of the funniest texts, owing to its inventive quid pro quo.
34. *Trip to Yalova (Yalova Safası)*. Popular for the wealth of its quid pro quos and amusing ripostes. Two lovers, Çelebi and Zenne, decide to take a trip. Çelebi absents himself in order to make the preparations. Karagöz arrives and announces his death and a slew of other lies, one more absurd than the next. Each time Hacivat appears and contradicts him, receiving a reward from Zenne. Çelebi meanwhile

sends Zenne the trunks and a vat he has bought. She hides the other men who want to come with her – Hacivat, a second Çelebi, Tiryaki, Arab, Albanian, Armenian, Jew – in the vat. Each newcomer is resented by the others, and disputes ensue. When Karagöz' turn arrives, he receives a number of obscene proposals. He introduces his dog, which bites everyone, including the first Çelebi.

35. *Karagöz, the Public Scribe (Yazıcı)*. Following Hacivat's advice, Karagöz becomes a public scribe. Zenne, Frenk, Tiryaki, and many others come to have their letters written. Zenne dictates a letter to her lesbian lover. Karagöz distorts so much the content the woman goes away angry. Frenk (Greek) wants to send a business letter to his partner in Chios, and demands that it should contain impossible things as the melody of his speech, the creaking sound of a water wheel, the barking of a dog and so on. It ends with a brawl between him and Karagöz. Baba Himmet needs a letter to his sweetheart. His mistakes are terrible. Laz, the sailor from Trapezunt (Black Sea Coast), wants to explain the advantages of hazelnuts over copper (typical products from Trapezunt). Narrates the shipwreck where the copper sank and the hazelnuts floated on the water. After them comes the Tiryaki, for a list of drugs to be bought; Gipsy, whose letter is full of Gypsy words and the content is obscene; and Çelebi who narrates his numerous heart affairs. For each one, Karagöz writes nonsensical texts. There is also a jinn in the story who seem to live in the stall and punishes Karagöz. At end, Karagöz beats Hacivat when he comes to claim his share.

Performance Elements: Comedy and Language

1. Comedy

According to And (1979:47-67), *Karagöz'* "theatre of laughter" depends upon a number of comic devices, familiar from elementary clowning, but infallibly droll. These include:

- Slapstick and horseplay, including many basic clowning gags: crude action, tumbling around, and brawls (sometimes involving the wrong person).
 - In *The Coffee Grinders*, Arab or Beberuhi hits Karagöz on the head in the process of grinding coffee.
 - Words provide a rhythmic accompaniment to the blows, as when Karagöz beats Hacivat in the Dialogue.
- Repetition of a gesture, a movement, or an episode which had previously induced laughter. Nearly all the Main Plays include a scene repeated with different characters (or even the same characters) with minor variations.
 - In *The Bloody Poplar*, Karagöz wants to cut down a bewitched tree. The Albanian forest guard beats him up as punishment. But he repeatedly loses track of the number of blows he has delivered, and starts over again.
 - In *The Garden* and *The Public Bath*, Karagöz repeatedly seeks to trespass by various means.
 - In *The Fish*, each time a fish is caught, Arab cries for joy, and the fish escapes.
 - Duplication of characters. In *The Marriage of Karagöz* there is a Karagöz look-alike who causes a series of confusions which are blamed on the real Karagöz.
 - Obsessive verbal repetition, whereby a character introduces the same word into each sentence. For example, Hacivat's brothers start each sentence with an expression that is also their name: *Tavtati Kütüpati* (___), *Dedi ki* ("He said that"), *Rastgele* ("By chance").

- Disguise – to escape detection or as a feint.
 - In *Salıncak*, Hacivat disguises himself as a woman in order to spy on his business partner, Karagöz, who is cheating him.
 - In *The False Bride*, Karagöz disguises himself as the bride in order to trick the groom.

- Concealment – to spy on the other characters.
 - In *The Fountain*, Karagöz hides in the attic in order to spy on his wife, whom he suspects of cuckolding him with Çelebi

- Contrast and Incongruity – Characters are juxtaposed against an average person or situation in order to stress their singularities of manner, behaviour, or language.
 - In *The Circumcision*, the woodcutter comes to perform the ceremony with an axe.
 - In *The Purse*, a girl beats all the wrestlers.
 - In *The Public Scribe*, Baba Himmet asks Karagöz to write a letter for him. On the desk are a sheet of paper, a quill, and an ink pot, but he has no idea what these items are, and calls them: “white field”, “ox-goad quill”, and “pot of pitch”.

- Exaggeration: boasting, anger, drunkenness, etc.
 - Tuzsuz’ stentorian threats.
 - Arab’s stupidity.
 - Rumelili’s fantastic accounts of wrestling matches.
 - Laz’ and Beberuhi’s haste.

- In *The Turkish Bath*, two lesbians are not on talking terms, but once reconciled, they faint from emotion.
 - In *Ferhad and Şirin*, the lover loses consciousness whenever he sees his sweetheart.
 - Matiz' favorite joke is to threaten Karagöz with decapitation. In anticipation he asks Karagöz to lay a handkerchief on the floor, so that when his head falls, it will not get dirty.
- Exploitation of grotesque types and features.
 - Supernatural and magical acts, often involving witches and jinn.
 - In *The Coffee Grinders*, when the donkey carrying Karagöz and Hacivat breaks in two, it is taken to the repairman, who fits it together wrongly, so that the hind legs stick up.
 - In *The Witches*, Karagöz, Hacivat, Çelebi, and Zenne are transformed into different animals: donkey, turtle, rooster, and so on.
 - Arbitrary occurrences – For the sake of action or the plot, things just happen, without any reason.
 - In *The Offended Ones*, Hacivat and his brothers are killed by Karagöz, but afterwards they simply come back to life.
 - Dream Motif – A fixture in Ortaoyunu, it is sometimes used in *Karagöz*, generally in the Dialogue. Karagöz tells an impossible story, which turns out to be a dream. Fantasy and reality are woven together with mounting suspense.

2. Language

Karagöz' idiom is very distinctive:

- Rational discourse is almost entirely absent, and it is difficult for the various characters to understand one another, as language is not a medium of communication, but a device to arouse laughter.
- *Karagöz* himself constantly and deliberately seeks to invest his words and phrases with *double entendre*, often with sexual overtones.
- Characters are mocked because of their dialects or speech defects.
- Elegant diction is caricatured with the insertion of Arabic and Persian words. The text also includes material derived from Turkish tradition: proverbs, citations, riddles, sallies (witty or imaginative saying), metaphors, etc.
- *Tekerleme* – A speech formula, in many variations, which detaches the phrase from its logical context, resulting in gibberish rhymes, with nonsensical terms. In one form, it is similar to the *dips* in child and adult, used, for example, to count players out or award a penalty in a game. Sometimes it introduces a fable or occurs in the form of *Lie Stories* – aimless, free-association tales.
- Generally speaking, the text indulges in constant verbal play: malapropisms, misuse of homonyms or like-sounding words with different meanings, words with more than one meaning, punning, verbal inversion – with a comically nonsensical result. Couplets and poems are parodied, whereby the sound of the words and the versification is kept, but the meaning erased. The distortion of normal language to create a deliberately absurd atmosphere is one of *Karagöz'* chief characteristics.

The Puppeteer

Hayalı, the puppeteer of Turkish shadowplay, is also called *Karagözcü*, the *Karagöz* performer. In the Ottoman period, being a puppeteer was probably not a profession in itself, as performances were not daily occurrences, but

only given on special occasions. He had to combine shadowplay with other comparable trades, and thus its practitioners were often storytellers, Ortaoyunu actors, and conjurors. A formal school has never existed; the tradition is passed orally from generation to generation. And because of the long training necessary to achieve the requisite dexterity and knowledge, the prospective Karagözcü started his apprenticeship at an early age.

The puppeteer has to possess all the qualifications required by a “one-man show”. Formerly (but less so today) he was usually the maker of his own puppets. *Taklid*, imitation, is the term denoting his art (Tietze 1977:26). He must interpret (or “imitate”) each character from the realm of *Karagöz*. He needs skill in manipulating the distinctive movements of each and in reproducing his or her speech according to age, sex, and class; the idiom of an educated person, a local or a foreigner, as well as individual peculiarities, such as a stutter. It is essential for him to be conversant in the dialects of the many provinces. Knowledge of poetry and music is indispensable. And during the performance he must be able to manipulate at least two puppets at once, while sustaining their dialogue; it is said that the more dexterous performers were able to manipulate four, even six puppets, concurrently (And 1985:166).

As a rule, the puppeteer should have command of the entire classic repertoire, including at least 28 scenarios, corresponding to the 28 daily performances during the month of Ramadan. But because these scenarios are merely outlines, he needs to be quick-witted and imaginative, able to improvise, to absorb current events into the plot, to expand certain parts, always keeping the audience involved and entertained. This is why the texts have come down to us in so many versions.

The puppeteer has a couple of helpers (*iardak*): one charged with playing the *def* (the tambourine) and singing the songs; the other is the *sandikkâr*, responsible for the box of puppets (*hayâl Sandığı*) and for organizing them for the performance.

Stage and Puppets

The stage consists of a small screen (there is no stage curtain), varying slightly in dimensions; it averages some two metres in width by one metre in height. Translucent white cloth, generally cotton, is stretched across the frame. The light source is fixed just below the screen. The puppets are put between the screen and the light source, close to the screen (And 1979:42-43) (Fig.17, p.185). In former times illumination was provided by olive-oil lamps that produced a flickering light "which contributed to the mysterious character of the show" (Tietze 1977:15) and gave a sort of independent life to the figures. Today electric bulbs are employed, in consequence of which the figures are clearer but more static.

The puppets represent stylized characters. Because Islamic law prohibits human representation, theologians had to decide if such ban applied to shadow puppets. Exemption from the ban was secured by a clever argument. Images of animate beings are forbidden, but the *Karagöz* puppets are perforated, and therefore inanimate. It is thus permissible to attend shadowplay performances (Martinovitch 1968:35-36; Tietze 1977:13-14).

The puppets average in size between 25 and 35 cm: the smallest is the dwarf *Beberuhi* (about 20 cm in height), the tallest is *Baba Himmət* (just over 57 cm). They are made of (preferably camel's) leather. The hide, scraped until it becomes translucent, is treated with special oils, and cut according to traditional patterns with intricate open designs. The patterns vary according to the artist or even the performance. Tietze (*ibid.*:55) mentions the collection of a puppeteer whose set of characters, except for *Karagöz* and *Hacivat*, were slightly different (in their coloration, for instance) for each plot. Finally, the puppets are painted with brilliant dyes. They have small reinforced orifices for the horizontal rods used to manipulate them. During the performances, the puppets are pressed against the screen with the rods, and the resulting shadow



17. Puppeteer Tacettin Diker, in performance of *Karagoz, The False Thief*. Izmir, 1997.

possesses the appearance of stained glass³⁰. Usually, only two puppets are held by the puppeteer at any one time; if he wants more, however, he can use a forked stand to introduce a stationary figure, resting its rod in the middle of the stand. In general, the puppets are articulated at the waist, Hacivat and Karagöz have mobile legs. Karagöz has also a mobile arm. It is believed that in earlier times this arm was actually a phallus; other puppets had, in addition to the arm, a similar member (Tietze 1977:18-19; And 1979:85-86). Some special puppets, such as Çengi, the belly-dancer, have more than one articulation. She has several joints in her body and arms, and orifices in both arms; when she is suspended from the rods, the resulting movements are sinuous, as in belly-dancing. As a rule, the characters' heads are in profile, although, in some cases, the body is frontal; she, by contrast, is totally frontal.

In magical transformation scenes, the characters can change a body part; these dual members are attached to the body by swivel joints. In *The Witches (Cazular)*, for example, a young man is cursed, and his head is changed into a donkey's. The puppet initially appears with a human head; its donkey counterpart is hidden behind the body, perpendicular to the screen; when the curse befalls, the puppeteer quickly gives a half-turn to the attachment, and the donkey head comes up instead. When the curse is broken, the reverse occurs; the young man recovers his human head by a flick of the puppeteer's hand (And 1979:43-44).

The puppets are simple technically, but a skilled puppeteer could convey lively movement, creating the illusion of stylized life. Furthermore, by subtle manipulation, he accorded to each its characteristic movement, enhancing its individuality. It should be noted, however, that, owing to the dearth of performance descriptions, such proficiency is mostly inferred from the popularity of *Karagöz*

³⁰ Chinese shadow puppets are also translucent and have the same stained-glass effect,

except that they are much thinner (mule) leather, and more flexible due to their 11 joined sections.

Music and Instruments

Music has a key function during the performance; it is essential in helping to create the festive atmosphere. It announces the start of the play. The music is often an original composition; sometimes the melody is taken from the classical repertoire of the Divan or a popular tune. In earlier times, when *Karagöz* enjoyed widespread popularity, the music was played by an orchestra that could comprise up to 20 or so different instruments, including a tambourine (*def*), a tambour (*davul*), a kind of cithara (*kanun*), a kind of violin (*keman*), an ancient viole (*kemmençe*), different kinds of lute (*saz*, *oud*, *baglama*), and a wind instrument similar to the shepherd's flute (*kaval*). Usually, however, the performance was more modestly accompanied by a tambourine, a violin, and a flute. The tambourine is always shaken before the entrance of a character, even if he or she is merely returning to the screen, since its purpose to give the puppeteer time to prepare the puppet (Petek-Şalom undated:58).

As mentioned above, there is a particular whistle, the *nāreke*, made of light wood with a thin sheet of cigarette paper at its end, which produces a high-pitched sound. In every performance, following the introductory music, the *nāreke* is heard, whereupon the *göstermelik* is shown. The first measures of the tambourine announce Hacivat's entrance.

The puppeteer and his helper also require voice training, since the performances include songs in different styles and accents, and also sound effects: natural phenomena, such as rain, wind, thunder, and animals, as well as various machines.

A particular tune precedes the entrance of each new character, announcing him to the public. He often enters, sometimes dancing, while a song about him is being sung, or he himself is singing (*ibid.*).

Today, most music is recorded, as practical circumstances dictate. The electronic tape is certainly festive, but it lacks the warmth and intimacy that only live

music affords. This, at least, was my personal impression after attending performances in which the puppeteers and their assistants still sing.

Mystical and Satirical Character

The combination of the sacred and profane in *Karagöz* is intriguing. In spite (or because) of the lack of data, scholars have tried to elucidate this phenomenon (Siyavuşgil 1951:15-19).

During the Ottoman period, Islamic orthodoxy succeeded in imposing its moral and social control over the populace. Tietze enumerates several factors that might help explain how irreverent shadowplay was able to survive and develop under such a regime. He notes, first of all, that it acquired a mystical aura by virtue of its opening, “The Poem of the Curtain” – a *gazel* (literary poem), which is always serious and appeals to the *Hak*, a Sufic synonym for God. In it, *Karagöz* proclaims the symbolic character of shadowplay: it draws the spectator’s attention to the vanishing images on the screen, which signify the transitory nature of life and the illusory state of this world, in contrast to the permanence of the afterlife. It concludes with an invocation to Şeyh Küşteri, the legendary patron of the puppeteers. And in the Epilogue, before exiting, Hacivat invariably admonishes *Karagöz*: *Tu as démoli l’écran. Je m’en vais avertir le Propriétaire*. According to Siyavuşgil (*ibid.*:16), the owner of the screen and the shadowplay master is none other than Allah. But official sanction cannot explain *Karagöz*’ popularity. Furthermore, the religious element is absent from the rest of the performance, and was arguably a mere subterfuge.

According to Islamic law, human representation was blasphemous; forging images was Allah’s exclusive prerogative. However, the shadow puppet was “unambiguously marked as a figment” by the hole in the neck for the insertion of the manipulator’s stick (Tietze 1977:13-14). Tietze (*ibid.*:18-19) agrees with Siyavuşgil that the mystical touch made shadowplay more acceptable than the other forms of puppetry to the authorities. But he also notes that many spiritual leaders deemed it

objectionable, not only because of its offense against the iconoclastic precepts of Islam, but also on moral grounds; it was violently attacked in number of *fetwas* (legal decrees), for “a pious mind should not indulge in such worldly, trivial, and sensuous amusements (*ibid.*:18). Nevertheless, he observes that the doctors of Islamic law, in contrast to their European counterparts from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, accepted the obscenities in *Karagöz*, because “such crude entertainments can only be excused, if the expectator does it for the purpose of moral edification, as viewing sin can teach us to be virtuous” (the *fetwa* of Ebüssuud [1490-1574], quoted in Selim Nüzhet, *Türk, temaşası, meddah, Karagöz, orta oyunu*, Istanbul, 1930, p. 64; as cited by Tietze 1977:19, note 7). In addition, there was no lack of disapproval on the part of the intellectuals, supporters of the regime. Sümbülzade Vebi, a moralist poet at the end of the eighteenth century, declared *Karagöz* “*l’image proverbiale d’une ignorance sans borne*” (Siyavuşgil 1951:16). Nevertheless, there was a generalized acceptance of certain inviolability of *Karagöz*, perhaps residual from the original mystical nature of the shadowplay.

Karagöz thus managed to escape persecution on religious grounds. But the extent to which it reflects a pious attitude is highly questionable. Siyavuşgil (1951:15-16) suggests that it had a mystical character in earlier times, evolving only later into satire. It was introduced, he contends, by two Sufi devouts, İmam Gazali and Muhyiddin-i Arabi, to illustrate their teachings. The spectacle, designed at first to entertain and instruct the audience with vignettes drawn from daily life, became a pretext or point of departure for contemplation, and offered the initiates sacred visions. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Anatolia was convulsed politically, socially, and religiously. The Turks, under the last Seljuks, were engaged in a struggle with the Byzantine Empire. But they were also divided among themselves under local warlords, while the central authority in Konya was impotent. The prevailing anarchy, he affirms, influenced the character of shadowplay. – The difficulty with this reconstruction, however, is that it is purely hypothetical, and lacks supporting evidence.

Since there is no documentation in support of this thesis, the opposite approach offers a viable alternative. That is to say, it is possible that *Karagöz* was

irreverent, obscene, and essentially satirical from the outset, and the pious affirmations were merely conventional touches demanded by Islamic society and designed to make a very profane genre more palatable to the authorities. After all, besides the Opening and the Epilogue, there are no religious references within the performance. A transformation such as *Siyavuşgil* posits would surely leave traces in the characters and plots.

One of his observations, however, can perhaps serve as the basis for a different interpretation. While admitting that it is impossible to say exactly when the supposed mysticism of *Karagöz* yielded to satire, he notes that the social environment of the Sultanate in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would be conducive to such a transformation. Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, and the palace was installed in the new capital, renamed Istanbul, which attracted different ethnic groups and individuals from the farthest reaches of the Ottoman domain. Soon, however, the increasingly lavish court grew ever more distant from the populace, and the wealth and leisure of the rulers led to decadence and despotism. And because the commoners were severely repressed, it is plausible to imagine that they voiced their grievances metaphorically through *Karagöz*. Sometimes a play had its origins in an actual event. *Nigâr, the Sanguinaire*, for example, was inspired by a scandal provoked by two women of dubious character. The historical archives of 1565 relate that the populace of one of the quarters assembled before the house of a certain Fatma, wife of a janissary, and demanded her expulsion because her blasphemous conduct attracted undesirable types. *Karagöz* can thus be seen as the translation of a specific incident into an archetypal situation. But its contents was social, not religious.

Afterglow

The themes of *Karagöz* were undoubtedly meaningful to the audience in Ottoman times; they reflected the circumstances of their lives, and evoked an enthusiastic response. In the twentieth century, however, Turkey underwent enormous social and historical changes, and traditional shadowplay's frame of reference is no longer relevant to today's spectators. Accordingly, today's

puppeteers seek somewhat to update the themes in order to make them more accessible to the contemporary audience, but their basic contents must seem very remote, nonetheless.

By the early and mid-nineteenth century, *Karagöz* turned its attention to political issues with the same freedom of expression it had hitherto applied to moral and social mores. Its offenses finally led to its being restrained, and, after its eclipse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it never fully recovered. It belonged to a historical epoch – that of the repressive Ottoman Empire – that nurtured its satirical character. With the empire's downfall after World War I, it lost its *raison d'être* – to comment on Istanbul society under the Sultanate – and its vitality. Nevertheless, here and there in Turkey there have been attempts to preserve its tradition. *Karagöz* continues to exist, but in a bland version, having lost practically all its licentiousness and sharpness; it has been reduced to presentations for children, in schools or on television, or an object of scholarly attention. In 1997, I attended a performance at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Izmir by the puppeteer Orhan Kurt, followed by a lecture by Prof. Metin And, the expert of *Karagöz*. A sign that the subject's is already established as an academic historical material, rather than live popular art.

Research on its classical form has been undertaken to a certain extent, mostly on the basis of printed texts and descriptions by local writers and foreign travellers. But the written record offers merely a hint of the live performance, and many of the spontaneous jokes and immoral insinuations were probably omitted. Nevertheless, *Karagöz* is still regarded as a cultural heritage. There are a few puppeteers who present the surviving texts within the traditional structure, more or less, while retaining the improvisational spirit by attempting, for instance, to update the themes. They perform regularly in Turkey and sometimes abroad. It is interesting to note that few scholars of *Karagöz* even mention its living continuity. However, it is rather considered a subject for archives and museums, and, in fact, today's public consists of more foreigners than Turks (Petek-Şalom 1986:217-218). Besides that, Petek-Şalom claims that the puppeteers and scholars in an attempt to

preserve the *Karagöz* tradition created instead an hindrance to the development of the shadowplay (*ibid.*:222).

In Europe and America, however, interest in the “marginal” manifestations of theatre, including puppetry, has been growing since the early twentieth century, and both artists and scholars have turned their attention to *Karagöz*. This has had its impact on Turkey proper, and has induced a revival of its once-popular shadowplay. The Bursa *Karagöz* Festival has been held almost yearly since 1992. On several occasions, Izmir has also hosted its international puppetry festivals. Many of today’s Turkish puppeteers have travelled abroad to participate in similar festivals elsewhere or give workshops to their professional peers.

I attended the Third International Festival of Traditional Theatre in Izmir in 1997, where several of the contemporary *Karagöz* puppeteers performed. All the plays were drawn from the traditional repertoire, but, except for the aforementioned performance at the Faculty of Arts, all were basically directed at young viewers. Innovations and up-datings were introduced. Puppeteer Mustafa Mutlu, for example, emerged from behind the screen after his show and spoke directly to his audience, and, in the play, *Karagöz* himself offers advice to children on how to behave. Another puppeteer, Tacettin Diker, plays contemporary pop music by well-known bands instead of the traditional belly-dancer at the end of the performance. Generally speaking, the format of these various presentations was traditional, but the text was “decorous”, that is to say, purged of foul language and dubious jokes; it was meant for the young, and conscientiously avoided offending their elders. The audiences reacted with considerable interest, and certainly found the play amusing. A most interesting performance (*The Marriage of Karagöz*) was offered by the puppeteer Mehmet Baycan.

The next section presents a synopsis of the translated text of the performance of *The Marriage of Karagöz* and its analysis.

The Marriage of Karagöz - A Play

This section is devoted to the analysis of a performance, *The Marriage of Karagöz*, by puppeteer Mehmet Baycan, presented during the International Festival of Traditional Theatre, in Izmir, Turkey, in October 1997. The main reason for the choice of this play is that it represents a live performance, in contrast to the “dead plays”, as defined by And [see p.170]. This circumstance allowed me to form an impression of the puppeteer’s use of improvisation and of audience reaction, which, as I have stressed, was germane to the traditional art of *Karagöz*. In addition, it is interesting to observe those features of the performance which survive from Ottoman times, in contrast to those which attest to adaptation to the modern setting.

The performance had some peculiar aspects. It was held during the evening in a main square in front of the pier in the commercial centre of the residential district of Karşıyaka. The stage was mobile; it was a bus transformed into a small theatre, with an open side where a small screen was located. Thus the backstage was within the bus. The audience was the local population – passers-by or people who had come for the performance; it consisted of people of all ages, including many children.

Visually, the performance was not especially impressive. The manipulation of the puppets was basic, and the puppeteer lacked exceptional skill.³¹ Which did not seem to disturb the interest of the audience. Vocally, however, the puppeteer was more successful in conveying the voices and peculiar accents of the various characters. In general, the performance was lively, and held the public’s attention, who responded with obvious pleasure. According to my observation, most people remained throughout the entire presentation, and were clearly involved by it, often reacting with comments, clapping hands to music³², in addition to laughter all the way through.

³¹ Other *Karagöz* puppeteers that performed in the festival were Orhan Kurt, Mustafa Mutlu, Metin Özlen, Şinasi Çelikkol, Tacettin Diker, Ünver Oral. The first two were

dext manipulators and voice interpreters.

³² The spontaneous handclapping to music, by children and adults, was a constant occurrence in practically all the performances I was present in the Festival of Izmir.

The festival programme indicates that the author of the original scenario is unknown. It does not appear in the collection of plays by Cevdet Kudret. I was unable to discover its source. The text was transcribed, annotated, and translated into English by Doli Benhabib. It is not totally complete, since some of the passages are unintelligible in the recording. The word plays, based on similarities of sound in Turkish, are usually lost in translation. Otherwise, the translation is quite literal; it does not claim to be perfect, but is adequate for the purpose of the following analysis.

There follows a condensed version of the text of *The Marriage of Karagöz*. The piece is presented in its entirety in the Appendix.

The Marriage of Karagöz

List of Characters:

H - Hacivat

K - Karagöz

DH - Dirrubâ Hanım, or Miss Dirrubâ, Karagöz' future wife.

FC - Faik Celebi, the dentist.

BR - Beberuhi, the dwarf.

HK - Hamsi Kaptan, or Captain Sprat. A quiltmaker, originally from Trabzon, a city on the Black Sea shore of Anatolia.

TE - Tuzsuz Ekim, Dirrubâ Hanım's brother.

Prologue

(Song)

Oh, I entered the [*inaudible*],

Oh, oh, its roses are like [*inaudible*];

Oh, oh, there are three moles on her neck

Each one of them is like a [*inaudible*] cup.

I built a play, I did [*inaudible*];

What you see is not a play,
 But what exists wherever
 There are a thousand lights
 Which brings pleasure
 To those watching us.

[*Words of welcome to the audience, to the VIPs, etc.*]

Dialogue and Main Play

H -(enters) Karagöz and I, we're like blood brothers. We eat the same food, we drink the same drink. But I haven't seen him in a long time. Could it be that he's ill? Or did he have an accident? I've been concerned. Children, you, too, if you don't see a friend of yours at school for one or two days, go to his house to visit him. It's on such days that friendship proves itself.

Karagöz's wife has passed away. He's alone now. Let Allah not leave anyone alone. We've found a suitable wife for him. Karagöz has grown old. He can't wash his laundry. He can't cook. I hope he gets along with this lady, and that they build a happy home together.

Let me go to his house and ask how he's doing.
 Let me knock on his door (*knocks on the door*). Karagöz! Karagöz!

K - Oh, Allah, Fellow! What's going on at this hour of the night?

H - Oh, sir, well, come down!

K - I'm coming. Just a second. What's going on?

.....

[*They conduct a conversation characterized by typical puns and misunderstandings. Karagöz beats Hacıvat, who afterwards introduces his idea that Karagöz remarry.*]

H - [*Inaudible*] I said: "Miss, your father has died and Karagöz' wife has died. If that's so, we'll introduce you to each other! If you get along, you can build a happy home. You can grow old on the same pillow." And the girl said, "If he's suitable, OK."

K - Ohoo! I'm happy with this news. Is she pretty, this lady?

H - She's pretty, sir.

K - Describe her! Describe her!

H – Oh, sir. Let me describe her! Her eyes are almonds.

K – Her eyes are almonds?

H – Her cheeks are apples.

K – Her cheeks are apples?

H – Her lips are cherries.

K – This girl isn't a girl, but a greengrocer, Fellow.

H – Oh, sir. She's pretty, pretty. We can soon have an engagement ceremony.

K – Eehh?

H – Afterwards, we can have a wedding.

K – And after that we can have a funeral.

H – What happened?

K – What could happen, Fellow? I'm an old man [*inaudible*]. Can this work?

[*Karagöz goes to meet his future bride, Miss Durribâ.*]

K – (*singing*) Open the curtain of the window for me!
 Show your face!
 I climbed mountains and came,
 To see your face.

DH – (*enters*) Sir.

K – Welcome, my lady.

DH – Karagöz, is that you?

K – Yes, I am.

DH – I'm pleased to meet you.

K – And I'm a monkey to meet you.³³

³³ *Memnum* (“pleased”) and *maymun* (“monkey”) rhyme in Turkish.

DH – Oh, sir! Is your name Karagöz?

K – Yes, Karagöz.

DH – Is it only Karagöz?

K – No, it's Karagöz with cheese.

DH – No, not so. Is it only Karagöz?

K – No, Miss. Karagöz with ten people.

DH – Oh, sir. You joke all the time. Your name is Karagöz?

K – Karagöz, Miss.

DH – OK, and what is your name?³⁴ (How are you called?)

K – Sorry?

DH – What's your name?

K – What's my name, Fellow? Well, Lady...I forgot. Don't joke around with me! My name is also Karagöz.

DH – Ahh! Where can you find such an abundance? Both your *ad* and your *isim* are Karagöz.

K – I found them in the market and bought them, Miss, Fellow.

DH – Oh, Sir! Is there anyone who doesn't know you, Mr. Karagöz? You're a chapter in history.

K – Thank you, Miss. What's your name?

DH – Sir, my name is Dirrrrrubâ.

K – I don't get it, Miss.

DH – My name is Dirrrrrubâ.

K – What a name this woman has! Like a doorbell zrrrrrr!

.....

³⁴ "Name" in Turkish can be *ad* or *isim*. DH uses first *ad* and here on uses *isim*.

DH – What did you understand?

K – A crazy frog, a crazy frog.³⁵

.....

[*The couple get along and decide to get married. Hacivat announces the good news to the whole neighbourhood. Various characters appear to congratulate Karagöz. The first is Faik Çelebi, the dentist.*]

FC – (*enters singing Cetine, a traditional song*)

While going to Üşküdar

It rained.

My clerk's coat is long

Its fringe is muddy.

K – Who's that?!?

FC – Hello, Mon Chère.

K – What's he saying, this fellow? Is he saying: "To drink stuffed vegetables?"³⁶

FC – Oh! Sir. I'm speaking a foreign language with you, Ekselans [i.e., Excellence]!

.....

FC – Oh, Mr. Karagöz, didn't you recognize me?

K – No, I didn't.

FC – There is a dentist shop³⁷ in front of your house. I just moved in. Let me introduce

myself! They call me Faik Çelebi. Papa Hacivat said: "Karagöz is getting married." So I

came to congratulate you.

K – Welcome, Sir.

(*to audience*) Ohh, children, a dentist has moved into our neighbourhood. (*To FC*)

If

you've come all the way here, Sir, could you take a look at my teeth?

FC – Of course, I could. Open your mouth!

K – Let me open it!

³⁵ A play on words with similar sounds: *Dırrubâ* and *deli kurbağ* ("a crazy frog").

³⁶ *Mon chère* sounds like *dolma içer* in Turkish, meaning "to drink stuffed vegetables".

³⁷ FC says *dükkân* = "shop".

FC – All the teeth are decayed. Of course, if you don't brush your teeth after breakfast in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, your teeth decay. So, as a wedding gift to you, let me change all your teeth and make a prosthesis [i.e., denture].

K – What will you make?

FC – A prosthesis, prosthesis.

K – Father time?³⁸ What father time, Fellow?

FC – What's it got to do with father's time, Sir? They call this prosthesis. Let it be my wedding gift?

K – Thank you.

(*To audience*) Have you heard that children? I didn't brush my teeth when I was young.

What happened? My teeth got rotten. Please, brush your teeth in the morning, in the evening, and in the middle of the day. Don't let them decay early, right, kids?

FC – Yes, let's brush our teeth twice or thrice a day. So, when is the wedding?

K – It's next week, Sir. We'll be expecting you, Sir.

.....

[*Next comes Beberuhi, the dwarf.*]

BR – (*enters singing*)

Oh, I hang the [*inaudible*] on my neck.

Oh, I pay attention to the rake.

Oh, if you give me money,

I will dance a belly dance for you.

Hello, Uncle Karagöz!

K – Hello, welcome!

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that...

K – What did he say?

³⁸ *Protez* is an unfamiliar word to K, and he hears it as *baba kez* = “father time”.

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married.”

K – To whom did he say it?

BR – He said it to me, to me.
.....

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married.”

K – Who said that, Fellow?

BR – (*yelling*) Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married!”

K – Who said that?

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – To whom did he say that, Fellow? Don’t yell.

BR – He said it to me! To me!
.....

K – Don’t yell! What did he say?

BR – (*still yelling*) He said: “Karagöz is getting marrieeeeeed!” See what happened!

K – What happened?

BR – I talked a lot. See what happened!

K – What happened?

BR – I have to pee, to pee.
.....

[*Beberuhi exits. The next to enter is Hamsi Kaptan, the quiltmaker from Trabzon, who moves with quick, jerky movements and also speaks very quickly.*]

HK – (*enters singing*)

I put the sprat on the frying-pan;

It started to dance.

I put the sprat on the frying-pan;

It started to dance.
I put the sprat on the fryng-pan;
It started to dance.³⁹

K – Who’s this fellow? Welcome, welcome.

.....
K – Wow, wow, wow, wow, look at this man!

HK – Uiii! What’s your name? What’s your father’s name? Do you eat fish?

K – Stop, Fellow! Look at this man, he’s like the *Pamukkale* express train.⁴⁰ Fellow,
what’s
your name?

HK - Uiii! Uuiuiiii! Didn’t you recognize me?

.....
HK – Uii! I’ll come to your wedding and dance a *holan* dance.⁴¹ You watch me then.

K – Of course, dance, Fellow!

HK – Should I dance here and now, too?

.....
K – Look at this guy, by Allah! He’s dancing lika a sprat. Yaah!

HK – Uii! [*inaudible*]

May Allah make you happy! Well, see you at the wedding. Goodbye, now!
(*Exits dancing and singing.*)

.....
[*Tuzsuz Ekim, Miss Dirrubâ’s drunkard brother, enters.*]

TE – (*enter singing loudly*)

The poplar trees of Izmir;
Their leaves fall.
The poplar trees of Izmir;
Their leaves fall.
Yayy!

K – Wow! Wow! Who’s this fellow?

TE – (*yells*) Yay!

³⁹ A folk song from the Black Sea shore of Anatolia. HR speaks with strong northern accent.

⁴⁰ A known train known for its high velocity.

⁴¹ A traditional regional dance.

K – Don't yell, Fellow! Look, don't yell!

TE – (*yells*) Yay!

K – Don't yell, Fellow! Look, don't yell. There's a pregnant woman here. If you yell, you'll
make her have a miscarriage.

.....
TE – What's your name?

K – My name is Karagöz.

TE – What did you say? So, you're the man who's going to marry my sister. Quickly, choose
a death out of different deaths!

K – Quickly choose a death out of different deaths? It's like shopping for shoes at *Mahmutpaşa*.⁴²

TE – (*yells*) Yeh!

K – Don't yell, Fellow! Aaah...

TE – Look at me! Did you ask me for permission to marry my sister? My father has died.

K – Eeh! So what?

TE – I'm the oldest person in the family, so ask me!

K – I'll ask you. But your sister complains about you.

TE – What are her complaints?

K – You beat her up everyday; you gamble; you get drunk everyday. Only if you make a
vow of renunciation concerning your habits, will I ask you.

TE – Karagöz, I like you a lot, and I make a vow of renunciation in front of the spectators.

From now on, I won't touch my sister, and I won't put alcohol in my mouth.

K – You won't put it in your mouth! You can drink through your nose. Yah!

⁴² A popular street and market in Istanbul.

TE – I promise. I'm making a vow of renunciation.

K – Really?

TE – Yes!

K – Ohh! Now, if so, I ask you for your sister's hand with Allah's permission and the blessing of the prophet. Will you give her to me?

TE – Of course I will, Karagöz. Will she find a better man than you? May Allah let you grow
old on the same pillow!

K – Thank you.

.....

Epilogue

H – Sir, you tore down the curtain.

K – I did?

H – Let me go to the owner and tell him! (*Exits*)

K – You watched a play in the Traditional Theatre Festival. Thank you. (*Exits*)

Analysis

The Marriage of Karagöz is relatively brief. Hacivat, following tradition, opens the performance with a Prologue, in which he recites some verses, and thanks the sponsors and authorities. But the Dialogue seems to flow directly into the Main Play; it is not possible to separate them clearly. Generally, there is no thematic connection between these two parts; in the present instance, however, the Main Play's theme is introduced in the Dialogue: Hacivat tells the audience of his plan to suggest to the recently widowed Karagöz that he marry Durribâ. Otherwise, this section is conventional in structure. Hacivat repeatedly asks Karagöz to descend, and, when the latter finally complies, there is a nonsensical verbal exchange, and Karagöz

thrashes his companion for no reason. In the classical format, Karagöz and Hacivat now exaunt, and the Main Play begins.

In the *Marriage*, by contrast, they remain on the screen, and the theme, already known, now unfolds. The action abides by the customary pattern: a number of stock types familiar from Ottoman times arrive, tarry, and depart by turns. Finally, still in keeping with tradition, the performance concludes with a brief Epilogue: Hacivat, threatening to complain to the owner of the screen, exits, leaving Karagöz to bid farewell. As a rule, he takes this occasion to announce the programme and date of the next show; here, however, he merely reminds the audience of the sponsors.

The *Marriage*, as stated, was less elaborate than usual, and fewer characters appeared. It is likely that, being out-of-doors, the performance was abridged. And it is arguable that the setting also influenced the level of its humour. It was witty and amusing, with plentiful clowning, nonsense, and surprises. But the fact that the public mostly consisted of families, many with children, probably induced the puppeteer to temper his jests. They were sometimes risqué, but never obscene or in breach of conventional morality (so typical of *Karagöz* in its heyday). There was no hint of social criticism. The “message” was instead rather harmlessly educational. Now and then, one or another of the figures (Hacivat, Beberuhi, Celebi) turned directly to the children in the audience, and dispensed unexceptionable advice: that they should be loyal to their friends, study hard in school, observe hygienic habits, etc.⁴³

Several of the aforementioned comical devices recur in this performance. Hacivat is beaten for no apparent reason at the beginning and later in the Main Play. This abusive slapstick remains a hallmark of the genre, and it never fails to induce amusement. In addition, verbal play is still crucial. In several passages, rational discourse is replaced by almost childlike nonsensical exchanges (*tekerleme*) in many variations. On other occasions, words or phrases are confused

⁴³ This direct advising for good manners to the children in the audience was also constated in other performances in the Izmir Festival.

with like-sounding expressions of different meaning, which impedes communication between the characters, but is highly entertaining for the public.

One essential element of the performance, which cannot be conveyed by the written text, is its pace. It is generally rapid, owing, in the main, to Karagöz himself, who not only talks more quickly than the others, but also answers before his interlocutor has a chance to conclude his speech. The prime example of this is his conversation with Beberuhi, who is unwittingly forced to conform to Karagöz' rhythm, creating a very precipitate scene. The pace allows Karagöz' to exploit meaningless expressions or words of similar sounds for purposes of surprise and satire. It also keeps the audience closely attentive, for they will otherwise be unable to follow the conversation.

The main character of the *Marriage* is certainly Karagöz himself. He remains the clever and irreverent personage who dominates the plot. He treats all the others sarcastically, sometimes crudely. He subjects everyone, without exception, to a torrent of jokes and offensive remarks: Dirrubâ is mocked for her slow wit; Faik Celebi for his pretensions; Beberuhi for his stupidity; Hamsi Kaptan for his provinciality; Tuzsuz Ekim for his false bravery and drunkenness; and Hacivat, of course, is Karagöz' traditional counterpart and victim. Irreverence is clearly the gist of the comedy, in which the bounds of civility are tested. Karagöz is liminal insofar as he says aloud what others think, but normally keep to themselves. He articulates that portion of the mind where a person harbours his prejudices and stereotypes. As such, he is archetypal – both a natural and artificial jester. Nevertheless, his characterization in *Marriage*, indicates that he has undergone an intriguing transformation. In Ottoman times, it will be recalled, he was disreputable – scheming, dishonest, and distrusted by his neighbours, to the point that he was often blamed for misdeeds he did not, in fact, commit. All this has changed! As a “historical” personage, a symbol of the Turkish folk, he has become popular, not only with the public, as before, but also among his entourage. Hacivat genuinely wants to help his friend, and the neighbours are sincere in congratulating Karagöz on his impending marriage. By outliving his context, i.e., Istanbul of the Sultanate, he has become respectable. Even then, the audience identified closely with Karagöz, and thus had a

different opinion of him, as it were, than his peers on the screen. One can say that the fictional world has adopted the public's point of view. This is another aspect of inversion so typical of shadowplay.

Hacivat is an almost completely functional figure in *Marriage*. Functional, but essential. He opens the performance, and, in the Main Play, he has the role of Karagöz' solicitous friend, thus introducing the theme of remarriage. He remains, to be sure, the victim of Karagöz' unprovoked attacks. Dirrubâ Hanım is not the usual malicious and devious Zenne, but her depiction is hardly flattering. She is not very smart, and fails to understand Karagöz' wit; in her attempt to imitate his jests, she comes across as clumsy and ridiculous. Faik Celebi is the archetype of the dandy; he laces his Turkish with French, in order to flaunt his refinement. Beberuhi is slow-witted, a natural jester, and easy prey for Karagöz. Hamsi Kaptan is the stereotyped provincial from Trabzon; he is jittery in manner and speech, as reflected in the words of his opening song. Tuzsuz Ekim is also the stereotype of the loud, drunken braggart, whose bravado is a cover for cowardess; after the initial threats, he readily agrees to Karagöz' demands for his rehabilitation. – In sum, all the characters are caricatures of one sort or another, the only exception (perhaps) being Hacivat, who, despite suffering Karagöz' blows, has been "gentrified".

In conclusion, *Karagöz* survives as entertainment for youngsters. Nevertheless, although its obscenity and malice has been softened, much of its original character remains intact: it is still the satirical "theater of laughter"; its figures are stereotypes; and, very significantly, Karagöz continues to mock the Turks and their customs. The *Marriage* demonstrates the perseverance of popular tradition, which has been transformed into an icon. But, in the process, *Karagöz* has been domesticated; it is now used to teach proper and civilized behaviour to children.

Conclusion

Karagöz is a popular art form based on improvisation and transmitted orally from master to apprentice, and its study suffers from a dearth of adequate documentation. Nevertheless, in perusing its surviving texts, and in trying to enter

into its spirit and mode of performance, I think one can venture certain conclusions concerning its character and function for the citizens of Istanbul. Initially, one is tempted to suppose that it was a vehicle of social criticism, whereby the downtrodden commoners were able to voice their grievances against their overlords in a humorous and subtle fashion. The plays as we know them certainly convey a vivid picture of their daily struggle for survival, their frustrations and unrealistic ambitions, and the omnipresence of the authorities. In this respect, *Karagöz* can be deemed cathartic. In the end, however, it hardly seems subversive. It never challenges the right of the Court to rule over them; it never suggests that poverty, corruption, and other pervasive ills should be addressed. On the contrary, the circumstances of the lowly quarter are accepted as immutable. Ultimately, *Karagöz* confirms the status quo in that he mocks and implicitly censures anyone who deviates from the norm: those who violate conventional morality, who try to exceed their station by assuming aristocratic airs, or who, for reasons of ethnic origin or congenital disability, fail at being “one of us” – those, in short, who are Others. It certainly make fun of human foibles of all sorts, and its depiction of the obtaining order is caustic from our point of view. But it never proposes an alternative, and the Sultan could usually feel assured that his subjects were enjoying a basically innocuous form of entertainment, however sarcastic and obscene. It was only towards the end of the Ottoman period, when the “sick man of Europe” was under siege by new imperial powers and suffering real opposition from within, that the authorities, increasingly suspicious, felt threatened by the criticism tendered by this popular genre, and took measures to repress it. As a result, *Karagöz* lost whatever barb is possessed. With the empire’s fall and the social transformation of Istanbul, it lost its *raison d’être*, and, as a form of diversion, was easily supplanted by cinema and other forms of modern media. Under these circumstances, efforts to revive *Karagöz* have met with only limited success. Nevertheless, it remains an important legacy of Turkish culture, especially since it reflects the spirit of the people, in contrast to the familiar monuments of Istanbul, which attest to the grandeur of the Sultanate. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that the figure of *Karagöz* has undergone a kind of

inversion in terms of his relation to the audience: from being an Other, he has become a Self.

In the following, I will examine *Karagöz* with respect to my specific theses, for, in the very conventionality of its point of view, it is pervaded by Others: Jesters, Gods and Aliens.

The Other in *Karagöz*: Jesters, Gods and Aliens

Karagöz satirized contemporary Ottoman society. As such, Istanbul can be considered “reality”, the Self, whereby the fictional world of the shadows becomes the Other; it reflects the city and its characters in a distorting mirror. The Self includes the psychological and social components of the Ottoman mind. Perhaps this model is less specific than Francis Hsu’s [see p.17], since it does not represent an individual, but rather a community during a certain historical period.

In most successful comedies, the contemporaneity of the themes contributes greatly to their popularity. *Karagöz* is no exception. Its plays were pertinent to its audience, and its stereotypes (*taklitler*) and situations were instantly recognizable. As mentioned above, many of the Main Play plots were based on real events – often scandals (Siyavuşgil 1951:16-17). As a result, social criticism is often implicit. But it is harmless, usually just piquant commentary on the disgrace of some abusive figure of authority. The *dramatis personae*, especially *Karagöz*, mocked and defied the status quo by being indifferent to conventional morality and norms. In this respect it resembles the clown scenes in *Wayang*, except, as noted, *Karagöz* rarely criticizes the Sultan or the Islamic clerics. The characters, however droll or ridiculous, have interests; both the schemers and their victims are devious and/or stupid, and there is no differentiation between good and bad types.

The position of *Karagöz* as a theater of the Other is confirmed by its marginality, even today; it is performed as an interlude. In the Ottoman period, it provided a diversion from the seriousness of religious events: during the month of Ramadan or rites of passage, such as circumcision or marriage. Its irreverent spirit

would seem to contradict the tone of Ramadan, but its performances afforded a welcome relief from the injunctions against food, drink, and sex. Ultimately, in spite of its “sinful” character, *Karagöz* exercised no subversive influence on the populace; it consisted of repartee and moving shadows; its mocking “as if” world was not revolutionary; it proposed no changes; it lacked an agenda or ideology, and simply caricatured familiar situations and types in entertaining plots. It afforded a subjunctive state in which the audience enjoyed an absurd and imaginary world that was inventive, surprising, irreverent, and often obscene. It was certainly an emotional escape-valve from the restrictions of the Ottoman regime. Still, one could argue that, in actuality, its satire provided an indirect defence of the status quo by mocking the misconduct and immorality of its characters. As explained above, the jester’s criticism can actually be a conservative force, in that it calls attention to the limits of proper morality. I suspect that this is why the religious authorities tolerated it, and perhaps even deemed it beneficial. *Karagöz* has an ambiguous status: it both travesties and defends morality. Even if the latter was not perceived, its vulgarity and insolence were acceptable, not being in the form of human representation; it was a fictional world of leather cut-outs that cast shadows on a screen.

As to Otherness, *Karagöz* can be considered from two different angles: the first concerns the relationship between the fictional world inhabited by Others and that of the audience – the “real” world; the second concerns the relationships between the various characters within the fictional domain, which possesses its own Others – those types who are marginal, either by virtue of their provenance (ethically distinct and/or from outside Istanbul) or their congenital disabilities.

It bears stressing that, although the public finds *Karagöz* amusing, none of its characters indulges in clowning for its own sake, i.e., in order to induce laughter; they all take their roles and tasks seriously. *Karagöz* mocks Hacıvat and the others, but within the shadowplay world; he is oblivious, as it were, of his wit’s effect on the audience. It is the puppeteer who presents the various *taklîter* as stereotypes and caricatures. This, incidentally, applies to most, if not all, clowning; the clowns themselves are struggling to extract themselves from various predicaments. Their actions are unexpected, and the result is “inadvertently”

surprising and droll. To return to *Karagöz*, it should be noted that, the “serious” self-contained world on the stage is a world of Others for the spectators; the puppets, in their various machinations, are following the social norms of their upside-down Istanbul. Nevertheless, within the fictional world of *Karagöz*, there are also Selves and Others.

The stage and audience are naturally interrelated, since any live theatre will involve the spectators in some form of interaction with its fiction. There are differences, however, of degree and quality arising from the nature of the drama. In Ibsen’s realist theatre, for example, the text is a given, but the performance can be more or less “lively” or “gripping”, depending upon the rapport between the actors and the audience. In *commedia dell’arte* or *Karagöz*, by contrast, the script is a mere outline, and the show is based on improvisation, so that audience reaction is fundamental to the development and outcome of the performance. That is to say, in plays in which improvisation is scant or nonexistent, the audience is “passive”, while in those in which improvisation is essential, audience reaction forms an important counterpart to the development on the stage. *Commedia dell’arte* and *Karagöz* have been cited as exemplars of this latter genre (and it is interesting to note that in both the basic characters are always preoccupied with basic survival). But in terms of performance structure and style, there are notable differences between them, especially in respect to the personalities and roles of the characters. In *commedia dell’arte*, the stock types have fixed characteristics, and generally play set roles in different stories: e.g., Arlecchino and Pulcinella, the *zanni*, the comic servants, always performs that particular function. But in Turkish shadowplay, *Karagöz* has same personality, but he appears in many guises. Occasionally he has a trade: e.g., as a blacksmith in *Tahir and Zühre*. But usually he is unemployed and performs whatever work he is offered or can devise: grocer, majordomo, boatman, scribe, and so on. He will assume any potentially remunerative task, even if he lacks the requisite skills and knowledge. Still, despite his multiple roles, he is always the same basic character, as with Charlie Chaplin, who, in his silent films, finds himself in a variety of situations, but is always the tramp.

As seen above, Wayang also belongs to the latter genre. It has an outline, and improvisation is demanded of the dalang. However, as the rules are very strict for the class divisions, the Panakawa can only indulge in free improvisation when they are among themselves or with other servants or enemies, i.e., in the clown scenes.

As I explained in the theoretical introduction to the jester, many scholars dispute the idea that the clown functions solely as a “scape valve”. Especially in the case of the ritual clown, laughter is combined with a serious purpose, often symbolic, which is to re-enact and confirm a sacred tradition (Handelman 1981:322-324). The performance of *Karagöz* during the most religious of occasions leads one to suspect that, in earlier times, it also had some ritualistic function. This is purely conjectural, since the format and content of *Karagöz* as we know it from the Late Ottoman period hardly suggests a more complex or symbolic level of meaning; nevertheless, its association with cultic observances and rites of passage is intriguing.

In traditional forms of theatre, such as Shakespeare and Wayang, the clowns or jesters provide relief from the seriousness of the drama; they occupy a *tesseract*, a “fold” in time, that creates a marginal world, funny, irreverent, and reflexive of the dramatic norm. One could say, by contrast, that *Karagöz* is pure farce; the whole performance is a *tesseract* that provides respite from the seriousness of real life.

The following presents a summary of Jesters, Gods and Aliens in Turkish shadowplay.

Jesters: Karagöz and Others

In the traditional world of Turkish shadowplay, Karagöz is the star and chief Other. He is the natural and archetypal jester; that is to say, he is not devoid of intelligence or wit, but is impatient and impulsive. He is mainly driven by the struggle for survival, and is constantly scheming to attain his aim – generally

money or sex – as facilely and readily as possible. And he is prepared to invent any absurd story that promises to serve his purpose. His world is a distortion of reality, but things also happen causally, as in “normal” life. So it is not surprising that he is ultimately exposed. He is not especially popular among his fellows, and when trouble arises he is often blamed, being the habitual scapegoat. But he is not always the innocent victim; as he is often the actual cause of the imbroglio. In fact, most of the plots are motivated by him. His poverty and chronic state of unemployment induce him to accept any position, whether or not he possesses the requisite qualifications. Sometimes he is driven by sexual motives, and, since most of the women in *Karagöz* are of dubious cast, one might be inclined to credit him with reasonable chances of success. However, his fundamental dishonesty and constant recourse to precipitous and ill-conceived devices usually condemn him to frustration. – But if Karagöz is suspect to his neighbours in his quarter of shadowplay Istanbul, his qualities of cunning and deceit and his misadventures bring pleasure and catharsis to the audience. Perhaps there is an element of identification: He is a comical scoundrel who acts out in his fictitious world what many “respectable” citizens would like to do in reality. As such, he evinces the ambiguity of the Other: he scandalizes by crossing the limits of conventional morality, but his disregard of norms also constitutes his appeal. In Freudian terms one could say that he is pure Id; he lacks an Ego or Super-Ego to control his primitive emotions and drives. Taking the model of Jen according to Hsu, Karagöz’ personality is as if the deepest fields, the Freudian aspect of the unconscious and pre-conscious field is dominant (see page 19).

Karagöz himself may lack a Super-Ego, but there is an implicit moral to many of the tales. He rarely profits fully from his schemes, and usually confesses to them, if not found out first. He is ultimately good-hearted, which is probably an additional reason for the public’s partiality towards him. In addition, many of his victims are themselves stereotypes of suspicious (foreign) characters. So, despite the decline of shadowplay in Turkey, Karagöz remains a beloved figure – a symbol of his country’s popular culture. (Nevertheless, his position in the fictional world has changed somewhat, as discussed in the analysis of the *Marriage of Karagöz*.)

Karagöz is plainly the central character in the puppet genre named after him, but he never appears without Hacivat, whose importance should not be disparaged. The latter is Karagöz' stable alter ego, and is thus analogous to the elegant and self-assured white clown of the European circus, who is paired with the clumsy Auguste (Townsen 1976:206-216; Hugill 1980:8; Handelman 1981:333-334). The white clown is the most dignified of all the clown types; he is well dressed and never gets dirty like his cohorts. In the Prologue, Hacivat has the functional role of presenter; he introduces the performance by reciting the serious opening poems. As a character, however, he is also poor and struggles to survive, and is not above cunning and self-interest. His airs are in imitation of the class to which he would like to belong, but his erudition is sham. Karagöz, intuiting this, mocks him for his pretensions. Hacivat is an Other trying to present himself as a Self. He is a subjunctive character, behaving "as if" he were a cultured and fine-mannered patrician. His distinguished looks help him in the disguise, but his basic aims, as well as the methods he employs to realize them, betray his true origins and status. In the Dialogues, he is the butt of Karagöz' jokes and satire, and the recipient of his blows, whereby he also fulfils the role of a functional figure.

Shulman (1986:174) defines the pair of white clown and Auguste as polarized clowns; the former represents the stable norms within the fictitious circus world, whereas Auguste caricatures these norms with his capers⁴⁴. As clowns, they respectively "illustrate both a mockery of the norm and a mockery of the norm's mocker" (*ibid.*). This is reminiscent of Karagöz and Hacivat, the latter being "proper" and representing the status quo, while the former is an inveterate mocker. Hacivat is the defender of propriety; Karagöz is always ready to act in any way that suits him, generally at variance with the social norms. But, as mentioned above, his behaviour is not revolutionary, anti-establishment. He is more concerned with finding a simple short-cut to his goals than with breaking the rules of society (which, to be sure, usually comprise obstacles in his way) for its own sake.

⁴⁴ There is also a combination involving a third clown, the contre-auguste, who is hopelessly slow-witted (Hugill 1980:8).

Classical Indian Sanskrit drama (Shulman 1985:152-169) features the pair of Vidūsaka (the Brahmin clown) and *nāyaca*, the noble hero, often a king. The latter is the straight character who lives in an idealized reality, while Vidūsaka is the earthy character with a reflexive role. He restores the hero to reality. But being a foil to the *nāyaca*, his existence depends upon him. Vidūsaka thus has a specific function: he can be amusing, but is dispensable. Together with *nāyaca* they constitute an unity, but an uneven one. As the *nāyaca*, by contrast, can subsist without the clown.

One can see similarities between the Turkish pair of Karagöz and Hacivat and the Indian Vidūsaka and *nāyaca*. Hacivat, while hardly a hero or true noble, is also serious in nature, and thus forms a contrast to the constantly irreverent Karagöz. The role of the foil is reversed here, since it is Hacivat who generally suffers Karagöz' verbal and physical abuse, mostly in the Prologue and the Dialogue. Nevertheless, Hacivat is independent; he appears in various roles and functions in the Main Play. Without challenging Karagöz' centrality in Turkish shadowplay, I believe that Hacivat is undervalued. Depending on the plot, Karagöz and Hacivat can either be the best of friends or the worst of enemies. But they are rarely apart; they form a unity whose dynamic helps propel the action of the play, meaning that Hacivat is as essential to the genre as its namesake hero.

Gods in *Karagöz*

Except for the reference to Hak in the Prologue, deities do not appear as characters in the irreverent world of *Karagöz*, whose figures behave sinfully, in defiance of Islam's moral code. Nevertheless, the quarter's authority figures – Tuzsuz, Tiryaki, Fez, and Matiz – albeit loud and boastful, often act as *deus ex machina*, putting an end to quarrels and conflicts. Their intercession can be decisive to the outcome of events, but, rather than being altruistic, they generally harbour ulterior motives and act in their self-interest. Ostensibly Good Others, defenders of justice and morality, they are, in reality, Bad Others, drunken and corrupt.

The supernatural creatures – witches and jinn – are capable of casting spells, and interfere in human affairs. In fact, they are sometimes akin to humans. In

The Witches (Cazular), the mothers of both Çelebi and Zenne are witches who defend their children by afflicting their respective opponents with animal heads. They are not really gods, but Others with certain exceptional attributes: e.g., the ability to fly through the air and perform magic. They are not especially majestic or beautiful; on the contrary, their puppets are grotesque in appearance. They are certainly capable of changing the course of events, but hardly play the role of *deus ex machina*.

Jinn, deriving from pre-Islamic tradition, are spirits or demons endowed with supernatural powers. In ancient belief they are associated with the destructive forces of nature. In Islamic and Arab folk tradition (for example, in the *Thousand and One Nights*), they are similar to men in appearance, but are possessed of special abilities, especially that of changing size and shape, and are capable of both good and evil (Hughes 1977:133-138). In *Karagöz*, the witches and jinn merely act to scare and punish the humans who cross them, but they are also devious and, like everyone else, look after their own interests; in other words, they behave like most of the other characters in *Karagöz*. In *The Red Poplar*, the jinni is an evil creature who imprisons men; in the end, nevertheless, Karagöz outwits him.

Aliens in Karagöz

Most of the secondary characters in the fictional quarter of Istanbul are Others; they are Others within the domain of the Others comprising shadowplay. Each has his or her peculiarities. Some deserve special mention. Beberuhi, for example, is a deformed and stupid dwarf – a natural fool; he is one of the most colourful figures to appear in the Main Plays. Zenne, who represents all women, is an Other with a more important role. She often initiates the intrigue, especially when young and attractive, and is always negative – a Bad Other: a liar and a cheat, who uses her seductive sexuality to achieve her aims. In her capacity as wife of Karagöz or Hacivat, she is a constant nag. Zenne exemplifies the Alien within. She is generally cunning, but sometimes obtuse; e.g., in *The Trip to Yalova*, she believes all the absurd stories Karagöz invents. In *The Marriage of Karagöz*, she is a simple-minded bride.

The world of *Karagöz* abounds in aliens, both from within the Ottoman Empire and from abroad. They are stereotypes. The provincials can be deemed Others within; they are Turkish, but outlandish from the point of view of Istanbul's natives. The actual aliens (foreigners), the Others without, are clearly distinct from the locals. They are satirized neither more nor less than the provincials; the latter are more naïve, while the foreigners are usually more sophisticated and shrewd. Both types – foreign and provincial – are guided by self-interest, and are prepared to lie and cheat in order to obtain their ends. Thus the Bad Other seems to be ubiquitous in *Karagöz*. This is central to its comedy. Exaggeration and stereotyping render the characters universal. One should note, however, that “bad” here is not synonymous with “evil”; the characters are certainly immoral, but they are motivated by basic human drives, and their actions lead to absurd and laughable predicaments. The prevailing tone is one of bawdry – a quality *Karagöz* shares with *commedia dell'arte*.

VII

PING CHONG – SHADOWPLAY IN MULTIMEDIA THEATRE

Introduction

Ping Chong is a multimedia director who has been creating personal plays since 1972. In twentieth-century theatre, the use of various media (e.g., film, slides, puppetry, dance, etc.) within a single work is common, and Ping Chong is an exemplar of this approach; he employs whatever medium best fits a specific theme. Two aspects of his work make him particularly suitable for this thesis. First of all, he uses shadowplay extensively; and, secondly, the Other – the stranger, the Other society, the Other in oneself – is basic to his vision. He adopts the stance of an outsider looking in; his central character often assumes the role earlier defined as that of the jester as a functional figure. He is an established representative of modern theatre who elaborates themes we have already encountered in Java, Turkey, and elsewhere. The work of Ping Chong offers a contemporary view of the role of the Other in drama and shadowplay.

Although he has been producing new works for more than thirty years, I deemed it unnecessary for my purposes to follow his career to the present day (2004). Instead, this chapter will examine the Other in his oeuvre from 1972 to 1990; I have chosen to concentrate on this period because in it he employed shadowplay extensively, either for the entire play, for part of it, or in some technical variation.

Initially, by way of background, I will survey Ping Chong's singular multimedia theatre, looking into the diverse components and media he employs, as well as his themes and style. Next, I will consider his shadowplay pieces, where the Other appears according to the three categories I have defined: gods, jesters, and

aliens. For each category I have chosen a single illustrative piece, to be examined in detail. Finally, as supplementary examples of the Other, three further works will be discussed more summarily.

This chapter is based on attendance of several of Ping Chong's plays, the viewing of others in video, personal interviews with the director, participation in a stage-design workshop he gave in Amsterdam in 1992, and the perusal of reviews and articles concerning his performances, as well as theoretical literature.

Background and Oeuvre

Ping Chong's "shows" (his own nomenclature, 1992a) comprise careful compositions of an artistic mind, reflecting his mixed cultural heritage, as well as his experience in diverse media. Of Chinese descent, he was born in Canada, and raised in New York City's Chinatown. His parents were performers in the Chinese Opera – the theatrical style he knew in childhood. Ping Chong's professional education includes film and plastic arts. He was later introduced to dance by Meredith Monk, in whose company he performed for seven years. They have subsequently collaborated on a number of works. This background, together with the stimulating atmosphere of the late 1960s, so conducive to experimentation, induced Ping Chong to develop his personal approach to theatre.

Between 1972 and 1990, he produced his work either independently or in co-operation with other companies, in addition to Meredith Monk's. Initially his shows focused on a central figure. His first, *Lazarus*, premiered in New York (1972), already introduces the theme of the outsider – the alien of unknown origins. *I Flew to Fiji; You Went South* (1973, New York), in which Meredith Monk appeared together with Ping Chong on the stage, is concerned with metaphoric death and separation. The recurrent theme of the alien is treated with a disturbing combination of violence and delicacy in *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* (1975, New York). In 1977, *Humboldt's Current* was premiered in New York. It concerns an obsessive visionary's search for the "lost beast", which is also a search for man's own origins. Ping Chong considers *Nuit Blanche* (1981, New York) transitional in both thematic and

presentation idiom. Its leitmotiv, more universal than hitherto, is pursued across different historical contexts, proceeding from particular events to ontological issues. He also acknowledges this to be his technically most complicated piece. In the category of psychic case studies, paranoia in the present instance, is *Rainer and the Knife* (1981, Chicago). In *A.M./A.M.—The Articulated Man* (1982), the influence of Joseph Cornell's box constructions is pronounced in the staging. First presented in La MaMa E.T.C., New York, it was shown on tour extensively in the United States and abroad. Frustrated love is the subject of *Anna into Nightlight* (1982, New York). In the summer of 1983 (Seattle), Ping Chong directed *A Race. The Games*, produced in collaboration with Meredith Monk, was initially performed in Berlin in 1983. *Astonishment and the Twins* (1983) was premiered in Lexington, New York. *Nosferatu* (1985, New York), based on the film of that name by the German Expressionist director Murnau, is more theatrical in the usual sense, offering an interpretation of evil, pestilence, and social degeneration in America (i.e., New York City) of the 1980s. Also in 1985, Ping Chong produced *Angels of Swedenborg*, dealing with the split between the spiritual and analytical in modern life. Initially presented in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, it toured for several years in the United States and elsewhere. *Kind Ness* (1986, Boston) is about the growing-up vicissitudes of a group of friends, in which one of the characters is a silverback gorilla. *Without Law, Without Heaven* (1987) was premiered in Seattle. Over the ensuing three years Ping Chong produced three pieces annually. In 1988, *Maraya - Acts of Nature in Geological Time*, a metaphysical interpretation of civilization, premiered in Montclair, New Jersey; *Quartetto* (Rotterdam and Amsterdam); and *Snow* (Minneapolis), a rich weave of cultural and societal elements, alternating between history and myth. In 1989, *Skin A State of Being* (New York), a parable of civilization's evolution; *Noiresque - The Fallen Angel* (New York) a combination of Alice in Wonderland and a detective film noir of the 1930s; and *Brightness* (New York): "...a cabaret of sorts, at once prehistoric and postapocalyptic" (Jacobson 1990:68). In 1990, Ping Chong was invited to Holland to create a piece for Van Gogh's centenary. *Deshima*, the colourful and disturbing result, is concerned with the Japanese and the West, with the artist as the meeting-point. A co-production with the Mickery Workshop, it was premiered in

Utrecht. The remaining two works that year comprise *4AM America*, in collaboration with the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre; and *Elephant Memories*, about a fictitious conformist society under a dictatorial regime. One of Ping Chong's more verbal pieces, it was produced and first presented in the Yellow Spring Institute, Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, where he was in residence. – Ping Chong has also directed some shows for television in collaboration with Meredith Monk, among them *Paris* and *Turtle Dreams (Waltz)*. He has also devoted himself to art installations, exhibiting extensively.

Ping Chong's oeuvre from 1972 to 1990 can be divided into two phases. In spite of their differences, his singular style is recognizable in both. The first phase was more personal, its meaning more cryptic, and, so he claims, it was chiefly influenced by his background in plastic arts and sculpture. As such, it mostly appealed to the avant-garde public and artists. His collaborators were mostly people from the arts, but without professional training for stage in the traditional sense. One could call this phase the more experimental one.

In the second phase, in the mid-1980s, his work becomes more structured, while still not linear. His choice of themes is more universal and less personal, involving commentary on specific social groups (Yuppies, Japanese-Americans, etc.). Theatre, dance, and text become prime components, and he accordingly called these shows "movement play works" (1992). The performance is also more theatrical, in that acting assumes greater importance. Even though the verbal component is generally downplayed, the text is now germane to the elaboration of the piece. His company mostly consists of professional actors and mimes, which, considering the collaborative process, is conceivably a factor influencing the change in his style. Other notable characteristics of this phase (which also reflect better funding) are the use of complex technological devices and more intricate scenery and costumes, although the aesthetic spareness is retained.

Ping Chong avers that this change in the tenor of his work was accompanied by a change in his public. In the earlier phase, his spectators were similarly experimental; as his productions became more conservative, they began to attract a more traditional, theatre-oriented audience.

From 1990 until 2002, Ping Chong has pursued new directions, creating works on diverse topics. Nevertheless, the theme of the Outsider, the foreigner, has recurred in a number of them, e.g., *Undesirable Elements*, composed with material proffered by the participants, who originate in countries different from that of the performance. That is to say, they are existential Others. Initially, it was created and performed in various American states; later on, it was “re-created” in other countries, such as Holland and Japan, with local “foreigners”. It has been widely performed, intermittently, from 1992 until the present day (2004), with new participants being assembled according to the locale. Other plays in which the Other has a role include *Deshima*, which forms part of Ping Chong’s East/West Quartet, the other three plays being *Chinoiserie* (1994), *After Sorrow* (1997), and *Pojagi* (2000). These works stress verbal communication, while the visual element is simplified, barer, with more limited recourse to multimedia resources. In 1999, *Truth and Beauty* was produced in collaboration with Michael Rohd and Jeffery Wiseman. Recent works have used puppetry. The first, *Kwaidan*, which is based on the Japanese ghost stories by Lafcadio Hearn, opened in New York within the framework of the Henson Puppet Festival in 1997. In April, 2002, another puppet show was premiered – *Obon: Tales of Rain and Moonlight*. It, too, was based on Japanese ghost stories (by Lafcadio Hearn and Ugetsu Monogatari).

In the following, I will initially try to define the general characteristics of Ping Chong’s work, and then proceed to a study of its basic elements in greater detail, while concentrating, as mentioned above, on the plays created between 1972 and 1990.

Theatrical Approach

Ping Chong’s shows are generally non-narrative; they comprise a succession of scenes, independent units, lacking linearity or causal connection, but which are nonetheless integral to the total spectacle. Nor can their order be rearranged at random, for, appearances notwithstanding, there *is* an inner structure, as I hope to demonstrate. Ping Chong employs different arts, such as dance, mime,

and theatre, as well as different media. The stress is on visual, as opposed to verbal, language, and his use of props and lighting is carefully planned; space and sparseness are accentuated. His presentation, plain, direct, almost detached, was probably influenced by Chinese Opera. For the spectator, these isolated scenes certainly contribute to creating a mood, but not necessarily to dramatic clarity. Gradually, as the piece evolves, one achieves a better understanding of the overall situation, but its specifics often remain obscure. This contrasts with realistic theatre, in which the mysteries are ultimately clarified. Even in Ping Chong's later and more linear shows, much is unexplained. This irresolution is intrinsic to his style.

Ping Chong stated early in his career that his works are *bricolages*. This expression, borrowed from the writings of anthropologist C. Lévi-Strauss, indicates that the material he uses is unsystematically culled from whatever sources he encounters. His pieces constitute "a new world created out of any and all available materials from an old world."⁴⁵ One could contend that this haphazard medley of events replicates reality very closely, constituting Ping Chong's version of Rashomon.

Ping Chong, as stated, is a multimedia artist. He employs film, slide projections, shadowplay, and other devices, as well as varied performance techniques, such as theatre and dance. In spite of the multiplicity of the means and theatrical forms, the shows are integrated, that is, every element contributes to the general idea. In *Elephant Memories*, for example, body movement is emphasized, but lighting and sound are carefully modulated to create the artificial world in which technology uniformizes the inhabitants. There is, in fact, a marked stress on modern "high-tech", either as a means of presentation, as part of the instrumentation available to contemporary theatre, which, as an experimentalist, Ping Chong is quick to adopt; or, becoming the dominant theme, it demonstrates man's subjugation to his own inventions.

In spite of the almost stark, bare space, and the minimal props, one has the impression of a brimming stage. The explanation of this, I believe, is that

⁴⁵ Programme to *Humboldt's Current*.

Ping Chong's multimedia theatre is not simply visual, but *audio-visual*. Sound and music constantly occupy the space, together with abundant, often stylized body-movement, flooded by highly inventive lighting. All these elements, carefully coordinated and timed, and interspersed with intermittent action, give the spectator the feeling of a full and busy performance. In the darkness obtaining during the scene changes there is music or a taped voice, and even the occasional silent transitions echo with the just-completed action.

His theatre's not being realistic has allowed Ping Chong to introduce unusual conventions that make his pieces even more original. In *Rainer and the Knife*, the ticking of the clock indicates the passage of time. More often, however, he projects written captions of dates and events related to the theme of the play: e.g., the sequence of scientific inventions and discoveries occurring during the explorer's lifetime in *Humboldt's Current*; or the sequence of historical dates and events in Japan in *Deshima*. Sometimes the projections are purely visual, as in the more recent *Obon*, which show a chicken, next an egg, then a fried egg sunny-side-up.

The Theatrical Elements

There is a certain danger involved in isolating the elements of Ping Chong's works, for, taken out of context, they lose their impact entirely. To be understood, however, his pieces have to be meticulously studied, as they raise many questions. What makes them, for instance, simultaneously so absorbing and disturbing? What aspects of the performance are responsible for the impression of abundance, the set being minimal, the imagery economical, the accent on space and spareness? I have divided these elements into two classes, which can be broadly defined as Form and Content.

It is important to bear in mind that Ping Chong's shows represent a collaborative effort; he works with other professionals, from actors and musicians to experts in sound, text, set, costume, lighting, etc., who also contribute to structuring the piece. Ping Chong has stated that "I am not so much a creator as an editor" (as cited by Howard 1990:28). This, however, is only partially true. His works

incorporate so many media that is difficult to imagine him exercising total control over all of them – which also applies to most of the contemporary multimedia performance artists, such as Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson, and others. But whoever is involved in the process of building the work, the result, as reflected in the themes, the approach, the atmosphere, the humour, is recognizably and singularly Ping Chong's.

Form Elements

The Stage

Generally, the stage is modest in dimension, which is customary in experimental theatre. And, as Ping Chong's company is frequently on tour, it is easier to adapt to new spaces if the pieces are small-scale. The stage is conspicuous for its bareness. Ping Chong has stated that wide, empty spaces are necessary to allow for the movement and dances to expand, but I tend to believe there is also a compositional motive. Minimal sets do not clutter, and the director has remarked that his aesthetics is probably more Japanese than Chinese (1992a), i.e., in its spareness and careful arrangement of elements, rendering them more noticeable.

Ping Chong early acknowledged his indebtedness to Joseph Cornell, to whom he dedicated *I Flew to Fiji; You Went South* (1973). Cornell is an American surrealist who made collages and films, and is mostly known for his box constructions, often no larger than a shoe box. He takes two- or three-dimensional objects of various sizes out of their normal context, rearranging them in his boxes. His creations exhibit chance combinations and strange coincidences – elements also found in Ping Chong, who uses a box set, for example, in *AM/AM* (1982). The entire stage is enclosed, and entrances and exits proceed via the proscenium, to the left or the right. In addition, to cite Xerxes Mehta (1984:171), both artists operate “...in the

atmosphere of gentleness, wonder and muted melancholy...". The difference between them is that Ping Chong's works involve constant movement and change.

Set and Objects

Sets and objects range from the strange and enigmatic to the most ordinary. The unusual is striking by virtue of its singularity, but, as Jack Anderson (1980) has observed in a review of *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*, "emphasis upon ordinary objects makes one acutely aware of the sizes and shapes...". This awareness basically arises from the fact that, whereas the commonplace evokes immediate associations, one cannot anticipate the new meaning, function, and importance it will acquire in Ping Chong's world.

In the earlier works, the stage is often bare, and projections function as the set. In *Deshima*, for example, an Indonesian dance scene has projections of foliage on the back, evoking a tropical landscape. In later works, Ping Chong has spacious sets that define a specific environment: e.g., the corral with feathers, representing heaven, in *Angels of Swedenborg*; or the circular space with thin cables extending from the floor to the ceiling, suggesting a circus ring or prison in *Elephant Memories*. But, whatever the size or shape of the set, there is always a wide, empty space in the centre of the stage, where the actors execute their movements and dances.

Dance and Movement

Ping Chong, as already mentioned, was introduced to dance by Meredith Monk, and her influence is noticeable throughout his work. Dance is not used in the traditional sense, although some shows feature occasional "dance pieces", which, being intrinsic to the general theme, do not function merely as interludes, but have the same importance as any other scene. We might recognize the original dance style, but it acquires new meaning:

- In the opening of *Nosferatu*, two characters wearing identical costumes and masks perform a combination of dance and martial arts exercise, as if, in

actuality, they comprised one personage trying to subdue another aspect of himself, or a creature seeking to destroy another, comparable to himself, of the same class. The irony here is that the antagonists are angels.

- The traditional Indonesian dance in *Deshima* reminds us of the people's cultural heritage, in spite of the Dutch and Japanese occupations.
- In *Skin*, the sexy Latin American dance performed by a couple wearing frog masks conveys an image of primitive sensuality by means of a cultural cliché involving anthropomorphic animals (or bestialized humans?).

Dance influence generally assumes the form of stylized movement. Natural, everyday movement is rare; insofar as it appears, its familiar components are distorted. In the fictitious autocracy of *Elephant Memories*, the speed or flow is altered, resulting in jerky, fragmentary movements. These bizarre gestures contribute to the sense of estrangement characteristic of Ping Chong.

Music

Music is crucial to Ping Chong's work in creating the context and mood, as in film, but it "often commands more attention than the actors onstage" (Carroll 1983:73). It is sometimes composed especially for his plays, but occasionally well-known popular or religious music is deliberately employed in order to evoke familiar images and feelings: e.g., in *Deshima*, the Christian chants in the scene of the Japanese converts.

Language

Language is utilized in many ways in Ping Chong's work: multilingual dialogues, sequences of unrelated facts, answers preceding questions. The unusual context enhances one's awareness of the words; basically, however, Ping Chong wants "...the audience to understand the other side of the fence, what it feels like not to comprehend" (Banes 2001:236).

In the earlier pieces language is sparingly used, and, in contrast to naturalistic theatre, it is rarely continuous, but appears instead in isolated sentences or group of sentences without narrative sequence. These words or phrases, like the other elements, form part of the puzzle, adding to the scene without clarifying it. By the mid-1980s, the pieces become more verbal, with extensive dialogues and monologues, but generally preserving a non-naturalistic style. In *Elephant Memories*, for instance, which consists of isolated scenes and exhibits other Ping Chong hallmarks, the quick flow of words coincides with continuous choreographed movements. That is to say, the text acquires greater prominence, but does not become central, as in traditional theatre; it is still closely integrated with other elements.

The interpolation of foreign languages, as in *Rainer's Knife* (German) and *Deshima* (Japanese, Javanese, Dutch), and fictitious languages, as in *Skin – A State of Being* or *Angels of Swedenborg*, enhances the feeling of estrangement. A similar effect is achieved by the use of technological intermediaries. Sometimes, to be sure, a live voice is heard, but usually it is taped or unnaturally augmented by being spoken into a microphone.

Ping Chong justifies his use of foreign or strange languages in his pieces: "I want the audience to understand the other side of the fence, what is to feel not to comprehend. But then, sometimes you see a situation better when you don't understand the language, because you pay attention to everything else" (*ibid.*).

Film and Slide Projection

As a contemporary artist, Ping Chong makes ample use of modern technology. Words, phrases, and textual passages are often projected in slides, on film, or in digital readal signs. Usually, however, these projections are images of great diversity and arbitrariness. In many instances, the images become clearer as the piece evolves. Not always, however! Ping Chong's signs are not necessarily elucidated, and it is pointless searching for referents, for very often there are none. But one gets used to his obscurity, and does not leave his performances frustrated.

The projections appear in isolation or in combination with other media. In the first instance, they consist of texts with data, pictures or drawings, generally conveying specific information: e.g., historical facts in *Deshima*. In *Nosferatu*, a sequence of stills from Murnau's namesake film, showing the approach of the vampire ship, confers its tension upon the theatrical piece.

Sometimes the projections contribute an additional dimension: in *Angels of Swedenborg* slides of machine parts alongside those of a water-turtle (technology and nature) are projected above the setting of heaven and earth (spiritual and material).

Films are also employed for the purpose of evocation and analogy. In *Humboldt's Current*, there is a home movie of the main characters at a beach resort in their youth – a reminder of happier times. In *Lazarus*, there is a short 1950s film about an alien monster, eventually killed by artillery fire, suggesting the outsider's (i.e., Lazarus') loneliness.

Lighting

Lighting is another basic component, which Ping Chong modulates in order to produce the many diverse atmospheres peculiar to his art. It could even be said that in some cases the lighting is so important that it functions as a stage set. Even the absence of lighting – the blackout – serves as a transition between successive scenes. In addition, lighting is utilized to model the space so that ideas can be presented on more than one dimension:

- The repressive political regime in *Elephant Memories* is stressed by the dimly lit stage or the spare spotlights and large unlit areas.
- The soft lighting during the refined Javanese traditional dance in *Deshima*.
- In *Lazarus*, the main character's sitting alone with the stage in darkness except for a spot on him conveys his isolation.

Costumes

Costumes range from everyday to “period” to outrageous. In *Noiresque*, the actors wear black and white costumes matching the colours of the set and have comic hats. The central character in *Kind Ness* is a silverback gorilla, whereas the others wear everyday attire. In *Elephant Memories*, everyone wears the same striped uniforms, hinting simultaneously at clowns and prisoners.

Shadowplay

Ping Chong uses shadowplay traditionally, except that the shadows are cast by actors, not puppets – a technique that resembles the aforementioned shadowplay with humans in China or the theatre of human silhouettes in eighteenth-century Paris (Bordat and Boucrot 1956:67-74). During the performance, the dimensions of the figures can be changed. Close to the screen, the silhouettes are small and vivid; by moving away from it toward the light source in the rear, they become larger, but also more diffuse. An advantage of this mode is that conventional entrances and exits can be eliminated. Technically, however, the actors have to adhere to certain rules of movement inherent in the medium to be clearly seen:

- In order to show facial expression, the head has to be in profile, since frontally it will appear as a solid black mass.
- In executing movements and gestures of the arms, hands, fingers and legs, they have to be kept separate from the body and also from each other; otherwise, they will merge into a single form, and the clarity of the gesture will be lost.
- In order to be clearly discerned, the pace of movement needs to be slower than natural ones. There is therefore a change in the time element.
- Since actors perform the movements, the flow has to be more natural, as opposed to the more mechanical movement of the puppets.

Shadowplay with actors is used almost exclusively in *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*; it also occurs in certain sequences in other works, such as *Humboldt's Current* and *Snow*.

Sometimes Ping Chong combines shadowplay with normal theatre. Figures moving in a darkened area in front of the stage cast their shadows over the three-dimensional actors in the rear, which is illuminated. Generally, the silhouette is “outside” the stage space, in the forward zone. In *Deshima*, however, there is a most interesting inversion of this mode. The translucent backdrop is irradiated from behind, whereas the space just in front of it is dark, and the stage is alternately lit in horizontal strips. Seated in the centre is a personage lavishly attired in the costume of a sixteenth-century Japanese Shogun. Just behind him is a towering shadow-figure, a black-clad black actor, who moves out of his darkness and mingles in the illuminated space, while preserving the qualities of a silhouette. One has the impression that his two-dimensionality is also retained.

Content

Themes and Style

Ping Chong’s themes involve either individual case studies or historical events, variously set in allegorical or fictional societies from palaeolithic to futuristic times. Cultural disparity – as reflected in manners, norms, traditions, myths, beliefs – is also central to his work. Frequently there is a juxtaposition or parallel presentation of contrasting contexts: cultures, societies, historical events, even worlds (metaphorical versus the “real”). He does not engage in psychological analysis or political partisanship. Instead, his approach is sometimes autobiographical, sometimes ontological. Robert Sandla (1989:32) writes: “If there is a recurrent theme, it is the transient nature of existence, the smallness of human beings in the universe.”

He dissects, criticizes, and comments, often ironically, about men and their affairs by presenting *bricolages* of material he has selected and composed. The

works have a dark, eerie atmosphere, full of tension, the menace not visible, but immanent, as if things are not as they appear, but harbour hidden content. The fact that the signs are not always clear or comprehensible contributes to this feeling. Even the comical moments usually have wry black humour. One feels uneasy laughing.

To return to the inner logic of his work, the non-sequential presentation of the scenes reflects his background in film: generally there is a blackout between them, as if to establish a clear-cut division; further, each scene has its individual unity; and, finally, the scenes jump back and forth between different chronological, historical, or cultural settings. This effect is enhanced by the used of different media.

Nevertheless, this chopped-up quality in Ping Chong is not aleatory; it is simply his way of presenting his themes. As the collage of separate scenes evolves, the spectator begins to grasp the characters and situations. The sequence as presented is carefully calculated to lead us in a specific direction. The sudden jumps also serve to introduce other levels of perception. When, in *Nuit Blanche*, a prehistoric scene abruptly follows a small domestic tragedy, our first impression is one of astonishment, but its main effect is to produce detachment, estrangement; it heightens our awareness. That is to say, the scenes develop from the microscopic focus on a small historical event to one of universality, emphasizing human transience. Without being rhetorical or pretentious, and relying on visual communication, Ping Chong springs from the specific and personal to the catholic and philosophical.

In describing his own work, he has often used the metaphor of travelling to a foreign country. At first everything seems strange and unexpected, but gradually it becomes more familiar.

The Other in Ping Chong

The Other recurs constantly in Ping Chong's work. It appears in various forms – as specific characters, in terms of the individual's relation to society,

on an abstract ontological level: "...the theme of the Other is persistent in all my work. Culture, one culture and the Other, or your Other inside you" (1992a). Ping Chong often presents his works from an outsider's point of view, a figure intermediate between the scene and the audience, which creates a sense of alienation in the spectator.

His Other is darkly shaded; it represents not evil so much as a sombre vision of humanity and life, a recognition of mortality, which, in turn, forces one to recognize the illusory nature of reality, as the Buddhists see it, but without the belief in renewal in reincarnation. The attractive aspects of the Other are not totally absent; they generally appear in the form of ambivalence (attraction-rejection): e.g., the murderer in *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* is served tea by his future victim; the gorilla in *Kind Ness* is a funny-sad character who is mocked by children but considered attractive by women.

For purposes of analysis, I have divided the Other's dramatic role (theme and function) into three main categories, corresponding to those of this thesis:

The Other as Outsider – the Alien.

The Versatile Other – the Jester.

The Other Self – the God.

It should be noted, however, that the Other rarely appears in a single, clear-cut category; usually there is overlap. Nevertheless, such distinctions are useful, and I will try to explain and exemplify them in the following discussion.

The Other as Outsider – the Alien

The Other is a society misfit – an outcast, a foreigner, or a visionary. Generally the central figure, he is unusual in the given context in appearance and behaviour (as the Asian murderer in the occidental setting of *Fear and Loathing in*

Gotham, or as Lazarus, in the work of the same name, whose head is wrapped like a mummy's). These Others are characterized by their inability to conduct themselves according to accepted norms, which conduces to isolation, loneliness, detachment, and sometimes suffering in the knowledge of being an outsider. Their mien is considered bizarre, and their reaction, deriving from extreme frustration, is often aggressive and sometimes criminal.

In their capacity as individuals on the margin of society, the Others in this category possess attributes similar to those in a liminal state, as defined by Victor Turner (1965b:95), whereby "liminal" means "betwixt-and-between", "neither here not there", in limbo, on the threshold of society. In such circumstances, one is allowed, like Van Gennep's 'initiators', to behave in unruly ways (1960:114-115). Often new ideas arise from such occasions (Turner 1992:27). For Turner, however, limbo is generally a temporary condition (e.g., the initiation rites in primitive tribes, or Carnival revelry in Brazil). One could suggest that Ping Chong's Other is an individual in a permanent liminal state.

The outsider in Ping Chong is the alien in my thesis. His difference incites ambivalent feelings: fear, causing him to be rejected; and attraction, as someone exotic who arouses curiosity. The outsider is a threat to the status quo in that he is liable to alter the obtaining balance, positively or negatively. Ping Chong's work exemplifies both the intentional and existential outsider, following Hans Mayer's classification. Charles in *Humboldt's Current* is the intentional outsider, driven by a personal obsession which overrides any other life commitment. The foreigner in *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* is the existential outsider.

The Versatile Other – the Jester

The Other changes from being the central character to an instrumental one: a "wild poker", in the director's phrase, who can assume a variety of roles and

functions, or remains outside the context of the scenes. Generally he does not influence the action, but participates in it as a servant or intermediary in order to stress or explain it. Often he stands between the stage and the audience – as narrator, commentator, or simply observer. As a result, the spectators experience the show from a different perspective (cp. Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*).

This Other acts both to fulfil functional theatrical needs and as a spokesman for the director in order to influence the audience directly. T.F. van Laan's notion of the conventional and functional figure [see below, p.268] is the most suitable model for understanding Ping Chong's Other in theatrical convention.

The versatility of this character, in addition to his mobility within and without the shows, identifies him as the jester of this study. We find him in Ping Chong's *Deshima*.

The Other Self – the God

The Other is not an individual, but a character or characters, often metaphorical, belonging to an extramundane sphere – the underworld of *Nosferatu* or the heavenly realm in *Angels of Swedenborg* – parallel to that of the main scene, and representing different levels of reality, ordinarily hidden, menacing, and often infused with ontological meaning; they evoke man's primitive desires and actions, as well as his inexorable end. Its inhabitants have superhuman powers. The revelation of this hidden world exposes the true nature of our own; and, in this respect, it can sometimes signify man's innermost psyche. As such, the Other can be personified as a superior being (e.g., the figure of Death in *Snow*) with an ironic function who will not himself be affected by the course of events, but whose mere presence communicates the inevitable outcome to the audience.

The attributes of the Other Self are identical to those of God, and represent both idealized perfection and fearsome capabilities.

The primitive Other within us as delineated by Jung has been given a contemporary interpretation by S.L. Gilman, who explains the "good" and "bad" Other as projections of our internal images. His ideas, together with David Parkin's

anthropological approach to evil, provide the framework for the following discussion of the Other Self or the Bad Other.

In this category, I find *Nosferatu* the most significant Illustration of the Other Self. Although shadowplay has a very minor part in it, I have chosen to include its analysis for the sake of this theme in Ping Chong.

I will now proceed with the analysis of three shows – *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*, *Deshima*, and *Nosferatu* – in which the Other plays a prominent role. Each will be considered according to one of the three categories defined above. Three additional shows – *Lazarus*, *Humboldt's Current*, and *Rainer's Knife* – will be discussed more generally since they enhance our understanding of Ping Chong's Other as Alien.

The Other as Outsider – The Alien

A. Fear and Loathing in Gotham

Introduction

Most of Ping Chong's early creations concern a central character: the Other – an outsider of some sort, a pariah, foreigner, visionary, robot, often a psychological “case”. These pieces, however, are not “disturbed”, mainly because of their stylization and the use of different media to distance the viewer from the drama on the stage. This is not to imply that they do not arouse feelings. On the contrary, there is constant tension, as well as emotional involvement. But one remains looking in from without, as in the “fourth wall” situation in realistic theatre.

In this early phase, Ping Chong relates (1992a), his pieces were closer to the visual arts, such as sculpture and cinema, than to theatre proper. Instead of actors or other stage-trained professionals, his performers were “renegade downtown [i.e., New York City] types”.⁴⁶ The use of shadowplay is also derived from his passion for the movies; it is for him “a very primitive cinematic form” that allows for quick geographical change.

The reason for choosing *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* as the prime example of the Other as outsider is practical. There is no record in video or on useable film of the works illustrating this category, and, in order to study it, one has to rely mostly on written material, substantial in the present case. In addition, I have seen this play performed.

Fear and Loathing, first presented in 1975⁴⁷, is based on Fritz Lang's film, *M*, about a psychopathic child-murderer. In Ping Chong's version, utilizing three actors and a stage-hand, the main character is also a killer (originally played by the director himself). A foreigner, he agonizingly attempts to adapt to a strange

⁴⁶ I think he is referring to the social dropouts of Greenwich Village, Manhattan.

⁴⁷ *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* was restaged in 1980 with some changes. For example, according to Jack Anderson's review, the killer was clearly a psychopath, “...rigid and pasty-faced one minute, the next minute he was having a fit” (1980). In the 1975 version, the killer's behaviour was relatively “normal” – less extreme. My analysis is based on the earlier version.

society (America), but acts pathologically by slaying schoolgirls. Thus the work is simultaneously psychological and social; it shows the ordeal of an outsider in an incomprehensible culture⁴⁸ (Fig.18, p.236).

Ping Chong asserts that his theme concerning the position of the Other as outsider is central to him and very personal. However, in order to avoid creating autobiographical drama, he attached it to "...a melodrama like *M* to distance the fact that it had anything to do with me overtly. And yet it is probably the most autobiographical piece I've done " (1992a).

Synopsis of Play (1975 Version)

Staging

The *stage* is long and narrow with a low proscenium. It is level with the floor. The backdrop is a bare white cloth serving as the screen for the shadowplay. There is a red tassel hanging by an invisible thread down its middle.

Lighting: Two long fluorescent tubes illumine the entire length of the stage. They are sprayed with translucent yellow paint in order to reduce the glare. On either side of the proscenium is a set of three bulbs, blue on one side and red on the other; one of the

⁴⁸ The 1980 version was played by Rob List, a Caucasian, thus discarding the Asian outsider aspect of the original. But the "hero" remained an alien.



18. *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* (1975). The Little Girl serves tea to the Alien (the Killer).

bulbs in each set is continually blinking. The deliberately simplistic idea is to convey the cliché (as in cartoons) of gaudily flickering city lights. There is also a green shadelight over the detective's table.

Characters

Little girl

Killer

Detective

Text of Performance

Preamble:

One day Chief Raising Noon went hunting in the woods. Suddenly, he saw something in the distance. He called his people to come and see. It got closer and closer, it grew bigger and bigger. It was a ship. "C'est un bateau." On it stood a tall, strange man. His name was Christopher Gotham. (Ahoy, Land hoy)

"We come in peace. I want to buy Gotham. I bring you beautiful beads to trade."

Gotham Play Song:

We sailed & sailed for many a year
A new world for to find
And now at last our prayers come true
A home for me & you.

So on sail on – on sail on!

We come with hopes & dreams & tears
To build a better land
A land where everyman is free
To live like you & me

On sail on – on sail on!

And with our hands we'll plow & hoe
To grow & grow & grow
The seed of Gotham that we plant
Will blossom this I know.

So on sail on, boys, on sail on!

Prelude:

Recorded music from the "Kingdom of the Sun".

On stage right is the detective, sitting on a chair and reading a newspaper that covers his face. He is dressed in shirtsleeves, like a policeman of the 1940s or '50s. A suit jacket is slung over the back of the chair. Next to the chair is a small table with a plant, keys, cigarettes, and an ashtray. There is a manila folder on the floor next to the table.

On stage left the stage manager carries in a chair, a small table, a dish with a piece of bread on it, a knife, a fork, and a red cup. Except for the dish, knife, and fork, the objects are brought in one at a time.

The music finishes. Silence.

Scene 1:

The fluorescent tubes, the coloured bulbs, and the hanging lamp are lit.

The detective is still hidden behind the newspaper. The killer enters and seats himself before his meager meal. The detective, setting the paper aside, reveals himself. He gets up and exits stage left, returning with a watering can to sprinkle his plant. He finishes, removing the can. He returns and sits down again. He lifts the folder from the floor, taking out cards which he arranges on the table, as if looking for something. The killer, meanwhile, puts a bead in his mouth, sways, and lets it drop.

A phone rings but nobody answers.

The killer cuts the bread into small pieces. He puts one into his mouth, but withdraws it. He repeats the action. He takes the cup to drink, but retracts it before it touches his mouth. He collects the cup, dish, fork and knife, and exits.

The stage manager brings to the table, one at a time again, a basin, a pitcher, and a towel. He exits.

The killer re-enters. Rolling up his sleeves, he decants water and washes his hands. The phone rings, it stops, it rings again. Silence. The killer is meanwhile drying his hands. He exits.

The detective, frustrated at not finding what he wants, dons his jacket. He turns off the lamp. Concurrently, all the stage lights go out. A moment afterwards he switches the lamp on, picking up the keys, and turns it off again. Darkness.

A children's song is heard.

Scene 2:

Shadowplay with pale blue light.

In the middle of the stage is a large round table with a lace tablecloth and two chairs. The atmosphere is Victorian.

A little girl enters with a teapot and two teacups and puts them on the table. She exits, returning with the lid of the teapot. She puts sugar cubes in the tea, stirs it, and makes conversation with somebody imaginary.

The song finishes, but the sound of chirping birds continues throughout scene.

The girl exits again. The killer enters, seating himself on right side chair. The girl returns with a dish of cookies, offering them to her imaginary companion. Then she offers tea to the killer, who accepts. She offers him cookies; he accepts. She notices that she is short of cookies, and exits. The killer, glancing quickly to the sides, follows her, growing gradually larger and larger as a shadow. Blackout.

Scene 3:

Song.

A bouncing white mask slides ("dances") across the stage from right to left on an invisible wire about 1.5 metres above the floor.

Scene 4:

A child's voice offstage singing:

Good morning to you
 Good morning to you
 We're all in our places with sunshining faces
 Good morning to you
 Good morning to you

The stage manager brings in a chair, placing it in the centre of the stage. A little American flag enters from stage left on the invisible wire; it hovers over the chair.

The child's voice continues: "... to start a new day".

The girl, dressed in warm clothes and carrying a school bag, walks in. Standing in profile to the chair, she takes off her coat, sits down on the chair, and stares out to the audience. She stands up and names a number of countries emphatically, sitting down again.

A voice on tape says a list of words:

Night
 Night tide
 Lips
 Fluorescent
 Fandangle
 Redemption
 Bon Voyage
 Faces
 Death
 Oregano
 Foreign
 Hymn
 Constantinople
 Katmandu
 Waterfront
 Language

The little girl spells some of these or different words at random, and enumerates 2, 4, 6, 8, etc. The stage-manager brings in an easel with a blackboard, chalk and an eraser.

The mask slides in on the invisible wire and stops right in front of the seated girl. She gets up and says a few foreboding or simply informational words concerning what is to come. Blackout.

A flute issues shrill "crying" tones.

Scene 5 [missing from reconstruction]:

Scene 6:

The sound of a music-box being wound. Its melody.

Shadowplay with pink light. A little girl, dressed as a princess, with a crown and a wand, does ballet figures. As the music box is being rewound, the killer enters right side from audience, and stiffly assists her. He raises his hand to strike her, but stops. Both exit, the alien to the right, the girl to the left.

The light changes to yellow.

The flute cries shrilly.

A little girl, wearing a nightgown and holding a doll, enters stage right. She seems lost. She kneels down on the ground and cries. The killer, entering from stage left, leads her off. Blackout.

Flute cries again.

(Note – There was no available script for the subsequent scenes, so what follows is solely a reconstruction of the plot, without any staging details.)

- Projections of bleak urban streets (Manhattan?)
- Words said in a recording, as in Scene 4. But now it is the killer who tries to say them. He is unable, however, and emits only howls and strange sounds.
- The detective looks under a blanket, and finds the corpse of the dead girl.

- In shadowplay, the killer hangs himself. The detective enters, and discovers his dead body.

Discussion

This is a simple, stark piece. Minimalist and disjointed, it offers innuendoes rather than explicit action, rendering it more disturbing. Deborah Jowitt (1975) describes it as “bricolage”, i.e., “tinkering or puttering around”, in which the director chooses to advance an idea, “...and then tinker with it and pluck away large portions of it until he’s left with a series of vivid fragments that drop hints as to their original connections and trail mysterious evocations of each other.”

It is presented on a narrow stage with a large white screen (on which the silhouettes are cast) as a backdrop. The bareness of the setting suggests the outsider’s inner emptiness. Shadowplay is skilfully used in this otherwise visually simple work. Since it is so revealing, every movement can be stressed, effectively conveying the characters’ intentions, and allowing us, as it were, to peer into their privacy. When the little girl, for example, talks to an imaginary playmate, the audience apprehends her gentleness, gaiety, and naïveté. The most horrific scenes are conveyed in this medium. Ping Chong (1992a) says that shadowplay exposes the killer’s “destructive self”.

The narrative is almost linear, which is uncommon in Ping Chong, especially in his earlier works. Still, compared to conventional theatre, it is quite unusual. As mentioned above, there is a juxtaposition of scenes representing separate locations in the same area and at the same time. The work is mostly non-verbal; it is not the text that relates the story, but the images, music, sounds, props, and slides. For example, the projections of rundown streets probably imply how a displaced foreigner sees the city.

Although, in general, text is not central to Ping Chong’s works (in *Fear and Loathing* there is no dialogue), he believes that language is crucial in the social

context. Sally Banes (2001:236) cites him as follows: "You can't be passive about language; language is culture." The alien is frustrated by his verbal insufficiency; he cannot articulate the foreign words, which the girl, oblivious to difficulties, spells easily.

In this piece, movement is still natural (quotidian) and, therefore, readily recognizable to the audience. It is only later that Ping Chong evolves into stylized movement. The killer's clumsiness is contrasted with the little girl's grace. Her dancing – conventional ballet routines – resembles that of music-box ballerinas.

The murderer is not depicted one-dimensionally as a villain. He is deserving of our pity, being a loner, a pariah, unable to understand and adjust to the obtaining rules and norms. He is at the threshold of society, but unable to cross into it, as if in a permanent liminal state. He lacks an identity in this society, but his effacement cannot be equated with the neophyte's in initiation rites: both are *not yet* classified, but the latter formerly belonged to society; he is *no longer* classified; the killer, by contrast, is of foreign origin, and therefore had no previous position. So, the similarity between the killer and the neophyte lies in their potential status after returning from liminality; there remain, however, differences of nuance: the neophyte's transition is normally assured, while the killer's is desired but decidedly uncertain. The neophyte is an intentional outsider, the killer is an existential outsider.

The killer's polluting presence is not just potential, but *de facto*; he is a lawbreaker. But, as alleged by O'Flaherty (1988:3) and Raz (1992:iv), his very ambiguity is fascinating to society. As a stranger he possesses self-contradictory qualities: he is inadequate, repulsive, and disturbing; at the same time, he is intriguing. The detective pursues him because of his menace, while it is his otherness that renders him appealing to the little girl. The fact of being a foreigner, of not belonging to any conventional category of "similar" (and therefore safe) or "dangerous", of simply being so different from herself, inspires her curiosity, and

even confidence. The contrast and attraction of binary oppositions, as expounded by Turner, pervades the show and generates its tension: the small, fragile girl and the large, clumsy killer; adequacy and inadequacy; delicacy and brutality; trust and destructiveness. The insane murderer in *M* is unable to prevent himself from luring and killing his victim; in *Fear and Loathing*, however, frustration and loneliness arouse and nurture the impulse to destroy the pure and guileless creatures who have no notion of their own facility, and who represent the Other's ideal Other, as embodied in the victim: beauty, trust, gentleness, ease of speech and movement. The killer, implying unknown possibilities, has the subjunctive "if" qualities mentioned above. Unaware of the peril, the girl plays at tea-drinking (house) with him: a perfect partner in her "as if" fantasy world. For Deborah Jowitt (1975), the piece has "the slight awkwardness" of an elementary school play, but it "truly generates horror and pity." The combination of innocence and menace has a chilling effect. As the scenes unfold with the leisurely pace of a seemingly normal situation, one has the sense of a lurking danger liable to materialize at any moment. The tantalizing prospect of salvation presents itself in the form of a detective, who appears on stage together with the criminal. He can be construed as society's guardian, since he personifies its laws, and, as such, is a metaphor of the normative state. But one soon realizes that, existing on different planes, the detective and the criminal are insensible to one another, and their simultaneous appearance is merely an artifice devised by the director. The outcome is perhaps not inevitable, but, in fact, the murder occurs, and directly in front of us. The detective is as inefficient and clumsy as the killer he is chasing, and is always a step behind him. In the end, adding insult to injury, the "agent of the law", having failed to forestall the crime, is also unable to arrest its perpetrator before he commits suicide.

Conclusion

Fear and Loathing is one of Ping Chong's earlier assays at theatre, but, in its dynamic and structure, it is closer to the plastic arts and cinema. It is essentially audio-visual, and minimalist in its general approach. Its events are insinuated rather

than explicit, and sometimes incidents presumably occurring at places apart are presented on the stage concurrently. The fragmentation and apparently disconnected sequence of the scenes create a Brechtian framework that allows the spectator to better appreciate the minimalist aesthetics. Nevertheless, the theme of loneliness and frustration leading to murder and suicide unfolds gradually in an atmosphere of suspense, similar to that of a Hitchcock thriller.

The simplicity of the stage and the starkness of the set and action convey (tacitly, without being enunciated) the emptiness and impotence of the main character – the outsider. He exists on society's margin, and struggles to belong. His efforts notwithstanding, he is unable to behave in the requisite way, and remains in permanent limbo. Liminality in *Fear and Loathing* has the darkest possible aspect: isolation, non-belonging, death. Society is so unlike the killer's inner world as to be incomprehensible to him, and every bid at assimilation is foredoomed. A gentle little girl – his ideal Other – is his victim. She, in turn, is captivated by the clumsy foreigner – the Other's Other; his extrinsicality to her world arouses her sympathy and curiosity (the attraction of opposites?), and she confides herself unsuspectingly to his care. Realizing, however, that this subjunctive state is purely fanciful, whereas reality is pitiless, and his liminal condition inescapable, he is driven to destroy her.

In society, however, the killer also has a sort of counterpart in the detective, who is supposed to protect the civic frontiers against disorderly (liminal) influences. But he proves as clumsy and inefficient as the one he stalks; he can neither prevent the murder nor the outsider's ultimately desperate act of suicide. The two – society's legal defender and its ostracized disrupter – are mirror-images, but in different contexts and roles. Their concurrent, but mutually oblivious, presence on the stage implies not merely spatial separation, but one of consciousness. The play comments about the outsider's tragic situation in society, but it can also be seen as a metaphor for the Others within the Self. In Jungian fashion, Ping Chong asserts that the piece is not about different characters, but about different aspects (selves) of the same individual (1992a).

In this show, shadowplay proved to be the most suitable medium. Every gesture and movement is clearly conveyed on the stark screen. The directness

of the story and the medium form a perfect combination of form and content, creating the chilling atmosphere of a tragic thriller.

B. Other Shows

In this section I will examine three of Ping Chong's earlier pieces – *Humboldt's Current*, *Lazarus*, and *Rainer's Knife* – all concerning characters in some way “exceptional” to their respective societies. These outsiders will be appraised primarily within the framework of Victor Turner's concept of liminality, which seems to provide the most suitable approach to individuals alien to the community.

As support material there are several articles about these pieces. Unfortunately, however, there is no visual record, such as video, available to me, which severely limits the data. The closest approximate are the critical reviews of the performances, which, ipso facto, are personal, but also represent the public's reaction. Furthermore, although reviews are usually lacking in detail, they can furnish reliable information about a performance in its general contours, which suffices for the purposes of the present analysis.

a. *Humboldt's Current*

Introduction

Humboldt's Current is a cold Pacific stream running along the coast of South America. Its discoverer, Alexander Humboldt, was an early nineteenth-

century naturalist who, at the outset of the age of scientific exploration, journeyed up the Rivers Amazon and Orinoco, across the Andes, and into the jungle. According to Erika Munk (1977), he symbolizes the “will to know and master the outside world”, then esteemed as “courageous overreaching”, but today censured as “doomed and pernicious”.

The present Humboldt is named Charles, perhaps because the piece is not a biographical account, and the explorer here represents, besides himself, an era, and, as such, man’s foolish drives. Xerxes Mehta called *Humboldt’s Current* “a multi-media meditation on quests exterior and interior” (1984:167). More particularly, it concerns a person driven by an *idée fixe*: tracking the beast, i.e., primitive man, which Munk interprets as the beast within.

Typical Ping Chong, it consists of a series of independent scenes not causally connected. Time is not linear, but shifts back and forth, similar to “flashbacks” in the movies. The images, which overlap and blend (slide projections, for example, are combined with live actors), are often suggestive and allusive, rather than specific, and accordingly intimate wider meanings.

The following section presents some information about the stage, as well as the general outline of most of the scenes; it is largely derived from Mehta’s extensive discussion of the piece (1984:164-198).

Stage

The rectangular stage is bare, with three evenly spaced strips of cloth (“legs”) suspended on either side. The backdrop consists of a wall-to-wall scrim, where the shadowplay and slides are projected. In the extreme down left corner of the stage is a small, primitive shrine with the votive image of a white man – bearded, spectacled, and holding a book.

Synopsis of Performance

Opening scene:

A slide of elegantly arranged flowers fills the scrim. A young Victorian couple walks in before it and stands centre-stage, silently staring at the audience. They are Charles and Emma Humboldt; his is the face in the shrine.

Scene:

The stage is empty. The sound of chattering birds and crickets. On the scrim are colour projections of nineteenth-century museum specimens of stuffed animals: a seal, a mole, an Arctic fox, a turtle. Halfway through these projections, Humboldt's voice is heard:

"For 35 years I have searched for the beast.
From the jungles of the West to those of the East..."

At the end of the scene, the image of the beast appears on the scrim: small, furry, man-like, its hair deep red, wary, melancholic eyes.

Scene:

As the image of the beast is retained, a black-clad stagehand lays a strip of Mylar across the darkened stage. The sound of distant temple bells. The stagehand pulls a train of paper prayer-boats, each bearing a lit candle and separated from its successor by a sprig of purple flowers.

Scene:

The projection of typed messages. Examples:

"The Electric Bulb is Invented."
"Night Falls Over Kilimanjaro."

(Darwin, Daguerre, Henry Ford, and Freud, and their respective achievements are also cited.)

Scene:

A native couple is flailing grain. Humboldt approaches and gives the woman a set of tin measuring-spoons, saying:

“I have gained their trust. First exchange of trinkets.”

Scene:

Darkness. The sounds of a dog barking and a boat in water. A dockside set. The deck of a freighter: heat, flies, crates, cripples. Humboldt and his secretary, Foghetti, low on funds, impatient to be off, are financially assisted by the rich Signora Hanes:

“I hope you find what interests you.”

Scene:

The hoisting of “350 head of cattle...one by one, from jetty to hold...” The stagehand brings in three miniature cows (about half a metre high) of papier maché, setting them upstage. He later removes them.

Scene:

The sounds of speeding trains, throbbing drums, and Tibetan horns. Black-and-white engravings of romantic exploration are concurrently projected on the scrim:

- Blacks carrying whites through lush jungle.
- Blacks carrying luggage.
- Blacks clearing bush.
- Immense trees and tiny humans.
- A steamboat in a vast cavern of ice.
- Rhinos.
- Stampeding elephants.
- Swarming crocodiles.
- Horses in a fire.
- Tornadoes at sea.

Scene:

Emma Humboldt is alone at night in a village street, whispering to her absent husband, and shredding and knotting his clothes.

Scene:

Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber. The scene is in shadowplay. Reeds are glowing in the sunset. An aged Humboldt and Signora Hanes, supporting themselves on walking-sticks, totter towards each other (Fig.19, p.250):

She: "Will you find it?"

He: "This time I've got it."

She: "... how is your wife?"



19. *Humboldt's Current* (1977). The final meeting between quester and patron.

(Silence)
 “and Foghetti?”
 He: “Foghetti is dead.”

Signora Hanes writes out a check. Humboldt kisses her hand. Silence. They leave as they entered.

Scene:

A screen descends in front of the playing area. Bach’s *Bist du bei mir* is heard. A home movie⁴⁹ of young Humboldt and Emma at a seaside hotel: weathered arcades, gulls, the surf, shells. The couple stands, frolics, drinks wine. The final image is of their smiling faces.

Discussion

Typical of Ping Chong, this is a multimedia work, with live actors mixed with shadowplay, slide projections, props, and different scenes occurring simultaneously.

The main character in *Humboldt’s Current* is a visionary loner whose separation from society is gradual. Initially he was “normal”, according to the standards of his time. We see him and Emma, his wife, in a home movie, engaged in youthful frolics. But he becomes increasingly detached, travelling to distant, uncivilized lands in his scientific search for the “beast” – the human prototype. His mission takes total possession of him, and, in the process, he forsakes his former ways, as symbolized by his abandonment of Emma. Their once romantic relationship ebbs away, transforming a dedicated wife into a angry, bitter, lonely woman.

The murderer in *Fear and Loathing* is an outsider in the negative sense: unable to adapt to society, he becomes hopelessly frustrated, killing himself in the

⁴⁹ The film was made by Meredith Monk, to whom *Humboldt’s Current* is dedicated, and who sings the music.

end. But Humboldt, albeit frustrated, is not overcome. On the contrary, as the years elapse his purposefulness becomes ever more intense, as if he were closer to his goal. Like an addicted gambler, he is unable to desist; it is a blind and consuming obsession that makes him oblivious to anything else.

Humboldt exhibits several liminal characteristics, as defined by Turner. As in the above-discussed phenomenon of effacement, he becomes “invisible” to others – not, however, like the foreigner in *Fear and Loathing*, who, unable to cope with society’s demands, recognizes that his outsider status is unalterable. Humboldt is neither rejected nor excluded, but abides on the threshold by choice, by virtue of his own estrangement. The visionary has a basic liminal trait: he is able to “play” with elaborate ideas beyond the conventional norms, and, therefore, to devise new symbols and paradigms. He “lives beyond” his society; his aspirations are different; and thus he is also a permanent outsider for whom liminality is the normal state.

Humboldt’s alienation is also subjunctive and reflexive. Subjunctive for society, that is, which ascribes his visions to the “if” realm of fancy; he, to be sure, believes them to be real and therefore realizable, even though they exist (so far) solely on the level of idea. The reflexivity consists in the object being pursued; since the beast represents primitive man, Humboldt is essentially searching for explanations about himself. Perhaps his search is misguided; it shouldn’t be in the jungle, but rather within himself, which explains his constant failure.

His liminality can be adjudged positive to the extent that it inspires him to undertake a daunting task to which he is totally committed. But it is also a negative, polluting liminality, because it is an obsession that isolates him and destroys those closest to him: his wife, his assistant, and finally himself. *Humboldt’s Current* is ultimately about the self-destructiveness of man’s fanatical scientific determination to fathom the world.

The figure of Signora Hanes can be seen as a modern version of *deus ex machina*; it is she who enables Charles to carry on with his obsession. But her financial assistance is not the solution to the problem, but quite the opposite; it allows the continuity of Humboldt’s mad ontological search and self-destruction.

The votive shrine that remains throughout on stage and features Charles' face should not be overlooked. It is there for a reason, I believe. It serves as an ironic comment on the play. Charles, who was searching for early man, perhaps his ancestor, himself becomes the ancestral icon.

*

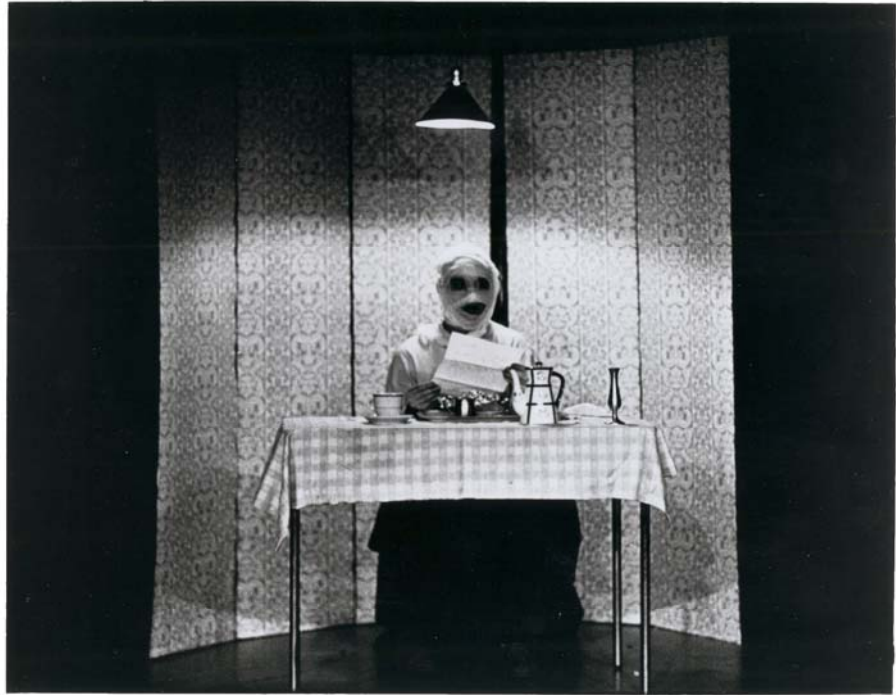
The following two pieces, *Lazarus* and *Rainer and the Knife*, do not employ shadowplay. I have included concise descriptions of them, however, because they illustrate the centrality of the theme of the Alien as Other in Ping Chong's work.

b. *Lazarus*

Introduction

Lazarus is a modern rendition of the New Testament account. The main character is called Tom, perhaps in order to distance him from his biblical prototype. In the original, Christ summons his friend, four days dead, from the tomb: "Lazarus, come out.' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth." (John 11:43-44). Lazarus/Tom returns from the dead to present-day New York. Erica Munk (1978) describes him as "an ordinary sloppy Soho type," except for his head, which is wrapped mummy-like, with the eyes and mouth exposed. Lazarus, having undergone experiences unknown to us, sees the world anew. Ordinary things are wondrous to him, and, in consequence, the audience also beholds them with different eyes. There is no narrative sequence; the scenes are not explicit, but rather allusive and suggestive (Fig.20, p.254).

There follows a synopsis of the play, then a discussion of Lazarus/Tom and the piece in general.



20. *Lazarus* (1972). Ordinary act made strange: Lazarus reads a letter.

Synopsis of Performance

The play opens with a recording of city-street noises. Slides are projected on a screen on the stage: first, Manhattan or Soho buildings; next, a series depicting the gradual ascent of a tenement staircase, interspersed with projections of deliberately simple drawings of several objects (a hand, a vase, feet in the process of climbing); finally, a man's dark figure fills the staircase and the frame. Blackout.

The scrim rises. Wallpapered partitions are arrayed on the stage, suggesting a room. A voice off-stage is heard:

“There is a room.
There is nothing in this room but a chair.”

A stagehand brings in, by turns, a chair, a table, a yellow-checked tablecloth, a coffee-pot, etc. Next an ashtray is announced, but a letter is brought in instead. And, without announcement, the stagehand re-enters with a tray containing a wrapped sandwich, a mustard jar, and a bunch of mums in a small silver vase.

Lazarus enters. He looks, as stated, like an “ordinary sloppy Soho type” (Munk 1978), but, except for his eyes and mouth, his face is entirely shrouded with a bandage. He extracts coins (change) from his pocket, and caresses (or counts) them on his open hand. Suddenly, as if struck by an idea, he walks to the table and fingers the tablecloth curiously, as if it were an unfamiliar object. He exits. Blackout.

The lights go on. Lazarus is facing the audience. He knocks on the “fourth wall”, and draws lines in space. Seating himself, he unwraps the sandwich. A voice off-stage announces that it consists of corned beef. Lazarus appears grateful for the information, and, as he eats it, “He seems delighted by the taste with an innocent joy” (Jacobs 1978).

A woman walks in slowly. Lazarus places a broken plate on the floor besides her. She promptly picks it up and proceeds to wipe it.

He walks to a manhole on one side of the stage and removes its lid. A bright light pours out. Blackout.

Lazarus and the woman look at each other. She trembles, and he puts a coat over her shoulder.

A screen is lowered. An edited version of the 1950s science-fiction movie, *20 Million Miles to Earth*, by Nathan Juran, is projected in pink. Accompanied by Fauré's *Pavane*, it is silent with titles ("It's alive!!!"). A rocket from space crashes into the ocean. Something like an egg is recovered. A miniature tailed monster hatches from it; it grows rapidly; it tangles with an elephant in the midst of Rome; it climbs the Coliseum; it is shot by artillery; it clutches the crumbling walls helplessly and dies.

Suitcases are placed on the stage. A curtain opens on the side, revealing a cardboard cut-out of Lazarus holding a valise. He is hoisted by a pulley skyward. An off-stage voice is heard:

"When you reach the door there will be a mirror."

Lights fade to bluish and an orange bulb blinks. Dried leaves are strewn across the stage and blow around. A column of smoke rises and the light shines again out of the manhole.

In one of the performances (Smith 1978) an intercom voice is heard, saying:

"*Lazarus* will be performed again the following Tuesday"

Discussion

Lazarus returns from the dead; he is an "undead" from another world. He stops off in Manhattan, where, one surmises, he lived previously. We get glimpses of his past through the letters from two women he receives and which are read aloud in part. In spite of his background, he no longer belongs to our sphere; he is an alien. He looks strange and behaves strangely. Common, everyday things (pocket change, a corned-beef sandwich, a yellow checked tablecloth) seem foreign

to him. By the way he scrutinizes, touches, and tastes them, he reveals his amazement. Or is he perhaps reviving remote experiences? This presentation of the familiar in an unusual context results in a sense of abnormality and dislocation. Jack Anderson (1978) mentions that Ping Chong's emphasis on the ordinary makes one acutely aware of the size and shapes of the things around us. He refers, however, only to the visual elements; I would add that the same applies to other basic senses, such as touch and taste.

Lazarus' presence is disturbing. Upon seeing him, the woman trembles. He is different, an outsider. Like Humboldt, he was once a member of society and led a "normal" life, having, for instance, relationships with women. But Humboldt, impelled by his visionary goals, detaches himself and leads a liminal existence. Lazarus likewise no longer belongs to society or abides by its norms. But the process responsible for his estrangement, his experience of death, is unknown to us. We can only state that he is now an Other. Perhaps Ping Chong intends Lazarus, coming from a different realm of existence, to represent another level of consciousness. In any event, he makes no effort to adapt; he is inherently liminal. Not only he is strange to society, but society is strange to him. His climbing the stairs suggests his emergence from below (Purgatory? Hell?). And, following his sojourn on earth, he ascends into the sky (Heaven?) in the form of a two-dimensional cardboard cut-out holding a valise (with his worldly possessions?).

In an interesting Brechtian gesture, Lazarus knocks on the "fourth wall" and draws lines on it. He is in an enclosed space. Ping Chong is typically reminding us that the action on the stage is fictional. Because of its lack of specific events, J. Anderson (1978) suggests that the domain to which Lazarus returned "...was the world of memory, resurrected from forgetfulness." And E. Jacobs feels that the images are familiar from dreams (?).

Lazarus contains a play-within-the-play, or rather a film-within-the-play. It similarly concerns an alien, in the form of a monster. Elizabeth Burns (1972:) discusses the dramatic device of the play-within-the-play. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was employed in three ways:

1. As an instrument directly affecting the action (*The Spanish Tragedy*).

2. As a means of bringing a special sort of pressure on the characters (*Hamlet*).
3. In preparing or arousing the audience for certain kinds of events (*Antonio and Mellida* by Marston).

By the nineteenth century, the play-within-the-play was less common; its artificiality, it was believed, rendered it unsuitable for realistic theatre. But, adapted to special purposes, it was still utilized occasionally. In Shaw's *Fanny's First Play* it serves as a satirical device to convey the author's criticism of prejudice. In modern and contemporary theatre, the convention is applied more broadly. Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* creates "...a performance within a performance, instead of just a play within a play" (*ibid.*:47). Brecht uses the play-within-the-play more traditionally in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, presenting a fictional moral dilemma analogous to the actual one.

Concerning *Lazarus*, perhaps it can be said that Ping Chong employs the film-within-the-play in order to arouse a more immediate emotional response. Several of the reviewers have noted that the monster elicits more compassion than the alien of the title. Compared to the fragmented style of the play, the film is naturalistic, and the viewer can identify with its protagonist more easily. Its vagueness notwithstanding, the piece induces a melancholic feeling of loneliness and separation.

It should be stressed that the reflexive function of theatre is doubly evinced in *Lazarus*: first of all, the theme of the alien itself reflects on the nature of society; secondly, the film presents a variant of the central theme, and, as such, one can see the monster as Lazarus' alter ego, the Other's Other.

c. *Rainer and the Knife*

Introduction

Rainer and the Knife, created by Ping Chong in collaboration with Rob List, is essentially visual, with constantly recurring movement and geometric motifs. It concerns Eric Newman/Rainer, “the archetypal innocent-scapegoat” (Carroll 1983:73), who represents the “epitome of the naïf and innocent untouched by civilization and evil” (*ibid.*:77). It has a linear storyline, and the feeling of foreboding is present throughout. As the conclusion is inevitable, J.L. Conklin (1981) calls it a parable.

The synopsis of the play will be followed by a discussion.

Synopsis of Performance

The play begins in darkness with the rhythmic sound of a heartbeat. Next, infrared aerial photographs of land masses, interspersed with slides of map grids, are projected on two translucent screens hanging from the ceiling. Music. Two performers enter and stand behind the screens, which conceal their bodies from waist up; the audience, however, can see the red and blue penlights they manipulate, drawing patterns in space. They stop abruptly.

In the second scene, Eric Newman/Rainer and Marianna Buchwald appear far off at the back of the stage. They speak in German. They are mother and son, and she instructs him by drawing geometric patterns, similar to those of the opening scene, with her hands in the air. Whenever Rainer repeats a figure successfully, there is recognition and praise. The woman hands her son a knife: his reward and birthright. Rainer exits and returns without it; he has lost it. He wanders through the world in search of it. The passing of time is suggested by the regular ticking of a clock.

The boy encounters a regimented society graphically rendered. Its members are in a line-up, exchanging positions mechanically, like “a conveyor belt going nowhere” (Carroll 1983:77). They are dressed in black, and their expressionless faces are heavily made-up and shining with vaseline. They look odd: one wears a

blouse backwards, another has a spatula around her neck, yet another has chandelier earrings.

There are projections of flash-cards with signs: "High Voltage", "Final Notice", "Live Wire". Rainer is outside the action, observing it.

This country is dominated by a dictator, who is standing on a pedestal. When he makes a gesture, a clique of followers sigh. As he descends from the pedestal, the valet stabs him and gives the knife to Rainer, assuring him that this is the knife he is searching for. Rainer is arrested, interrogated, and bound like a mummy.

A door swings open; blazing lights issue from within. Rainer's wrapped corpse is dragged in by a wire. Everyone exits.

Discussion

Rainer does not fit neatly into the category of the Outsider according to our definition. In the context of this parable-like play, his role is essentially archetypal; he is not so much an individual as a functional character.

Nevertheless, despite this reservation, Rainer *is* an Outsider, a naive who stumbles into a strange milieu to whose norms he is oblivious. He has one aim only: to recover the knife (i.e., his birthright) he lost. He is altogether lacking in both judgement and malice, believing whatever he is told, and thus facilitating the valet's criminal design. Rainer readily accepts the assertion that the assassin's knife is his, and takes it without suspecting the implications of his act.

As in Humboldt's case, Rainer's lack of awareness and social detachment essentially result from an *idée fixe*. But the former initially belonged to society, while the *ingénu* Rainer is inherently an alien, even, it appears, without Lazarus' curiosity. Rainer can be considered an Outsider in perpetual liminality.

There is a predominance of visual elements in *Rainer and the Knife*, such as the geometric patterns drawn in space by the performers in the opening scene and by the mother in instructing her son. It is through movement patterns that language is taught, roles assigned, and character developed.

The feeling of alienation is conveyed by several unusual devices: the remote stage positioning in which Rainer and his mother initially appear; their conversing in a foreign language (German); and the odd looks and stylized movements of the members of the dictatorial state.

As with Humboldt, Rainer is determined to find a lost object. Both are uniquely driven by this obsession. Rainer's alienation has a reflexive function, in that it makes us aware of the totalitarian society. Finally, Rainer is a victim of his own alienation; his *naïveté*, or otherness, make him a perfect scapegoat.

Conclusion

Ping Chong's early works – *Humboldt's Current*, *Lazarus*, *Rainer and the Knife*, and *Fear and Loathing in Gotham* – all have as both main character and theme an Other who is alien to mainstream society, whether modelled on a real (New York City) or a fictitious one.

The audience, adopting the outsider's perspective, is given a critical-satirical view of the status quo, e.g., the slides of desolate city streets in *Lazarus*, or the regimented order that Rainer encounters. A Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* occurs variously in Ping Chong's oeuvre.

These Others subsist on the threshold of society, betwixt and between, in limbo, whether by choice (Humboldt and Lazarus), involuntarily (the killer in *Gotham*), or out of total ignorance and innocence (Rainer). As a result of their impotence or refusal to live by the obtaining rules, they have no social classification; they are strangers and pariahs. In their individualism and opposition to accepted norms, they constitute a menace to society. By the same token, however, they (especially Humboldt and Lazarus) also represent different possibilities of thinking and being, an "if" world, forbidden, but also fascinating. Thus the outsider has an ambiguous status combining repulsion and attraction.

The Other as an outsider subsists in the liminal state defined by Turner, that is, lacking in social identity, in suspension, going his own way, obeying his inner drives rather than the social norms. And since he does not belong, he is

allowed to be different, to do the normally unacceptable. Thus his position is foreign, ambiguous, reflexive, and subjunctive. For Turner this liminal state is temporary – a transitional phase between crisis and some sort of resolution; or a preparatory phase – as in initiation rites, in which a neophyte becomes a man. But Ping Chong’s outsiders can be described as existing in a permanent state of liminality, whether by choice, birth, or destiny. There is no re-entering society. Humboldt is driven from it by his *idée fixe*; Rainer cannot perceive it for the same reason; Lazarus comes for a brief sojourn only; and the killer is unable to belong. In all of them there is a sense of irresolution, i.e., the impossibility of resolution. Perhaps that is why, the grace and wit of Ping Chong’s pieces notwithstanding, they always leave one in a melancholic mood.

His choice of shadowplay is intriguing and disturbing. A medium of finesse and tenuosity is employed to convey the most tragic situations. In *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*, the light and easy style of the presentation is belied by the drama’s unbearable tension and horror. In *Humboldt’s Current*, too, the shadowplay scenes are notable for the visual clarity and delicacy with which brutal reality is portrayed. This refinement of dread suggests black humour bordering on the perverse.

The Versatile Other – The Jester

Deshima

Introduction

In 1990, Ping Chong was invited by the Mickery Workshop in Holland to create a production in commemoration of Van Gogh’s centennial.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *Deshima* was redone in 1992 and adapted to the proscenium stage in La MaMa E.T.C.

Instead, however, in view of the influence of Japanese art on the painter, as well as the recent purchase of his “Sunflowers” by some Japanese businessmen, he suggested a treatment of the East-West relationship, with Van Gogh as intermediary. The result was *Deshima*, alluding to the artificial island constructed in the sixteenth century off the coast of Nagasaki, where the western merchants and their crews were isolated.

Deshima is a show in Ping Chong’s characteristic style. It consists of a sequence of multimedia scenes, each devoted to a sub-theme, and not causally connected; it is, however, exceptional in its chronological framework, extending from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The theme is economico-historical, but not specifically political in purport, showing how the wheel of fate revolves, dominant peoples becoming subjugated, recovering, and repeating the same process over again. According to Dragan Klaić (1990:83), it concerns “the encounter of East and West and the intrinsic misunderstandings and collision of cultures”. This East-West confrontation-interaction appears in such episodes as: the xenophobic reception by the sixteenth-century Japanese official of his Dutch counterpart; the martyrdom of the Japanese Catholics in the seventeenth century; the jitterbug being danced by Japanese-Americans; the Dutch occupation of Indonesia; the brutal Japanese occupation of Java; the internment of the Japanese and their descendants in America during World War II; and Van Gogh’s dream-version/vision of an idealized Japanese landscape somewhere in Europe. The piece is multilingual, enhancing the international atmosphere. The cast is also multiracial.

This discussion is based on the viewing of *Deshima* in video, magazine articles, and comments by Ping Chong. The video, edited for this medium, features close-ups and angle-views, as opposed to the frontality customary in the documentation of plays (so that one sees the presentation approximately as the viewers in a theatre). Hence, some of the scenes are not in full perspective. There are also cuts from action to action. As a consequence, my comments may be incomplete.

The theatre for which the play was created had very special features. The audience occupied an auditorium of about 60 seats which could be moved back and forth between two stages. The first, to the right, was box-shaped, with rice-paper *shoji* screens on the ceiling, the lateral walls, and backstage. To the left was the second stage with a three-dimensional representation of Van Gogh's paintings in the final (Anvers-sur-Oise) phase. (Fig.24 , p.283)

Most of the scenes were performed on the first stage. The *shoji* screens in the back served a variety of purposes: the projection of slides, films, or videos, which supplied additional information; creating a suitable atmosphere; and, according to Ping Chong (1992a), facilitating "a change in geography extremely quickly", by dispensing with the usual time and labour required by set and scenery switches. This stage also had two conveyor belts in the floor, from side to side of the stage, allowing sets and actors to slide in and out of the scene.

The costumes, lighting, and music are colourful and attractive. The unfolding of the events is unexpected and absorbing. The pace is varied but always continuous. When there is a sudden change of mood from one scene to the next, it proceeds without intervals or breaks, but with careful juxtaposition, allowing a smoother transition. In one instance, the tragi-comic speech of the martyred Catholic priest is transformed in the following scene into the frenetic radio announcer's presenting an animated jitterbug; in the transition the spirituality conveyed by church bells is set off against the beats of the 1940s dance.

The choreography of the movements and dances is precise and generally succinct. The technical elements, as well as the actors' movements, gestures, and words, contribute in informing us about the aims and motivations behind the events. Much of the historical data is conveyed in texts projected on the screen and also in digital readal sign form.

Music and sounds are extensively employed. They serve to set the emotional tone, sometimes becoming the dominant element. The music ranges widely: traditional and popular Japanese and Javanese, medieval Christian chants, the jitterbug of the 1940s, and contemporary rock. In general, sounds have an atmospheric function: the chimes in the ancient Japanese scenes evoke a distant and

delicate world; church bells in those of the converted Christians indicate clerical dominance; water and jungle noises in the background of the Indonesian scenes suggest a quiet life close to nature.

The lighting is creative and extensively used in producing a variety of effects that contribute to the mood of the scenes. For example, during the serene Indonesian classic dance, it is generally a soft and warm pink; in the tragic monologue of the young Javanese, the stage is entirely in darkness, except for a bright spot focusing on the speaker and enhancing the tension on his account. Often there are projections from behind the backstage, suggesting different sceneries.

Shadowplay is frequently and innovatively employed. For example, the characters are sometimes *in front* of the illuminated screen, contrary to their usual positioning behind it, as I have previously described. Since, however, the general impression is the same, I consider it shadowplay in the accepted sense. The innovation is that the shadow figure shifts into the “three dimensional” plane and returns to “shadowhood” whenever the scene calls for it.⁵¹

⁵¹ The 1992 New York production was basically identical to the 1990 Dutch, with some changes due to the differing stage. The *shoji* screens from the first stage of the original production were reused, but, in the final scene, instead of the rendition of Van Gogh’s painting, a large backdrop with a drawing of the sun was hung backstage. The conveyor belt was substituted by stage hands dressed in black, who carried the sets in and out. The actors were all replaced, except for Michael Matthews, who again played “Black Man in Black” (BMB). In the New York reworking, however, BMB becomes more expansive in his speech tone and body movements, which are now more natural than the restrained, stylized manner of the Dutch production. This was also my general impression of the interpretation of all the actors in the New York version, which was decidedly more explicit than before. There were additions in the projected texts rendering the information more precise, perhaps in order to aid the American audience, less familiar with the historical events concerned. Occasionally, when a

The Other in *Deshima*

Deshima is perhaps Ping Chong's ultimate play about the Other. The title itself, as mentioned, refers to the artificial island constructed off the coast of Nagasaki for the westerners, rendering them accessible to the Japanese, but minimizing "defiling" contact. Amid the themes of the various scenes, the Other is a constant; the extreme example being that of the Indonesians, who become the Other in their own country during its successive occupations by the Dutch and the Japanese.

Of all the Ping Chong productions I have had occasion to view, this best exemplifies his use of the conventional and functional figure, i.e., his mobility throughout the piece and singularity of function and appearance makes him identical – in a contemporary version – to the jester figure of my study. Accordingly, I have chosen *Deshima* for the examination of this type. I will consider the theatrical functions and roles assumed by the figure I call "Black Man in Black" (BMB) on the basis of his physical appearance and dress.

A written description is limited in its ability to convey the acting quality and tone of a live performance. Nevertheless it is important to note that, in spite of the seriousness of *Deshima's* theme, the atmosphere is often farcical: exaggerated gravity is contrasted with extreme naïveté in certain scenes or with the mocking attitude displayed by BMB.

As a preliminary, I will present a theoretical discussion of convention in contemporary theatre, explaining the concepts upon which I base this study.

Convention in Contemporary Theatre

Convention is "mutual understanding" (Burns 1972:28), or "agreement between the audience and those producing or performing the play"

foreign-language phrase was spoken, an English translation followed.

(Roberts 1971:117), or, in another definition, “agreement between writers and readers” (Bradbrook 1969:4). Ultimately, according to Rozik (1992:1), it is “a tacit social agreement”.

Theatre is a social institution in a continuous process of change and renewal. Theatrical conventions are similarly influenced by shifting cultural trends, ideas, and technological developments. New conventions are created, old ones discarded, and hitherto forgotten ones retrieved and adapted to current thespian practices. Since the late nineteenth century, audacious experimentation in drama, as well as the general proliferation of performance activity, have increased the pace of mutation. Theatrical conventions have evolved in diverse directions, producing a number of sub-groups: certain directors have even nurtured particular audiences responsive to and understanding of their works. But the main change, as Martin Esslin states (1987:147), applies to the invention of new conventions.

“The persistent drive and desire to break new original ground which is so characteristic in modern Western culture also leads to a *constant change* [my italics] in the convention of dramatic performance.”

New conventions can appear in virtually every performance. As a consequence, there is a receptive attitude in the play-going public: unfamiliarity with the theatrical conventions is not a handicap, but practically the norm. This approach corresponds to P. Arnett’s scheme (1976:6): he has termed one of his two categories of drama the “theatre of convention” (more suitably “unconventional theatre”), as opposed to the “theatre of illusion”. In the “theatre of convention” the keynote is imagination, while direct imitation of life is disdained. There is more creative freedom in this form of theatre, which, Arnett believes, allows the message to be delivered faster and more clearly. However, it makes greater demands on the spectator, who can no longer remain purely passive; he has to meet the spectacle halfway.

The factor that enables the spectator to comprehend a play is *competence*, i.e., “familiarity with the mores, implicit assumptions and language of

the fictional world he is being exposed to" (Esslin 1987:141), so that he can "*decode* if not all at least a sufficient minimum of the signs and sign systems deployed within the performance" (*ibid.*:138). Thus, he must know at least the basic conventions of the theatrical medium. In addition, Esslin believes that an intelligent spectator, even if he is unfamiliar with the background and dramatic conventions, will be able to intuit the "ground rules" in the course of the performance. Such an ability, I would contend, belongs even to today's average spectator, conditioned, as he is, to the constant innovations characteristic of modern times.

According to V.M. Roberts (1971:117-118), the speech and actions of the actors on stage stimulate the imagination of the spectators, who automatically translate the dramatic pretense into the realities they suggest. There is a psychological substitution. The transmutation of fictitious into real action is a process the spectator has consented to, because theatre is a world of pretense that subsists by conventions.

Ping Chong's multimedia and highly personal oeuvre is exemplary of today's approach to theatre in that he introduces various novel forms of dramatic conventions. Being aware of the public's difficulty in understanding his work, he has, as stated, compared the experience of seeing his shows to travelling to a foreign country – what initially seems strange and unexpected becomes increasingly familiar by degrees.

In this study, I am concerned with those conventions governing the interrelation between actors and spectators which Burns (1972:31) called "rhetorical conventions", while Elam (1980:90) preferred the expression "presentational conventions", and which include the direct address conventions, such as presentation, soliloquy, and chorus, employed in explicit theatrical styles.

In the theatrical context of explicit style, Van Laan (1970:10) notes that there are two categories of characters: individualized characters and functional figures. The latter are minor characters, "frequently unnamed and unidentifiable but highly informative spokesmen who hover on the periphery of the main action in Elizabethan drama, and, more recently, the *raisonneurs* of Pirandello (...) and the narrator of Brecht" (*ibid.*). As to the individualized character, in spite of participating

actively in the action, his revelations, being essentially dramatic, only concern himself; they are decidedly secondary in respect to the other characters and the situations in which they are involved.

The functional figure is barely involved in the action, if at all. Generally, he is thinly developed, and the spectators are not interested in him, but react instead to what he says about the other characters and events, because he mostly presents expository statements. Being basically a source of information, the spectator tends to accept his facts as reliable, as well as the attitude and interpretations that accompany them. The dramatist can, by this means, present himself to the public almost directly. Rozik (1992:12) states that since the functional figures fulfil the playwright's need in carrying or delivering his own ideas, they can be seen as "personifications of the author's ironic side".

In order to understand the context of BMB in *Deshima*, a synopsis of the play will be presented. For the purpose of analysis, I have divided it into nine scenes, including two interludes comprising monologues. Each successive scene occurs in a different place and period, as indicated by such hints as costume, language, music, and style of movement. I have assigned a title to each scene in order to emphasize its general theme. The Opening and Scene 1, which illustrate the various staging elements Ping Chong employs in his approach, will be described in greater detail. In addition, BMB's two soliloquies will be transcribed in their totality, being crucial to my theme. Finally, Scene 9 (the conclusion), which juxtaposes East and West, will also be described in detail.

Opening

[Note. All stage directions are from the point of view of the audience.]

Darkness.

The sound of running water.

The stage is dimly lit. Behind the shoji screen and emanating from the floor is soft pink light; it becomes gradually bluish from the middle to the ceiling. The area upstage, in front of the screen, is in darkness throughout the Opening and Scene 1.

Backstage right, a round wooden bathtub, illumined by a spot-light. Sitting inside, an Asian girl, washing herself with a sponge, and humming a Japanese tune. Her bare back is turned to the audience, and she rubs herself slowly and carefully on her arms and body.

On the video screen appears:

IN THE NAME
OF GOD
AND OF PROFIT

Abruptly, as if alarmed, the girl in the bathtub, turns her head and upper torso towards the audience, while holding the rim of the bathtub with her hands, and exclaims (dismayed tone) in Japanese: "Oti-san, Oti-san..."⁵²

The sound of running water is succeeded by that of chimes.

The girl repeats the phrase twice.

Gradually there is a transition to the first scene.

Scene 1

The middle and downstage are softly but clearly lit.

From upstage left, BMB enters, walking in profile. Owing to the darkness and lighting from behind the screen, he appears in silhouette. Throughout this scene he remains upstage, never crossing beyond middle stage, and hence appearing mostly as a shadow. He stops in centre upstage and executes some arm and hand gestures, which, meaningless and unnatural, look stylized. He exits upstage right.

⁵² "Grandfather, Grandfather..."

From the emergence of BMB until just before the characters start talking, the following text appears in electronic readal dial:

"In 1598 five ships: LOVE, HOPE, FAITH, TRUST, and ANNUNCIATION left the Netherlands to trade in spices with the official destination as the East Indies. The actual destination was China and the 'silverland' Japan."

The bathtub and girl are slowly slid out towards the right on the upstage conveyor belt. Simultaneously, a Japanese official in a sixteenth-century costume crosses stage down from left to right, walking slowly on the conveyor belt.

The lighting behind the shoji screen gradually becomes entirely soft blue, and remains so throughout the remainder of the scene.

As the official exits downstage right, BMB crosses the upstage from right to left in a rapid walk. He returns from the left side, walking towards the centre. He stops, turning frontally towards the audience. Executing wide lateral arm movements, he holds a large piece of paper with both hands in front of his chest. Simultaneously, the Japanese official slides in upstage from the right, his back to the audience, and his head turning left in profile. He walks towards the downstage centre and stops to the right side of BMB in a forward position. He is holding a fan. The official now turns to face the audience, and crossing and uncrossing his arms while assuming the "horse-riding" stance, *kiba-dachi* (Funakoshi 1990:19), or, in classical ballet terminology, second position, demi-plié (legs opened wide sideways, knees bent).

Projected on the lower right side of the shoji screen is the enlarged photo of a Japanese-American girl from the 1930s or '40s. It will remain in the background throughout the remainder of the scene.

The Japanese official is sitting on a pillow, profile to the audience; he is facing, on the left, an appropriately attired Dutch official on his knees. (In the video, we do not see the Dutch official's entrance. One can assume that he entered after the two other figures.) The Dutch official bows to the Japanese official (Fig.21,

p.272). The sound of chimes stops. The Japanese official addresses his Dutch counterpart imperiously and condescendingly:

"What are you doing here barbarian?"

"Which finger do you pick your nose with?"

BMB says in a commanding voice:

"Stand up!"

The Dutch official complies.

BMB says to him:

"Dance!"

The Japanese official asks:

"Why do you hide your private parts while bathing?"

The sound of water running.

BMB, with a finger pointing gesture, commands the Dutch official to kneel, which he promptly does, and further instructs him:

"Write your name!"

BMB hands the piece of paper he is holding to the Dutch official, who takes it and writes on floor with a ballpoint-pen. While he is writing, BMB ways in a neutral, unemotional voice:

"Time passes".

Japanese flute music.

The Dutch official hands the ballpoint-pen to the Japanese official, who takes it and studies it with wonder. He presses it a few times and smiles in satisfaction. The Dutch official, encouraged by the other's reaction, starts laughing, gradually louder and with wider body movements. The Japanese official laughs with him, but in a somewhat more contained manner. After a while, he suddenly becomes serious. The Dutch official also stops laughing. BMB says to the Dutch official with a commanding voice:

"You may leave!"

The Dutch official gets up and leaves.

The flute music stops.

The Japanese official turns his head towards the audience and says:

"We must corner in those barbarians.
We shall build them an island off the coast of Nagasaki."

BMB asks:

"What shall the island look like?"

The sound of bells.

The Japanese official opens his fan.



21. *Deshima* (1990). Dutch official, Black Man in Black (BMB), and Japanese official.

The sound of aeolian chimes.

The Japanese official says:

"It shall be called *Deshima!*"⁵³

He then stands up and says:

"They are not nearly as troublesome as the
Americans will be two hundred years from now."

He starts walking towards stage right, then stops and says:

"Very soon, I must do something about *that!*"

With the last word, he points his fan towards stage left. BMB
simultaneously turns his head in the same direction.

A word is projected on video:

"Meanwhile"

The sound of chimes turns into church bells and the chant in Latin of
Christian religious music, introducing Scene 2.

Scene 2 – Portuguese Priests and Converted Japanese

⁵³ The island of Deshima was shaped like an opened fan.

BMB recounts the Portuguese pillage and destruction of the great ports and villages: "The trade routes became blood routes." He explains how the priests followed the conquerors, setting up their churches and missions.

The Catholic priests have a successful mission in Japan. But the Shogun orders the converts to renounce Christianity or be executed. A few thousand converts are "martyred", together with the priests. And we learn that:

"From 1641 to 1853
Japan closed its doors to the West."

BMB wanders among the characters, almost like an invisible presence or someone from another sphere, but accepted by them. Besides being narrator, he asks questions, as if assuming the function of chorus.

Scene 3 – Bomb A and Jitterbug

America in the 1930s–'40s. BMB is the rhapsodic radio disc-jockey of an animated jitterbug (Fig.22, p.276). He introduces the dancers and relates their future plans: "He would like to be a dentist like his father. – She would like to have her own coffeehouse. – He is going to be a farmer." Interspersed with the commentary and fast-paced dancing in an atmosphere of volatile euphoria are film projections of A-Bomb explosions, a traditional geisha, and Deshima's groundplan,⁵⁴ as if to reveal other levels of reality and their implications: tradition is associated with xenophobia and utter destruction. At the end of the radio programme, the disc-jockey reminds the listeners of their sponsor, "Chock-Full-O'Nuts" ("The java

⁵⁴ It is probable that the intertwining of scenes occurs only in the video version. On the actual stage, the dancing and projections are simultaneous. The reason for this difference is that the taping of a video requires comparatively bright frontal light, which impairs the visibility of the films and slides projected behind the *shoji* screen.

without the Jive”) and urges them to buy US War Bonds. The scene is amusing and disturbing at the same time.

The lights are extinguished, and we are transported to Indonesia.



22. *Deshima* (1990). Jitterbug.

Scene 4 – The Dutch in Indonesia (Fig.23, p.278)

"In the name of Profit and of God"

While three dancers execute a traditional Indonesian dance, a Dutch and Indonesian official meet and discuss business. BMB, acting as attendant, stands between the two officials. When everyone else leaves, he comes forward with his first monologue as Van Gogh:

Hi! In 1853 I was born.
 I had a rather normal Dutch childhood.
 My father was a minister, so I wanted to be a minister.
 But time passed, things changed.
 I began painting, or, rather, painting began me.
 You know, people say: "If you are a painter you either are a fool or a rich man.
 So, I went looking for a little pocket of utopia.
 A place where grand spectacles of nature could be viewed and cherished.
 A place both complex in simplicity, simple and spectacular.
 A place not unlike...Japan. Japan.
 I invited Gauguin and Bernard and those other blokes out down to Arles, to see my
 Japan.
 But only Paul came.
 I mean..., Paul is a nice guy, but he is just a little...I don't know, Tahitian.
 I had a nice time there, though.
 Arles will be the Japan of the future. Mark my word!
 An occidental Paris. Paradise. Cornfields, crows, cypress trees. A train moving
 across
 the high-rise.
 I fear the future.
 I keep having this recurring nightmare.
 All my soul turns black and externalized.
 Well, so long as there are nights like these. Who cares?
 Music please.

Scene 5 – Official Dutch Ball

In the year of Van Gogh's birth, 1853, Japan was also opened to the West by the US naval forces under Commodore Matthew Perry.

In 1870, a ball was given by the Dutch authorities in the East Indies in honour of the King. The guests were the representatives of the Western nations



23. *Deshima* (1990). Javanese dancers and Black Man in Black (BMB).

occupying Asia. BMB is the majordomo, introducing each arrival. He has direct communication with the audience, talking to today's spectators, very much in the Brechtian mode.

In a sort of interlude, a scene of seduction commences. After brief foreplay, however, the gentleman exits, leaving the lady alone. We then hear BMB's voice reciting a text in which the loved one is extolled above a variety of cherished material possessions:

"I love you more than the gold in Siam.
More than the precious jade and jewels of Japan..."

Scene 6 – Java 1941

BMB is a member of a multilingual *chorus* consisting of three men. Initially a pair (excluding BMB), the two others assume the respective characters of the "Javanese" (occupied) and the "Japanese" (occupier). They describe the excited reception the Javanese accorded the Japanese as their liberators from the Dutch. But soon they discover that their new "allies" are no less cruel as occupiers. BMB leaves the stage, and the Javanese delivers a soliloquy, relating the tragic events involving his family during the Japanese occupation. The text projections inform us of Japanese actions outside their country from 1895 until Pearl Harbor and World War II: strife and occupation, victories and humiliations.

"This is not a people intended to erect factories:
Why do they not ennoble their handicrafts?"

"In the founding moment of the League of Nations,
Japan's request for a simple declaration of racial equality was
rejected."

"Japanese pilots wouldn't have a chance against ours,
because all Japanese share poor eyesight."

Scene 7 – Japanese Camps

USA, 1942. BMB is the narrator. The Japanese internment camps are opened, and the Japanese "aliens" and "non-aliens" suffer humiliating treatment.

The suspicions concerning their lack of loyalty were never substantiated. There were no equivalent camps for Italian-Americans or German-Americans.

During this narration the Japanese-Americans are standing in line, facing the audience, receiving personal tags. In the back there are slides of Japanese-Americans and further textual information is provided by the electronic readal dial.

BMB in the voice of an American official (*character*) reads out the roll of names of those Japanese-Americans who are to be transferred to internment camps. He concludes by wishing everyone “a nice day”. All leave the stage.

Downstage right, a Japanese-American girl recounts, in a monologue, the visit of an opportunistic American art dealer who seeks to buy her mother’s set of antique porcelain at a bargain. The mother, tears running down her cheeks, proceeds to smash each piece.

Scene 8 – Bomb B

Backscreen projection:

“In the Name of Profit”

While the Japanese Americans are packing and departing, there are interspersed scenes of A-Bomb explosions.⁵⁵

BMB delivers a monologue-dialogue (playing a dual role) and again impersonating Van Gogh:

Ohaio Gozaimas.

Funny. Your idea of fun is not my idea of funny.

Your idea of fun seems like no fun to me.

Funny. We have so much in common. Income, for example.

On my way home, one night, three men mugged me and left me dying in the street.

This doesn't happen in Tokyo.

⁵⁵ Same as note 69. In the show, the actors are on the stage with simultaneous projections on the backdrop.

What do you want me to say? The world is a mess?
 Is in my kiss? Let's be realistic for a minute.
 The American Express Gold Card is the most discreet and effective sign of
 recognition worldwide.
 My problems are not your problems, and your problems do not interest me in the
 least. However, what I am interested in is how your problems also become mine.
 Everybody just have to make up their minds.
 Is money money or isn't money money?
 That is what makes everybody so crazy crazy.
 Once upon a time nobody managed to be useful. And now, everything is useful.
 The war is not over between our two countries.
 You just can't say "no" and we just love saying (throwing a kiss) "yes".
 But this is a positive difference. A unifying difference.
 Know your enemy! Know yourself! We are moving closer to understanding the
 trivialities that link our two great nations.
 Ushering in banality in a big budget sort of way.
 You are a great customer of mine. You know the meaning of a good "yes". Not to
 mention a good "yen".
 Sayonara.
 Sayonara? Every time you say "Sayonara" I think of Marlon Brando. I fear your
 double-talk is beginning to sound like triple-talk. And I was just getting used to
 your double-talk.
 Look! I wanna show you something big and black. Black being your favourite
 colour. (He lowers his arms to open coat button and takes out a postcard from
 inside pocket). You purchased this painting for 75 million dollars. Yes, 75 million
 dollars. But I've sold 175 million exemplars of this postcard for one dollar and 50
 cents each. Yes, one dollar and 50 cents each. Stamps not included. So, let's be
 realistic! Are we talking about diversity? Are we talking about the fact that your
 country is more homogeneous than mine?
 Why should you pontificate to us? Yes, we have to address our own mistakes, but
 then, we have so many. You know, I may not be alive when this happens. But
 there's going to be one hell of a train wreck. And your trains run faster than mine.
 I can agree with your concept of the fat, the happy, the dumb American. Several of
 them have gone on a new improved diet. I myself have toned down a few.
 You say we have too many blacks. We have too many Hispanics. We have too
 many lazy workers. Well, so what? You must remember this. Money is color
 blind. And that's what makes our country great.
 So, let's put our differences on the back burner and get down to brass tacks.
 Two!
 Two?
 That's what I said: "two"!
 Hum, three!
 Three? What do you take me for?
 O.K. Two and a half.
 Two and a half? Two and a half. Two and a half. (Pause). Two and a half. Well, on
 paper I could agree on that. In public I will deny we ever had this conversation.

So, that means we've got a deal. Photographers!
 (The sound of waves and seagulls)
 It is time to go.
 Dear Theo. With a handshaking goodbye. It's time to go. It is time to go home.
 Music please!

Scene 9 – Van Gogh's Painting (Fig.24, p.283)

BMB, as Van Gogh (?), emerges from the passage connecting the two stages. He is wearing an old peasant hat, and carrying a seed bag slung across his chest. He walks onto the second stage, whose set is a three-dimensional, life-size rendition of *Crows in the Cornfield* (broad strokes and strong hues of yellow, blue, and orange). It depicts a field with a bright sun in centre backstage. BMB proceeds to stage left, and stops for a moment with his back to the audience. The image is typically Van Gogh (Illustration 24, p. 316). Three young girls in school uniforms and bearing books cross the stage chatting in both Dutch and Japanese. The European “peasant” (BMB), sowing seeds, crosses to stage right and exits. Two characters dressed as Japanese peasants with large straw hats enter from left downstage. They are stooped, and carry a bundle of dry branches on their backs. The scene resembles a well-known painting by Hiroshige (1797-1858). A small train passes on the horizon, and the peasants wave to it. Several youths appear in the middle of the set, and move slowly forward. Meanwhile, “Van Gogh” (BMB) re-enters, followed by a stage-hand carrying a few effigies of crows; he instructs the stage-hand on where to place them and exits. The music is Japanese pop. The youth are now standing in the centre on a horizontal line executing movements with their arms. BMB, still as “Van Gogh”, re-enters backstage and stops in the centre. Blackout.

In the dark, one hears a female voice reciting her love for a long list of nationalities: “We love you, Italians. We love you, Brazilians. We love you, Tibetans...etc.”.



24. *Deshima* (1990). Van Gogh's Painting.

Analysis of Black Man in Black (BMB)

The object of this study, whom I have dubbed “Black Man in Black” (BMB), was described by Ping Chong as “a wild poker” (a joker), meaning a versatile figure who assumes many characters and functions. He appears in all the scenes and delivers two of the three monologues. He is usually in the unlit areas of the stage, and, as the shoji screens are illuminated from behind, we often see him in silhouette. Only in performing his duties does he move partially or totally under the lights, so that we can see him three-dimensionally. His body movements are sparse and controlled. His walk is like a mute gliding in the shadows. In moving and delivering his monologues, he executes various arm and hand gestures in silence, which, in the latter instance, dramatize the speech. These gestures are not identifiable as “natural language” movement, i.e., their meaning is not recognizable as belonging to an everyday setting. They are signs without signified. They cannot be related to outside criteria, but are peculiar to BMB; once we become familiar with such gestures, their further elaboration seems completely plausible. Since the other characters move “naturally”, it could be said that BMB’s unusual repertoire of gestures serves to characterize him as a figure outside the main context.

Apart from the final scene, BMB is invariably dressed in a modern black suit, evidently with a neutral or “no signification” connotation. This is reminiscent of the convention in the traditional Japanese puppet theatre of Bunraku, where the manipulators of the puppets wear black to signify “invisibility”. In BMB’s case, one can say that the quality of “versatility” is added, since he wears the same outfit whether “in” or “out” of character, in contrast to the others, who, according to role and context, assume the occidental or oriental costumes appropriate to the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, as the setting demands. BMB is thus atemporal, almost always present, if sometimes unseen by the other actors. He can be likened to a contemporary of ours passing through the scenes in a time-machine. Sometimes he participates in the action, talking with the other characters or becoming part of their milieu, but always as an Other, an outsider on the margins of the action, like the

radio disc-jockey or the majordomo. The unclassified status of BMB in society is comparable to the novice of van Gennep in the initiation rituals during his separation phase – the liminal state in Turner’s version.

Except in the character of “Van Gogh” himself, there is no clear definition of BMB’s personality. Data about him is conveyed by his looks and varying capacities, but never in depth. He is an anonymous, functional figure, such as those described by Van Laan, who does not arouse the spectator’s curiosity to know more about him. In addition, he appears, disappears, and reappears in quite different functions.

In spite of BMB’s chameleon-like role in *Deshima*, his function is ultimately specific. Ping Chong employs him, not only to convey historical and other information, but also to direct the audience towards the interpretation of the scenes that he, the director, aims to impart. Often BMB exhibits the traditional jester’s ironic humour; he amuses us by his exaggeration or satirical remarks.

Although BMB is rarely the central figure in the various scenes of *Deshima*, he is undoubtedly the most intriguing. He is interwoven into the fabric of the play, while his mobility allows the audience to experience it on a different level. He thus contributes to a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*⁵⁶ by forcing the spectator to view and judge the drama from outside.

⁵⁶ Apropos Brecht, it should be observed that, owing to the precipitate pace of the scenes of *Deshima* and its multimedia format, the detachment BMB produces is momentary, rather than ongoing. The diminished efficacy of the *Verfremdungseffekt* can also be ascribed to the nature of contemporary theatre, which has developed an audience quite different from that of Brecht’s time. Present-day performances often do not follow any standard theatrical structure, and represent the director’s individual vision, with personal conventions being a common result. As a consequence, today’s receptive audience is usually ready to accommodate to new conventions, without being disturbed in their theatrical experience. As such the *Verfremdungseffekt* no longer induces the radical detachment that Brecht intended when he produced his plays.

Scene-by-Scene Analysis of BMB in *Deshima*

Opening

We are introduced to BMB, who already exhibits his singular features: his hand movements and distinctive black suit, incongruous with the period.

Scene 1 – Deshima

BMB is present throughout the scene, standing between the two characters and functioning as *assistant* to the Japanese official:

- He stresses what the Japanese official says, echoing his phrases.
- He gives commands to the Dutch official: “Stand up!”, “Write your name!”
- He verbalizes what the Japanese official expresses in gestures: “You may go!”
- In the middle of the scene, BMB is also *narrator*: “Time passes.” (Japanese flute music follows.)
- After the Dutch official leaves, the Japanese official reveals his future plans, and BMB serves as *confidant*. Not merely a passive one, however. He also asks questions, eliciting informative replies, and thus, functionally, he acts as *chorus*.

Scene 2 – Portuguese Priests and Converted Japanese

As *narrator* (but not a completely neutral one), BMB recounts the bloody Portuguese pillage and destruction of the great ports and villages.

The converted Japanese are forming a line upstage in almost total darkness; light is supplied by the candles in their hands. The Portuguese priest is downstage right. BMB enters upstage left, behind the converted Japanese, and passes through them as if he were intangible or nonexistent. He does not disturb the scene’s

continuity. Although the spectators notice him immediately, he remains an outsider, as all the others on stage are standing still.

BMB walks forward and stands behind the Portuguese priest, asking questions (like a *chorus*) in order to obtain information. The priest, as if stepping out of history, informs us about his personal fate. BMB is not neutral. The tone of his voice, as well as the substance of his questions, have a touch of sarcasm; he acts as an accusing and mocking alter ego.

In this scene, BMB is purely a functional figure, invisible within the action; as narrator and chorus, he sets the emotional and critical tone.

Scene 3 – Bomb A and Jitterbug

The lights are extinguished, and we are transferred to Indonesia.

In the character of disc-jockey, BMB functions as *presenter* and *narrator* at the same time. In spite of the fact that he plays a character who leads the scene and the action, we have no information about his personality beyond what can be inferred from his actual behaviour and appearance.

Scene 4 – The Dutch in Indonesia

While three dancers execute a traditional Indonesian dance, a Dutch and Indonesian official meet and discuss business. BMB, acting as a silent *attendant* (servant), stands between them. He takes their teacups and bows respectfully to the Indonesian official. While standing in the back, he again executes his characteristic set of hand and arm movements.

When all other characters leave the stage, BMB comes forward and, personifying Van Gogh, delivers a *monologue*, citing the date of his birth (1853), and discussing his origins, his artistic tendencies, the Japanese influence on his aesthetics and technique, and his painter friends to whom he wants to show his “Japanese” landscape (in France).

His speech is accentuated by the now-familiar hand gestures and some new ones. From the outset, he addresses the audience (“Hi!”) in direct

exposition, except for an interval of madness, in which his speech becomes, in Rozik's terminology (1992:18), a soliloquy-to-self.

"Van Gogh", returning to the audience, asks for music (which introduces the next scene) like a master-of-ceremonies.

As a silent attendant, BMB's function is minor, similar to that of a stage-hand, but his servile attitude (serving and bowing respectfully to his master) contributes to the patrician atmosphere.

When alone on the stage, BMB assumes the character of Van Gogh, and delivers a monologue that is informative and interpretive at the same time. The information is interspersed with personal observations. There is a moment in which Van Gogh addresses himself – a soliloquy-to-self.

At the end of his monologue, BMB acts as a master-of-ceremonies, introducing the next scene.

Scene 5 – Official Dutch Ball

BMB is the *majordomo*, introducing each arrival. Standing under the proscenium, between the stage and the audience, he has direct communication with the latter, very much in the Brechtian sense, complimenting imaginary characters and "conversing" with others, likewise imaginary.

Scene 6 – Java 1941

In this scene there is an unusual development of theatrical conventions: the chorus of three men is transformed into a "dialogue" between two characters, not exactly individualized, but rather generic, since they represent categories, the Japanese people and the Javanese people respectively. Finally, the Javanese becomes an individualized character and delivers a dramatic monologue of personal and historico-social significance. BMB is present here only as a member of the original chorus.

Scene 7 – Japanese Camps

BMB is the *narrator* of the Japanese-Americans' humiliations. He is also the voice of the American official, a *character*, polite and cynical.

Scene 8 – Bomb B

Everyone vacates the stage, leaving a pile of bags and personal belongings in the centre.

BMB delivers a monologue, but assumes the respective voices, as in a dialogue, of two generic characters: a Japanese (from Japan) and an American. Their relationship is typified by cynical economical interests. During this "dialogue", BMB stresses his words with the already familiar hand and arm gestures, plus others, including some involving different body parts.

Towards the end, BMB undergoes a metamorphosis, heralded by his lowering voice and by textual hints: "It's time to go. It's time to go home." He removes his black jacket and sweater, revealing a crumpled white shirt. Gradually, as if discarding the monologue-dialogue masks, he becomes *Van Gogh*; and we confront the core of his character.

BMB bows respectfully (a reminiscence of the quintessential Far Eastern gesture) towards the pile of baggage abandoned by the Japanese-Americans, and, executing the recognizable hand and arm movements, moves slowly towards the alternate stage.

Scene 9 – Van Gogh's Painting

BMB plays both himself and Van Gogh.

Conclusion

It could be said that BMB represents Ping Chong's minimalist approach to theatre. He alone fulfils virtually all the conventional functions in *Deshima* that would normally be performed by a variety of actors, as well as impersonating individual characters.

The versatile BMB corresponds to the functional figure as defined by Van Laan: anonymous and ageless, he generally does not participate in the action, and most of his statements are explanatory. However, the selected information BMB conveys to the spectators is delivered in a critical, sarcastic, and sometimes tragic tone, which implies that Ping Chong is speaking to us indirectly through him.

BMB articulates his words by means of presentational conventions, mostly direct, sometimes indirect. Nonetheless, these familiar theatrical conventions appear in unusual forms, being adapted by the director to the requirements of his very personal multimedia theatre.

Regardless of BMB's function or role, he is always an outsider on the margins of the main action. He weaves in and out of the scenes, sometimes motivating the events, at others explaining or satirizing them.

One can define BMB as a singular conventional figure created by Ping Chong. His distinctive looks and movements reveal him as someone outside the context of the play, and his constant presence produces the *Verfremdungseffekt* expounded by Brecht; that is to say, BMB obliges us to view the scenes from without, and thus contributes a reflexive and, therefore, critical level to the drama. *Deshima* is more than a sequence of related historical events; BMB, in his various functions and roles, allows Ping Chong to present them from his personal point of view.

The Other Self – The God

Nosferatu

Introduction

Nosferatu was inspired by the silent film of the same name directed in 1922 by F.W. Murnau. He derived his theme from Bram Stoker's Victorian novel *Dracula* (1897), which has engendered several cinematic versions. The book

originated in the Vampire legend⁵⁷. Nosferatu, the Un-Dead, has the liminal characteristics of the initiands in Van Gennep's conception: he exists on the margins of society, but his marginality is permanent; he sustains himself by destroying the living, by sucking their blood. Nosferatu is a destructive and evil force (Fig.25 , p.292).

In Murnau's film, the Vampire is associated with a plague that attacks Bremen, and his principal victims are the innocent Jonathan and Mina Harker. Ping Chong transfers the setting to New York in the 1980s: "...a consumer society, eating itself alive from all conspicuous consumption" (1992a). In contrast to the film, the play portrays Jonathan and Mina Hawker as a yuppie couple who are decidedly not innocent, and the Vampire personifies a modern plague, some kind of ecological disaster, striking the already decadent city. Towards the end, when Nosferatu is introduced, "the back wall opens not to a gothic scenery with spider webs, but to a set looking like a boiler room in a factory, with toxic waste signs, in an interpretation of evil and pestilence" (*ibid.*). In a later scene, this pollution, accruing in the underworld, spills out of the sewage pipes into the Harkers' living-room.

The Harkers and their friends are completely unaware of, or indifferent to, this underworld. Robin Wood, in writing about Murnau's film (1976:5-6), notes that it provides an exemplary illustration of the *Descent Myth*, "one of those universal motifs that seem fundamental to human experience", telling of persons who live in total innocence, but who, by a process of descent, sometimes literal,

⁵⁷ In 1990, Francis Coppola directed the *The Vampire*, a new film version based on Stoker's novel. In it, Count Dracula is given a personal past: In the sixteenth century, upon returning from the wars against the Turkish invaders, he finds his beloved wife dead; she had killed herself after being misinformed about his fate by his cunning enemies. In his despair, Dracula curses God, and transforms himself into an undead. Such an introduction does not annul Nosferatu's identification with evil, but softens its impact; his tragedy arouses our sympathy, and partially vindicates his actions. For Stoker, Murnau, and Ping Chong, by contrast, Nosferatu betokens absolute evil; his origins are obscure, enhancing our sense of horror.

discover “a terrible underlying reality of whose existence they had scarcely dreamed”. The play’s characters, while not innocent, are certainly ignorant of the corruption below (or within themselves). Ping Chong, in devising images of these parallel worlds, conveys the inexorable advent of the apocalyptic Vampire. The Hawkers of the 1980s are initially distinct from their nineteenth-century counterparts; projections from Murnau’s film are juxtaposed against the action onstage. Gradually, however, as the play progresses, one realizes that their respective destinies are closely intertwined. In both cases, the couples bring *Nosferatu* and the plague upon themselves.



25. *Nosferatu* (1992) (Carol Rosegg-Martha Swope).

In the following synopsis, I will include some of the projected or spoken texts in greater detail whenever I find them crucial for understanding the performance; otherwise, the scenes will be summarily described. In the discussion section, I will examine the aural and visual aspects more carefully.

The use of juxtaposition should be noted: two episodes that, in actually, occur at different times are sometimes presented simultaneously on the stage.

The Play

There is a Prologue: a duel between two angels. The curtain is closed. In front of it, a small dais rises from the orchestra, and the angels emerge from it on either side. They are identical, wearing the same costume, with wings, wigs, and masks with a neutral expression. But their movements are aggressive. They perform a sort of dance, quick and vigorous, and evocative of oriental martial arts. Initially, one of the angels attempts to conciliate the other, caressing his face and body. He is rebuffed, however. The second angel is consistently bellicose. In the ensuing battle, the first angel tears, not the heart, but a dark hairy ball from his rival's chest, terminating their struggle. Fast and forceful organ and string music, stressing the violence, accompanies this scene. Later, when the creatures of underworld are revealed to us and their seizure of the Harkers' apartment is imminent, black, hairy balls of different sizes, presumably betokening the triumph of darkness, roll out onto the stage. And, in retrospect, one can infer that the Prologue introduces us to the birth of evil.

As the angels descend, there is a transition to lighter sitar (Indian) music, and the lights go out. The curtain opens in the dark, and the audience sees projections of captions, followed by stills, from Murnau's film. They inform us of the

Harkers' innocence and their joy over Jonathan's sale of their house to Count Dracula (Nosferatu). We also have the first premonition in the caption:

"I have long sought the cause of
that terrible epidemic and found at its origin
and its climax the innocent figures
Jonathan Harker and his young wife, Mina."

This sequence is also accompanied by music.

The stage lights return, revealing a high-tech, post-modern living-room being set up by two movers. Above, on the upper back wall, is the screen on which the previous images appeared, and further projections accompany the play. In this scene and whenever the yuppies are present, they depict the sky with various configurations of clouds, and the music, whether playing in the background or stressed, is generally of the "muzek" type (with a touch of kitsch, as suiting the superficiality of the milieu).

We are introduced to the characters, their world, their relationships, their values. There is Mina and Jonathan Harker, a yuppie couple, and their friends Arthur Seward and Lucy Wersterna.⁵⁸ The Harkers are very conscious of being "in" – knowing the "right" places to frequent, the "right" food to eat, etc. Their values are expressed by Arthur in a direct address to the audience:

"Style!
.....
It's basically an attitude.
Combine self-assurance, a flair for show biz and a serious business
sense.

The ones that walk faster, talk faster and think faster.
They are the living lights of the twentieth century.

⁵⁸ Arthur and Lucy are not named in Ping Chong's play. Some reviewers have named them after the characters in Bram Stoker's novel, presumably because of the similarity in their relationship with the Harkers. For the sake of convenience, I have followed this precedent.

You don't have to be rich to have it all.

Flair! Just too busy to think about it.

.....

What you do is more important than who you are.

Taking risks, having it all.

More is more.

And after six months, you'll be walking faster.

And at that point you'll really have what it takes."

Thus Jonathan seems constantly preoccupied with his work. His relationship with Mina is almost mechanistic, stylized (in the way the characters sometimes move), not emotional. Even in intimacy, in their underwear, their relationship is insensitive, concerned with trivialities. In the exciting, fast-paced yuppie life, there are touches of sadness, anger, disappointment, exasperation, loneliness. There is also betrayal, adultery, and lies – all quickly covered up by another festive drink or dinner. But the underlying putrefaction begins to seep out; the Harkers' need a plumber to fix the clogged toilet. While Lucy is delivering a long monologue about the marvels of a fashionable spa on the Upper East Side, a bride wearing a death mask, illumined in red tones, appears in their midst, visible to us but not to them. We again have projections of Nosferatu's ship approaching the port of Bremen. The crew have all died in mysterious circumstances, while Nosferatu himself is in his coffin in the hold.

When the Harkers leave for a weekend out of town, their living-room becomes the setting for a macabre and funny celebration for the skeletons of *El Dia de los Muertos*, which, in the Mexican tradition, is a kind of procession, both religious and profane. The projections are of death symbols and disasters, drawn in simple, almost primitive lines. The music is jubilant, including Mexican folkdance themes. The participants celebrate the meeting of the bride and groom, both wearing death-masks. When the Harkers return, the bridal couple and several skeletons remain on the stage, invisible to the living. The Harkers discover that the sewage is invading their home.

There ensue the final text and image projections. The former ponders the origins, character, and meaning of darkness, all in the form of questions, leaving the answers (i.e., the responsibility) to us. The images are again from Murnau's film:

Nosferatu emerging from the basement, and Mina gazing out of the window. One understands that their meeting is imminent. With this last projection still on the screen, the wall underneath opens up, revealing, as mentioned above, a smoky basement boiler-room with toxic signs, whence Nosferatu rises to the living-room, in which our contemporary characters, totally unaware of their destiny, are indulging in another of their culinary celebrations. During this final scene, the stage floor is gradually covered by the black hairy balls, invisible to the diners, symbolizing evil. As Nosferatu attacks Lucy, his first victim, Jonathan is occupied with another of his business calls. Mina and Arthur are already being paralyzed by some strange power. There is an instant of revelation for Jonathan when, as the stage becomes incandescent and an awful scream is heard, he finally beholds Nosferatu. Black-out, and Mexican folk music.

Discussion – Staging Elements

It should be stressed that, in analyzing *Nosferatu*, the methodological division between form and content posited above for the sake of clarity will sometimes interfere with the proper understanding of the scenes, since, in practice, both categories overlap. There will be occasions in which form and content prove inseparable.

As already mentioned, the set is a living-room appointed in the accepted (indeed, requisite) fashion for the yuppies of New York. It is minimalistic, and, as it happens, Ping Chong's characteristic aesthetic coincides with the post-modern style. The few furnishings suffice to indicate one's location in time and space: a large couch, a dinner table with four chairs at the opposite side of the room, and a small desk with a phone downstage. A long bookshelf against the right-side wall later opens up to admit the Dance of the Dead. An additional shelf is arrayed with decorations. In the centre of the stage is open space.

In this spacious setting, the Harkers and their friends move in an artificial, dance-like manner. Everyday motions are intertwined with stylized

elements, and sequences are repeated, creating the comical effect of human automatons.

Although there are rare moments of tense and pregnant silence, music is a major component in this piece. It functions in two basic ways: either dominating the scene or setting its tone. Sometimes it also heralds coming events, as in announcing the arrival of Nosferatu's ship. In addition, it often comments upon the scene, mostly ironically or comically: e.g., the "muzek" accompanying the Harkers stresses the falsity of their society, while the festive music in the skeleton sequences creates an atmosphere of black comedy. This, in fact, is how the festival is celebrated in Mexico. In the pre-Colombian tradition, death is considered not a final, gloomy state, but the threshold of rebirth; it is therefore perfectly acceptable for the skeletons to personify ordinary people in diverse situations, such as workers, politicians, mothers and their children, and even bride and groom (Gutierrez and Tonatiuh 1970-71). In the context of this piece, to be sure, death has a very different connotation: in principle, the dead are dead, and the living are alive. However, I think Ping Chong uses ambiguity in order to raise questions about yuppie society, about the authenticity of their lives. Who is alive? Who is dead?

The music ranges widely from Indian sitar and drums (accompanying the initial projections of Murnau's film) via softly orchestrated muzek to Mexican folk.

Both verbal and non-verbal language is stylized. The former includes everyday exchanges, monologues, dialogues and direct address to the audience. Often the text consists simply of a list: business codes, place-names, types of food, etc. In some instances, the enumeration clearly conveys subjects of interest to the characters (e.g., fancy foods), and accordingly exposes their value-system. The list of place-names, by contrast, mentions plague-stricken sites (even if some are unknown to us) throughout the world at different times. This broadens the theme from New York in the 1980s, lending it a universal cast.

Non-verbal communication is predominant. Language and movement, naturalistic (everyday) and stylized, together with slide projections, are juxtaposed in a *bricolage* of the familiar and unfamiliar. It is a combination of apparently illogical but carefully chosen causal sequences.

In order to discuss the theme and characters of *Nosferatu*, I think it will prove useful to consider, in general, the nature of evil, as well as the emergence of the Bad Other. The following presentation is based on the *Anthropology of Evil*, edited and introduced by David Parkin (1985).

Understanding Evil

The word "evil" has at least three meanings: moral – referring to human culpability; physical – including destructive elemental forces, such as earthquakes, storms, and plagues; and metaphysical – in which disorder in the cosmos results from the conflict between divine principles or wills (*ibid.*:15). In practice, however, these distinctions are not absolute, since moral, social, philosophical concepts vary from culture to culture.

Nevertheless, Parkin stresses that, in order to understand evil, the study of morality is unavoidable, since "evil is a negative aspect of any moral system. The bad cannot be studied without also knowing the boundaries of the good" (*ibid.*:3). There is, however, a danger of falling into the simplistic idea of "good" as being the right thing to do, whereas "bad" is wrong and socially punished, because there are acts considered morally wrong, but which, not violating the rules, are not punished. Contrariwise, many social rules, sometimes even codified as laws, do not belong to the sphere of morality.

Parkin (*ibid.*:6) argues that "throughout society, acts are judged to be morally good, bad or indifferent according to the happiness or misery of those involved." Misery and happiness are broad terms, and hard to define. The contentment associated with happiness is only realized *after* the experience. Misery, by contrast, can generally be apprehended immediately. As such, the idea of evil, linked to human suffering and contrary to happiness, leads us towards theories of human nature, without the complex mediation of morality.

Parkin conjectures that for primitive man "bad" was associated with natural disasters, such as fire, flood, or drought, as well as with the decaying corpses of animals and people. Any event out of the "natural" or expected order would have

such a connotation. The idea of a “bad death”, i.e., one resulting from an accident or homicide, refers, according to Metcalf (1982:254-257, cited by Parkin 1985:7), to a premature departure that failed to fulfil the normal expectations associated with natural death. The latter implies a timely and peaceful leave-taking of family and friends. Those who die a good death are destined to become souls or ancestral spirits, whereas the victims of “bad deaths” have an “indeterminate destiny: they may become evil spirits or simply ‘lost’” (*ibid.*:8). These are cases of “incompleteness”.

The various views of maleficence and suffering indicate that, metaphysically, evil is an ambivalent power between perfection and imperfection which man seeks to balance. Its association with dirt, ugliness, blackness, and incompleteness derives from the primordial idea, in P. Ricoeur’s formulation (1967:25-46), of defilement, i.e., staining what was clean or pure.

Parkin contends that the main beliefs concerning evil can be grouped into three broad categories: *monist theodicies* (Hinduism and Buddhism) posit a single unity that includes evil. At the other extreme is the *dualism* of Manicheism and Confucianism, where good and evil are separate entities, possessing almost equal power. The Semitic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – fall approximately midway between these poles, and constitute *near-monist theodicies*: Satan is independent of God, who has subdued him in the past, and the ordinary mortal can overcome him with God’s help.

Concerning the personification of evil, Parkin notes that many cultures do not draw a clean-cut distinction between human and non-human, since the concept of “human” varies considerably. As such, the personifications are equally various, making it difficult to generalize. The archetype of evil is not just the opposite of good; it is rather an ambivalent power, as attested by diverse explanations of misfortune and maleficence. Some cultures blame human malice: in the African examples Parkin cites, sorcery and witchcraft predominate. Others place the blame on non-human agents. Nevertheless, there is “the attribution to creatures of qualities that appear to resemble at least in part those of the people themselves in interaction with each other” (*ibid.*:18). The resemblance is usually partial, with the

pertinent traits exaggerated. These creatures might look like “real” persons, but more often appear as spirits, demons, or demi-gods, offering possibilities beyond the purely human.

Here it should be mentioned that evil can be represented as either terrible and serious or, antithetically, as playful and creative. Its agents are perceived as abhorrent, but are also admired for their cleverness. For the reckless, brave and foolish, as in Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, the Devil promises otherwise unobtainable prospects (*ibid.*:19). Still, Parkin cautions (*ibid.*:20): “Pleasure and happiness may be the prize, but the risks of a grim future are also high.”

The Other in *Nosferatu* – Theme and Characters

Angels are divine creatures, partaking of the power of their master, God, in some fashion. They are usually considered to be messengers of goodness. In *Nosferatu*, however, we are presented with a contrary aspect: these superior spiritual beings can also be agents of evil. Their confrontation in the Prologue terminates when one extracts a dark ball from the chest of his opponent. Later, when the dwellers of the underworld are revealed to us, and their seizure of the Harkers’ apartment is imminent, hairy black balls of different sizes, presumably symbolizing the triumph of darkness, roll out onto the stage; and, in retrospect, one infers that the Prologue introduces us to the birth of evil. The angelic struggle implies that good and evil exist simultaneously. The point of the play, I think, is to show that the lack of equilibrium between them brings disaster. However, I do not believe that Ping Chong’s intends to give us a moral or didactic lesson. I would perhaps call *Nosferatu* a black-humour parable, in which yuppie society is merely the “newest social stereotype”, in the words of Sally Banes (2001:277), the “extreme example” of what the director sees universally in civilization: hollowness, darkness, mystery, something whose origins predate the beginning of the world, when the angels already possessed a heart of darkness.

The personality and motives of the characters are not well explained, but also not relevant. This is not a psychological drama. The characters are

archetypes, and the relevance is in the criticism of the society in which they live. We learn gradually, but clearly, that this is a consumer society with its stress on appearance ("Style!").

The frenzy of yuppie society creates and conceals a parallel world, decadent and rotting. The epicureans, given to a fast pace and lacking depth, live an automatic life of obedience to external, superficial demands at the expense of individual, often deep emotional needs. The revelling skeletons, by contrast, seem more alive than the living. This underworld that invades the Harkers' living-room in their absence has a festive atmosphere, both comical and lugubrious. It is filled with Others – the living dead. The ostensibly alive are, in reality, already dead, going through the motions of a murderous society. Nosferatu comes to claim what is already his.

In the book, Count Dracula (Nosferatu) is the symbol of total evil. He is the Un-Dead, the vampire who subsists on blood. He emerges at night, attacking his victims in various malevolent forms (as wolf, bat, crawling vermin, and so forth), retiring again at sunrise. His appearance is an animal-human combination; he has exceedingly long nails accentuated by reptilian movements. His realm comprises all the attributes of darkness. Bram Stoker's novel was written at the height of Victorianism, and it hinted at all the sexual perversions and repressions society most feared. In the more contemporary versions, Nosferatu still retains fantastic, monster-like features, reflecting our anxieties.

Ping Chong's *Nosferatu*, however, is not separate power, but a "shadow". He signifies the dark forces that the superficial and trendy yuppie society represses. Steven Hart (1985) writes that the characters' sin is not in being evil, but in being "devoid of feeling"; theirs is the insensitivity of the self-satisfied. For him, the origin of darkness lies in our lack of insight into ourselves. I would add that this self-satisfaction is artificial, because it is based on the internalization of a specific community's values, in this case that of the yuppies. Nosferatu, then, is the Bad Other, the projection of the "bad" self within society, the product of its own corruption. The underworld's emergence and seizure of control is gradual and in direct proportion to society's decline. The text and still projections inform us of

Nosferatu's ascent, so that we are better informed than the characters on the stage. Nevertheless, warning signs also appear early and graphically (e.g., dark balls and overflowing sewage), and accompany the drama. But the Harkers choose to ignore them.

In his discussion of Murnau's movie, Robin Wood (1976:4), speaks about the Id becoming Superego, whereby the repressed forces become dominant. The same occurs in Ping Chong's play: commencing as an intimated menace, Nosferatu becomes destruction.

Wood also states that, in the film, Mina has a direct relationship with Nosferatu (*ibid.*:8); she is the only one who vividly intuits his presence and potential danger. In the play, too, it is Mina who first discovers a dark ball, but she jettisons it; nevertheless, upon Jonathan's negligence in calling the plumber to fix the broken toilet, she nearly throws a tantrum; later, it is she who discovers the overflowing sewage; and finally, in an excerpt from Murnau, the cinematic Mina, the yuppie's alter ego, waits at the window for Nosferatu's final coming.

Evil's gradual taking-over parallels the revelation of the characters' lies and cheating. Nosferatu's entourage penetrates the world of the living by degrees. First the death bride appears among them, but is not seen. Jonathan Kalb (1985:68) writes that, for the audience, such an apparition "shatters the cloistered atmosphere, the feeling of safe domesticity" nurtured by the yuppies. And the reason is not that this macabre figure is external to the characters, but rather internal and of long standing. Afterwards, with the Harkers away on a trip, a lively group of skeletons invades their apartment. Upon their return, they do not see these intruders, but discover that the sewage, arising from the darkness below, has flooded their house. Still, Mina, Jonathan, and their friends, incorrigible yuppies, are unable to face this incursion. They continue their celebratory life-style, which is when Nosferatu finally emerges from the walls of the apartment.

Throughout the play, there is no attempt on the part of the characters to alter their ways, in spite of their unhappy moments. The balance is always tilted towards evil, so it is not surprising that eventually it becomes dominant. In their blindness

and indifference, the Harkers and their companions bring their fate upon themselves. Long before Nosferatu's actual strike, they are dead.

In spite of the dark theme, Ping Chong does not miss the opportunity to introduce farcical elements into the most tragic episodes. In the course of evil's gradual take-over, we have lively music and dances – by skeletons, of course.

Conclusion

“...human beings are, as in the Chinese sense, this big [showing the last phalanx of his little finger] We are this small in the universe... Everything is transient and illusion.”

Ping Chong, 1992a

The Other-related themes that occur in Ping Chong's work (the foreigner, the visitor, the allegorical society, menacing creatures, etc.) are not unusual in themselves; it is how he presents them that is original: the foreigner is an

Asian murderer; the visitor is an “undead” with his head wrapped in bandages; the allegorical society consists of frog-people; the menacing creatures are skeletons celebrating a festival. Ping Chong renders the familiar Other (or Others) as comical or horrific beings.

The three categories of Ping Chong’s Other I have enumerated cannot be accounted for completely by the theoretical models to which I have appealed:

- The Other as outsider, I believe, is elucidated by Turner’s concept of liminality; he exhibits the following qualities (among others): effacement, ambiguity, reflexivity, and subjunction. For Turner, however, liminality is a temporary state; for Ping Chong’s outsiders it is an abiding condition, whether arising from choice, birth, or impotence.
- The Other (“Bad”) Self is certainly illuminated by Gilman’s psychological model. Ping Chong exposes the social circumstances leading individuals to self-destruction, and their behaviour accords with the pattern proposed by Gilman for madness, in which, losing one’s judgemental balance, one oscillates between extremes; becoming “bad” results from denying one’s darker side, one’s shadow.
- In theatrical convention, the Other mostly appears as a functional figure. The director sometimes employs him to present himself directly to the audience; but, as delineated by Van Laan, he, the figure, also fulfils all the performance’s functional tasks. Nevertheless, Ping Chong often invests the Other of this category with Brechtian characteristics; he looks “different” from the others on the stage; he is “peculiar”.

This Brechtian element in Ping Chong’s work has the effect of lending the spectator the Other’s point of view: he sees the drama at a distance, from without. Still, the comparison should not be overdrawn. Brecht’s plays are structured in such a way as to keep the audience constantly aware of being in the theatre; Ping Chong repeatedly reminds the spectator that he is witnessing an

artificial world, but its events, nonetheless, elicit emotional responses of many shades. His “shows”, eclectic, constantly flowing, and absorbing, shift in and out of illusion. In addition, Brecht’s aims are distinct from Ping Chong’s. He is primarily concerned with socio-political themes; Ping Chong’s orientation, even if not enunciated, is ontological – the *condition humaine*. His antics and serious moments not only provide a mirror of contemporary society and ourselves, but a reminder of life’s instability and transience.

VIII

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Theatre reflects society and, as such, it is a rich field for the study of the Other. The three classes of the Other considered in this thesis – Jesters, Gods, and Aliens – share marginality, ambiguity, and the ability to affect the development and outcome of the plot. I have argued that shadowplay is particularly suited to present

the Other theatrically, both realistically or fantastically, and it has fulfilled this purpose in traditional cultures, e.g., those of India, China, Java, and Turkey, and in contemporary drama, for which I chose Ping Chong as a prime example.

This remarkable recurrence of shadowplay in different corners of the world and at various times required a flexible, transcultural theoretical model. In elaborating my thesis, I believe that my initial intuition concerning the general applicability of Turner's concept of the Other as a liminal ("betwixt-between") character was borne out. For the Javanese audience watching a performance of classical Wayang, the Panakawan, the gods, and the ogres and other enemies are Others *par excellence*; they represent a alien world of religious values and bygone glories, with which, nevertheless, the spectators identify. Karagöz is an Other by dint of being a jester, and his neighbourhood in Ottoman Istanbul is replete with eccentrics, provincials, foreigners, witches, and jinn. For Ping Chong the Other is a central preoccupation. His characters are usually misfits – displaced, maladjusted, obsessive, and, especially in his earlier works, he chose shadowplay to convey the darker aspects of their psyches.

In this respect, Turner's concept of liminality dovetails with Gilman's model of the Good and Bad Other. Gilman injected a psychological element into the Other by explaining it as a projection of fears and covert desires. His Other is distinctly ambiguous; he threatens the normal members of a given community, but also intrigues them, hinting at possibilities which their rules proscribe. As such, the Other is also revealing about the values and stereotypes of the "normative" society.

In trying to understand the nature of the Other, I chose an approach which allowed me to study the shadowplay of otherwise very different cultures, and, as I expected, I discovered that both the Other and its shadowplay representation have many features in common, transcending time and space. These similarities, however, should not disguise the fact that the three forms I studied also evince distinct and interesting differences. The Wayang world is highly structured, and Self is clearly delineated. The *satrija* princes are meant to serve as models for society as a whole. But no character in Wayang is totally good or bad. The heroes have weaknesses, and the villains have positive attributes. The loyal and reliable

Panakawan are generally Good Others, in spite of their *kasar* appearance and base and irreverent behaviour. The gods, albeit far from perfect, are also mostly Good Others. Even Batara Kala and Batari Uma, feared for their destructive powers, can be kept at a distance or exorcised. The aliens, while indisputably Bad Others, are also generally faithful to their masters. There is in the Wayang world an element of tolerance and avoidance of extremes: its paragons have weaknesses, its villains have virtues. It is possible that this acceptance of ambiguity, even among the gods, is characteristic of traditional Far Eastern religion and culture.

In the satirical *Karagöz*, the Good and Bad Others are never clearly differentiated. The audience expects Karagöz (their secret Self) to behave like a rogue – to lie, cheat, and drink to excess. In his upside-down fictional world, otherwise antisocial, even immoral behaviour, is permissible. It is interesting to note, however, that for the other characters of Istanbul's fictional quarter, Karagöz is often adjudged a Bad Other.

Of the three examples of shadowplay I studied, *Karagöz* undoubtedly proved the most challenging. I encountered limitations at every turn, the most serious resulting from its improvisational character. Wayang is also improvisational, but it is a living tradition, and scholars have documented its recent history. *Karagöz*, as I've recounted, suffered an eclipse with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and documentation is scarce. Nevertheless, it has proven sufficient for me to develop my thesis, and describe the nature and function of its diverse Others. In studying the subject, I found that some of my expectations were unfulfilled. A number of scholars have noted *Karagöz'* religious overtones: the performance opens with a reference to God (Hak), and the *göstermelik*, the first image to appear on the screen, is clearly reminiscent of the *kayon* in Wayang and the tree-of-life, ubiquitous in the mythology of the Ancient Near East and elsewhere. Thus I initially assumed that the essentially secular mode of *Karagöz* would, upon closer scrutiny, reveal a cultic substratum. That is to say, in addition to its abundant jesters and aliens, I hoped to find material on gods, as well. But, apart from the aforementioned "hints", I discovered that the themes and characters were totally mundane, that *Karagöz* can certainly be described as a theatre of the Other, but within a socio-historical context, in decided

contradistinction to Wayang. It is true, of course, that the witches and jinn represent pre-Islamic survivals in Ottoman culture, and they possess supernatural powers, but their role cannot warrant a “mystical” interpretation of the plot.

Allah exists in the world of *Karagöz*, but remains aloof from the activities of the figures in shadowplay Istanbul, and it would have been blasphemous to involve him in their schemes. Ping Chong’s world, by contrast, is truly godless. His “shows” offer a bitter critique of Western society and its commercial values. His Others, mainly aliens, are more ambiguous: they cause suffering, but they are also victims, and even arouse our sympathy. They are Bad Others, but not totally so. It is interesting to note that Ping Chong, a secular, multimedia director who addresses contemporary issues, still finds shadowplay an effective means of conveying the essence of the Other, and thus is heir to a tradition which has its roots in traditional India and China.

Thus shadowplay serves a similar purpose in cultures which are otherwise very different in their spirit and ideology. Whether in the Far East, in Ottoman Turkey, or in present-day America, the shadows on the screen are evocative of the dead; they are necromantic, and thus have occult connotations, even when the genre is not, strictly speaking, religious. Wayang is, to be sure. Its heroes are considered the forefathers of the Javanese, and the lakon is meant to renew their connection to the past, whether mythical or historical. The performances of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in the shadowplay of South Indian likewise involve ritual recreations of the seminal Hindu epics. The legendary origins of shadowplay in Turkey also suggest nostalgia for a bygone age and its dead: Karagöz and Hacıvat, whose exuberant jests delayed the construction of the Green Mosque in Bursa, are revived on the screen. The story is strikingly reminiscent of the Chinese account of the first shadowplay, in which the emperor’s late wife was “resurrected”. In Ping Chong’s *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*, the environment is so oppressive that it drives the alien to murder. Gotham is the Other’s shadow world, and has overtones of death. *Humboldt’s Current* also suggests atemporality; it depicts the search for primordial man, whereby the obsessive explorer seeks to return the past to the present. His attempt is unsuccessful, but his belief in its possibility is compelling.

It is noteworthy that both traditional genres discussed in this study, Wayang and *Karagöz*, are improvisational, albeit based on known stories. The ability to adapt to the interests and concerns of the changing audience probably helps explain Wayang's survival till today. But *Karagöz* was also improvisational, and, as we have seen, its classic form elapsed with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps the difference in their respective fates can be clarified – to some extent, at least – by observing that Wayang is explicitly religious, and religion is a conservative force able to survive drastic historical changes. *Karagöz*, by contrast, was bound to the socio-political conditions of its time, and lost its immediacy for the populace of a modern-minded nation-state. Ping Chong's shadowplays follow a set script, and clearly address issues pertinent to today's audience. Improvisation is not a feature of his multimedia approach, which means, as I have implied, that it will prove less adaptable as circumstances alter. In addition, like *Karagöz*, it is essentially secular and its frame of reference is the here and now. But whether or not it speaks to future audiences, Ping Chong's remarkable success today is further testimony to the enduring impact of shadowplay – an ancient medium still alive in the electronic era.

*

In writing this thesis, both its theoretical sections and the discussions of shadowplay in the various cultures I examined, I basically assumed that, owing to its dependence on Self, the Other occupies a secondary, subordinate position. Furthermore, as I've noted, it is tinged with negative and threatening connotations; even its "attractive" aspects are dubious, since changes to the status quo are almost always accompanied by a measure of ambivalence. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that the Other's marginality and liminality accord it a certain behavioural license which the establishment-bound Self cannot enjoy. If Self "crosses the line", it becomes an Other. That is to say, the latter possesses potentialities of which Self is intrinsically deprived. So that it is not fully accurate to speak of the Other's

dependence on Self; the two are interdependent: *Car Je est un autre* (Rimbaud 1963:270).

APPENDIX

The Marriage of Karagöz

List of Characters:

H - Hacivat

K - Karagöz

DH – Dirrubâ Hanım, or Miss Dirrubâ, Karagöz's future wife.

FC – Faik Celebi, the dentist.

BR – Beberuhi, the dwarf.

HK – Hamsi Kaptan, or Captain Sprat. A quiltmaker, originally from Trabzon, a city on the Black Sea shore of Anatolia.

TE – Tuzsuz Ekim, Dirrubâ Hanım's brother.

Prologue

(Song)

Oh, I entered the [*inaudible*],
 Oh, oh, its roses are like [*inaudible*];
 Oh, oh, there are three moles on her neck
 Each one of them is like a [*inaudible*] cup.

I built a play, I did [*inaudible*];
 What you see is not a play,
 But what exists wherever
 There are a thousand lights
 Which brings pleasure
 To those watching us.

[Words of welcome to the audience, to the VIPs, etc.]

Dialogue and Main Play

H -(*enters*) Karagöz and I, we're like blood brothers. We eat the same food, we drink the same drink. But I haven't seen him in a long time. Could it be that he's ill? Or did he have an accident? I've been concerned. Children, you, too, if you don't see a friend of yours at school for one or two days, go to his house to visit him. It's on such days that friendship proves itself.

Karagöz's wife has passed away. He's alone now. Let Allah not leave anyone alone. We've found a suitable wife for him. Karagöz has grown old. He can't

wash his laundry. He can't cook. I hope he gets along with this lady, and that they build a happy home together.

Let me go to his house and ask how he's doing.

Let me knock on his door (*knocks on the door*). Karagöz! Karagöz!

K - Oh, Allah, Fellow! What's going on at this hour of the night?

H - Oh, sir, well, come down!

K - I'm coming. Just a second. What's going on?

H - What's happened?

K - What could happen, Fellow. Someone was singing a song. I almost fell into a pot of beans.

H - Who was it?

K - How would I know, Fellow. Someone across from here is saying "I fell into your oven, I fell into your oven."⁵⁹

H - Who is it?

K - How would I know, Fellow. I took a look. The guy fell into the bean pot, Fellow.

H - Oh, sir, that song is sung by Tarkan.⁶⁰

K - OK, he sings. But he fell into his own pot and still sings, Fellow?

H - Oh, sir, oh, Fellow. Don't you like this song?

K - I like it, Fellow. Why shouldn't I like it?

H - Oh, my Karagöz. I missed you.

K - And I watched you from the window, Fellow.⁶¹

H - Oh, sir, come down. I have a question to ask you.

K - What do you have?

⁵⁹ There is a word play between "can" in the song and *olak* ("oven").

⁶⁰ A famous singer of *poptürk* – a style that mixes Western pop and traditional Turkish music.

⁶¹ *Özledim* ("missed") and *özledim* ("watched") are homophonous in Turkish.

H – A question.

K – You have an onion? What onion, Fellow?⁶²

H – What’s it got to do with an onion, Fellow? A question.

K – I can’t come down. I have work to do.

H – What work?

K – I’m writing a score.

H – [*Inaudible*].

K – This is something new, Fellow.

H - Something new? How does it work?

K – If you know six, you take the money. That’s the way it works.

H – Oh, sir. You’re joking, joking.

K – If it’s *kadayıf*, we can eat it.⁶³

H – Oh, my Karagöz, there’s good news. Come down!

K – (*singing*) A friend is entertainment for me,
Oh, entertainment for me, oh, oh.

If I come, I’ll smash your head, I promise.

(*singing*) Entertainment for me,
Entertainment, entertainment for me.

I’m not coming, Fellow.

(*singing*) Oh, entertainment for me.

(*raises his voice in an angry tone*) I’m not coming, Fellow.

(*singing*) Oh, entertainment for me.

I’m not coming, Fellow.

⁶² *Sual* (“question”) and *soğan* (“onion”) sound similar in Turkish.

⁶³ *Lâdayıf* (“Joking”) and *kadayıf* (a Turkish dessert) are similar in sound and rhyme in Turkish.

Look, there's Şinasi, there's Şinasi!⁶⁴

H – Eh, so what?

K – I'll send him now, I promise. He is one of the old boxers anyway. He gives you a blow and you'll see the entertainment.

Come, (*singing*) entertainment for me.

I'm not coming, Fellow.

Oh, entertainment for me.

(*Karagöz comes down*) Now (*beats Hacıvat*)!

H – Ohhh, Ohhh (*moans in pain, as he is beaten*)

Woe! Scoundrel, woe! Woe!

He can't live without fighting, you Fellow. Woe! Woe!

I came, and he immediately disturbed the neighbourhood.

Oh God, children. Do two friends fight? They don't. But this guy and I can't live without fighting.

H – Oh, my dear Karagöz. Hey! hey!

K – Welcome, you fool! (*beats Hacıvat*)

H – Oh, sir. Don't beat me!

K – And you, don't stand before me.

H – You Fellow, why do you beat me? Look! The children think we're shameful.

They say: "Karagöz and Hacıvat, such grown-up men, are fighting!" Come on, let's make it up!

K – Come on, let's make it up. (*Karagöz hits Hacıvat*)

H – Come on, come on. Stop, you scoundrel! Stop! What's happened?

K – His nose entered my mouth like a sardine.

H – Oh, Karagöz, I came here with good news. Now, lend me your ear.

⁶⁴ Mr. Şinasi, a *Karagöz* puppeteer from Bursa, was in the audience during the performance.

K – I didn't get it.

H – Lend me your ear.

K – Lend you my ear and be without an ear, you scoundrel?

H – That's not it, sir. Listen to me.

K – I'm listening.

H – There's good news for you.

K – What is it?

H – Eeh, it's been a year since your wife died. May Allah not leave anyone alone!

You keep saying "My wife has died. I can't wash my laundry, I can't cook!" And we've found a suitable lady for you.

K – Who is this lady?

H – Oh, sir, oh. You don't know her.

K – Who is she, Fellow?

H – You know, across from your dwelling the coffeehouse owner, Mr. Ali. May Allah

 bless him!

K – Eeh?

H – I saw his daughter yesterday. Miss Dirrubâ.

K – So, what happened?

H – [*Inaudible*] I said: "Miss, your father has died and Karagöz' wife has died. If that's

 so, we'll introduce you to each other! If you get along, you can build a happy home. You can grow old on the same pillow." And the girl said "If he's suitable, OK."

K – Ohooh! I'm happy with this news. Is she pretty, this lady?

H – She's pretty, sir.

K – Describe her! Describe her!

H – Oh, sir. Let me describe her! Her eyes are almonds.

K – Her eyes are almonds?

H – Her cheeks are apples.

K – Her cheeks are apples?

H – Her lips are cherries.

K – This girl isn't a girl, but a greengrocer, Fellow.

H – Oh, sir. She's pretty, pretty. We can soon have an engagement ceremony.

K – Eeh?

H – Afterwards, we can have a wedding.

K – And after that we can have a funeral.

H – What happened?

K – What could happen, Fellow? I'm an old man [*inaudible*]. Can this work?

H – Oh, sir. Indeed, it should be soon. May Allah not leave anyone alone! I'm going now. I'll send Miss Dirrubâ here. Don't let my face fall to the ground!⁶⁵

K – If your face falls to the ground, I can pick it up, Fellow.

H – That's not the way to behave [*inaudible*]. Be polite to ladies!

K – I will, Fellow. Don't worry!

H – Now, goodbye. Don't move from here. (*exits*)

K – Hey, children! I hope this lady likes me, so I can get rid of this loneliness. My laundry will get washed, my food will be cooked.

H – (*off screen*) Miss Dirrubâ!

DH – (*off screen*) Yes, sir? Mr. Hacivat?

H – Listen! I spoke to Karagöz about the issue. I talked about you, and he was pleased. He's waiting for you in front of his house. So, go ahead, and good luck!

⁶⁵ That is to say, "Don't embarrass me!" In Turkish, *Sakin benim yüzümü yerlere düşüme* means literally, "Don't let my face fall to the ground."

K – (*singing*) Open the curtain of the window for me!
 Show your face!
 I climbed mountains and came,
 To see your face.

DH – (*enters*) Sir.

K – Welcome, my lady.

DH – Karagöz, is that you?

K – Yes.

DH – Karagöz, [*inaudible*]?

K – Karagöz, that’s me. But I don’t know the watchmaker Ali.⁶⁶

DH – No, sir. Are you Karagöz?

K – Yes, I am.

DH – I’m pleased to meet you.

K – And I’m a monkey to meet you.⁶⁷

DH – Oh, sir! Is your name Karagöz?

K – Yes, Karagöz.

DH – Is it only Karagöz?

K – No, it’s Karagöz with cheese.

DH – No, not so. Is it only Karagöz?

K – No, Miss. Karagöz with ten people.

DH – Oh, sir. You joke all the time. Your name is Karagöz?

K – Karagöz, Miss.

⁶⁶ *Saatçi Ali* (“the watchmaker Ali”) rhymes with whatever DH said in the previous phrase, but her words are inaudible.

⁶⁷ *Memnum* (“pleased”) and *maymun* (“monkey”) rhyme in Turkish.

DH – OK, and what is your name?⁶⁸ (How are you called?)

K – Sorry?

DH – What’s your name?

K – What’s my name, Fellow? Well, Lady...I forgot. Don’t joke around with me! My name is also Karagöz.

DH – Ahh! Where can you find such an abundance? Both your *ad* and your *isim* are Karagöz.

K – I found them in the market and bought them, Miss, Fellow.

DH – Oh, Sir! Is there anyone who doesn’t know you, Mr. Karagöz? You’re a chapter in history.

K – Thank you, Miss. What’s your name?

DH – Sir, my name is Dirrrrrubâ.

K – I don’t get it, Miss.

DH – My name is Dirrrrrubâ.

K – What a name this woman has! Like a doorbell *zrrrrrrr!*

DH - What happened, Sir?

K – Miss, I don’t know, I thought someone was ringing my doorbell.

DH – Sir, Dirrrrrubâ, Dirrrrrubâ.

K – I understood, Miss.

DH – What did you understand?

K – A crazy frog, a crazy frog.⁶⁹

DH – Ahh! What kind of words are these?

K – Miss, I was joking, Miss. I have to joke all the time. Now, Miss Dirruba.

⁶⁸ “Name” in Turkish can be *ad* or *isim*. DH uses first *ad* and here on uses *isim*.

⁶⁹ A play on words with similar sounds: Dirrubâ and *deli kurbağ* (“a crazy frog”).

DH – Yes, Sir.

K – Your father died?

DH – Yes, Sir.

K – And my wife died. May Allah not leave anyone alone!

DH – Ehh! So what?

K – Ihh! What little understanding this woman has, Fellow. I mean, I'm saying, Miss.

My wife died.

DH – Yes, Sir.

K – And your father died.

DH – Ehh! So what?

K – Ahh! How shall I explain it, Fellow. Wait a minute! My Lady, your father died.

DH – Yes, Sir.

K – And my wife died.

DH – Ehh! So what?

K – I mean, I'm saying a-da-di-gi-ba-ga-di-gi.⁷⁰

DH – What does that mean? “How is the Ankara Market?”

K – That's not so, Miss. I mean, if we get along, let's build a home.

DH – If it's suitable [*inaudible*], OK. Did your wife die?

K - She died, Miss.

DH – Ehh! If your wife died, your spouse is aliveethen?⁷¹

⁷⁰ This is a kind of game children play, breaking the word into syllables and adding a constant syllable.

⁷¹ DH joins two words in her speech: *sag* (“alive”) and *ya* (“then”).

K – I didn't get it.

DH – If your wife died, your spouse is alive then.

K – The wife died, my spouse is alive then? My Lady, there's a misunderstanding.

DH – What happened, sir?

K – My spouse died. I said the wrong thing.

DH – Ehh, so? [*inaudible*] the spouse [*inaudible*] alive [*inaudible*].

K – My spouse died, my wife is oil to you (margarine).⁷² Yes, I'm Vita Oil.⁷³ Would you like to have some sunflower oil, too, Miss?

DH – Oh, Sir. You are joking.

K – Oh, Miss! You, too, are joking.

DH – Ohh! Mr. Karagöz, by Allah. You're an amusing person. So, I thought I would Do the same to you.

K – Now, Miss. If we get along, I can make you happy, make you feel good. Don't Worry!

DH – Ahh! Of course. I know. We all respect and like you. The only thing is that I have a brother named Tuszuz Ekim.⁷⁴ He gets drunk everyday and I've had enough. So I decided to get married. If he comes, don't tell him that I'm here!

K – OK, Miss, OK. Shall I go to the *kadi*⁷⁵ and start with the wedding arrangements?

DH – Let's start, Sir! May we be happy together! And let me gather my belongings! I'll find a horse cart and move into your place. [*inaudible*] OK, Sir. May we be happy together!

K – May we be happy together, Miss! Would you like to see my house?

⁷² Here is word play of similar sounds: *sağ ya* = "alive then"
sana yağ = "oil to you"
sana yağ = "margarine"

⁷³ Vita Oil is a familiar brand of cooking oil.

⁷⁴ *Ekim* = "strawberries".

⁷⁵ An Islamic judge.

DH – I would, please.

K – Please, come in, Miss! Please, come in!

DH – Ahh! It's so beautiful here!

K – Ohh! Miss, my house is very beautiful. It used to belong to my grandfather.

DH – May Allah make it possible for me to live here!

K – I hope so, Miss. So, Miss. Let's hope we'll be happy together! Let me go to the *kadı* and start with the wedding arrangements. As for you, gather your belongings, find a horse cart, and move in!

DH – Alright, Sir.

K – And make a nice vermicelli soup and some stuffed vegetables for me! There's Mr. Şinasi, from Bursa. He also likes stuffed vegetables a lot.

DH – Oh, Sir. Wouldn't I do that? Stuffed vegetables, *börek*s.⁷⁶

K – Ooh! *Börek*s! I love them. I swear to God!

DH – Meanwhile, with your permission, I shall leave.

K – Meanwhile, with my permission, you shall leave. Ooh! Ooh!

(DH exits. Enter H)

H – So, Karagöz. What happened?

K – It worked out, by Allah!

H – Really?

K – Yes!

H – Ohh! So, let me go to the neighbourhood and announce: "Karagöz is getting married!" Let me announce it!

K – Go and announce it!

H – So, may it be blessed, may it be blessed!

⁷⁶ Turkish pastry, dough.

K – And you [*inaudible*], Rascal. (*hits H*)

H – Ohh! Sir, don't beat me!

K – And you, don't stand in front of me!

H – Fellow, let me go to the neighbourhood and announce: “Karagöz is getting Married!” Let me announce it. Let me bring the good tidings!

K – Go and announce it!

H – Goodbye now. (*exits*)

K – Goodbye now. The whole neighbourhood will come here [*inaudible*]. Ohh!
Someone is coming, by Allah!

FC – (*enter singing Cetine, a traditional song*)

While going to Üşküdar

It rained.

My clerk's coat is long

Its fringe is muddy.

K – Who's that!?!?

FC – Hello, Mon Chère.

K – What's he saying, this fellow? Is he saying: “To drink stuffed vegetables?”⁷⁷

FC – Oh! Sir. I'm speaking a foreign language with you, Ekselans [i.e., Excellence]!

K – I don't understand.

FC – How are you doing, Ekselans?

K – Look at this guy [*inaudible*]. He's saying to me [*inaudible*], Fellow.

FC – Oh! Sir. You don't know foreign languages, Mon Chère.

K – This guy is still saying: “To drink stuffed vegetables”, Fellow.

FC – Oh, Mr. Karagöz, didn't you recognize me?

⁷⁷ *Mon chère* sounds like *dolma içer* in Turkish, meaning “to drink stuffed vegetables”.

K – No, I didn't.

FC – There is a dentist shop⁷⁸ in front of your house. I just moved in. Let me introduce myself! They call me Faik Celebi. Papa Hacivat said: "Karagöz is getting married." So I came to congratulate you.

K – Welcome, Sir.

(to audience) Ohh, children, a dentist has moved into our neighbourhood.

(to FC) If you've come all the way here, Sir, could you take a look at my teeth?

FC – Of course, I could. Open your mouth!

K – Let me open it!

FC – All the teeth are decayed. Of course, if you don't brush your teeth after breakfast in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, your teeth decay. So, as a wedding gift to you, let me change all your teeth and make a prosthesis [i.e., denture].

K – What will you make?

FC – A prosthesis, prosthesis.

K – Father time?⁷⁹ What father time, Fellow?

FC – What's it got to do with father's time, Sir? They call this prosthesis. Let it be my wedding gift?

K – Thank you.

(to audience) Have you heard that children? I didn't brush my teeth when I was young. What happened? My teeth got rotten. Please, brush your teeth in the morning, in the evening, and in the middle of the day. Don't let them decay early, right, kids?

FC – Yes, let's brush our teeth twice or thrice a day. So, when is the wedding?

K – It's next week, Sir. We'll be expecting you, Sir.

FC – So, may Allah make you happy! Goodbye. (*exit*)

⁷⁸ FC says *dükkân* = "shop".

⁷⁹ *Protez* is an unfamiliar word to K, and he hears it as *baba kez* = "father time".

K – Ohh, Sir, bye-bye, Sir. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

BR – (*enter singing*)

Oh, I hang the [*inaudible*] on my neck.

Oh, I pay attention to the rake.

Oh, if you give me money,

I will dance a belly dance for you.

Hello, Uncle Karagöz!

K – Hello, welcome!

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that...

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married.”

K – To whom did he say it?

BR – He said it to me, to me.

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married.”

K – Who said that?

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that.

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married.”

K – Who said that, Fellow?

BR – (*yelling*) Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: “Karagöz is getting married!”

K – Who said that?

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – To whom did he say that, Fellow? Don't yell.

BR – He said it to me! To me!

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: "Karagöz is getting married!"

K – Who said that, Fellow?

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – What did he say?

BR – He said: "Karagöz is getting married!"

K – Who said that?

BR – Uncle Hacivat said that!

K – Don't yell! What did he say?

BR – (*still yelling*) He said: "Karagöz is getting marrieeeee!" See what happened!

K – What happened?

BR – I talked a lot. See what happened!

K – What happened?

BR – I have to pee, to pee.

K – Look at this, Rascal, look at this!

BR – Uncle Karagöz, can I talk a bit to the children?

K – Talk then!

BR – School has started. Good classes and report cards with A's to all the children
When we leave home in the morning, please, let's comb our hair and brush our
teeth. Kids who attend school in the morning come home at noon. They put
down their bags. Please, let's first do the homework for the next day and then,
play.

K – Good for you, by Allah! You said the right thing.

BR – And, furthermore, we drink buttermilk, and eat biscuits, and (don't) throw the garbage on the floor. Let's keep our surroundings clean!

K – Good for you, by Allah! You said the right thing. Shall we applaud Beberuhi, kids? Let's applaud! (*applause*)

BR – Uncle Karagöz, I heard that you're getting married. I'll dance *ciftetelli*⁸⁰ in your wedding.

K – Of course, come, dance, Fellow!

BR – Goodbye, now.

K – Goodbye, now.

BR – Goodbye.

K - Goodbye.

BR – Goodbye.

K – So, goodbye, you, aaah! (*with a tone of anger and annoyance*)

BR – Goodbye, Mr. Karagöz.

K – Goodbye, Fellow. Aaaah! (*angry tone*)

BR – Goodbye, Mr. Karagöz. (*exits*)

K – That's way he is, Sir. Beberuhi, the clown of our neighbourhood.
What? Son [*inaudible*], another person is coming.

HK – (*enters singing*)

I put the sprat on the frying-pan;
It started to dance.
I put the sprat on the frying-pan;
It started to dance.
I put the sprat on the fryng-pan;
It started to dance.⁸¹

K – Who's this fellow? Welcome, welcome.

⁸⁰ A kind of traditional belly dance.

⁸¹ A folk song from the Black Sea shore of Anatolia. HR speaks with strong northern accent.

HK – [*inaudible*]
 [*inaudible*]
 Do you comb my father?
 [*inaudible*]⁸²

K – Wow, wow, wow, wow, look at this man!

HK – Uiii! What’s your name? What’s your father’s name? Do you eat fish?

K – Stop, Fellow! Look at this man, he’s like the *Pamukkale* express train.⁸³
 Fellow, what’s your name?

HK - Uiii! Uuiiii! Didn’t you recognize me?

K – I didn’t, Fellow.

HK – Uii! There is a quilt maker’s shop accross your house. They call me the famous
 Captain Sprat from Trabzon.⁸⁴

K – Which captain?

HK – Sprat.

K – Welcome.

HK – My Karagöz. As far as I’ve heard, you’re getting married. So I said that I
 would give you a quilt as a gift.

K – Ohh! Thank you!

HK – Take it!

K – [*inaudible*], Fellow.

HK – Uii! I’ll come to your wedding and dance a *holan* dance.⁸⁵ You watch me
 then.

⁸² A few lines of nonsensical phrases, difficult to hear and decipher.

⁸³ A known train known for its high velocity.

⁸⁴ A city on the Black Sea shore of Anatolia.

⁸⁵ A traditional regional dance.

K – Of course, dance, Fellow!

HK – Should I dance here and now, too?

K – OK. Dance!

HK – Let's see you dance, too, like me.

K – I'm not into this kind of stuff, Fellow!

HK – Uii, even if you're not. Let's see. Lads, let's see you play a *holan* tune.

(*sings and dances*)

I will take the stem
Of my gun from the roses;
[*inaudible*] will make dance
Ra ta ta, ta ra ta ta.

Well, dance!

K – I'm not into it, ya!

HK – Even if you're not, let me see you dance!

K – Let me dance!

HK – Ra ta ta, ta ra ta ta.

I put the sprat on the frying-pan;
It started to dance.
I put the sprat...

K – Wait a minute, Fellow!

HK – Uii, what happened?

K – Look at this guy, by Allah! He's dancing lika a sprat. Yaah!

HK – Uii! [*inaudible*]

May Allah make you happy! Well, see you at the wedding. Goodbye, now!
(*exits dancing and singing*)

K – Wow! Wow! Wow! Wow! This guy has to dance all the time, Fellow!

Ohh! Another person is coming.

TE – (*enter singing loudly*)

The poplar trees of Izmir;
Their leaves fall.

The poplar trees of Izmir;
 Their leaves fall.
 Yayy!

K – Wow! Wow! Who’s this fellow?

TE – (*yells*) Yay!

K – Don’t yell, Fellow! Look, don’t yell!

TE – (*yells*) Yay!

K – Don’t yell, Fellow! Look, don’t yell. There’s a pregnant woman here. If you yell, you’ll make her have a miscarriage.

TE – (*yells*) Yay!

K – Don’t yell, Fellow.

TE – The one who slaughtered my mother is me.

K – Wow! Wow! Wow! Wow! Eeeh?

TE – The one who slaughtered my father is also me.

K – What a blessed son! This guy slaughtered his mother and father.

TE – (*yells*) Yeh!

K – Don’t yell, Fellow!

TE – If you say “greetings”, I’ll cut off your nose!

K – Eeeeeh?

TE – If you say “Salam aleikum”, I’ll cut out your tongue!

K – Eeeeeh?

TE – If you answer “Salamin aleikum”, I’ll cut off your ear!

K – Look at this guy, he’s like a circumciser; he keeps cutting all the time. Fellow, I won’t let you cut.

TE – Why not?

K – You can cut the wrong way, Fellow.

TE – (*yells*) Yeh!

K – Don't yell, Fellow! Ahh, [inaudible].

TE – What's your name?

K – My name is Karagöz.

TE – What did you say? So, you're the man who's going to marry my sister. Quickly, choose a death out of different deaths!

K – Quickly choose a death out of different deaths? It's like shopping for shoes at *Mahmutpaşa*.⁸⁶

TE – (*yells*) Yeh!

K – Don't yell, Fellow! Aaah...

TE – Look at me! Did you ask me for permission to marry my sister? My father has died.

K – Eeh! So what?

TE – I'm the oldest person in the family, so ask me!

K – I'll ask you. But your sister complains about you.

TE – What are her complaints?

K – You beat her up everyday; you gamble; you get drunk everyday. Only if you make a vow of renunciation concerning your habits, will I ask you.

TE – Karagöz, I like you a lot, and I make a vow of renunciation in front of the spectators. From now on, I won't touch my sister, and I won't put alcohol in my mouth.

K – You won't put it in your mouth! You can drink through your nose. Yah!

TE – I promise. I'm making a vow of renunciation.

K – Really?

⁸⁶ A popular street and market in Istanbul.

TE – Yes!

K – Ohh! Now, if so, I ask you for your sister’s hand with Allah’s permission and the blessing of the prophet. Will you give her to me?

TE – Of course I will, Karagöz. Will she find a better man than you? May Allah let you grow old on the same pillow!

K – Thank you.

TE – Where is my sister, Dirrubâ? Call her!

K – OK, I will. Miss Dirrubâ!

DH – Yes? (*from inside*)

K – Look! Your brother has come.

DH – Aahh! Hide me somewhere!

K – Where shall I hide you, Fellow? The guy can cut me up, by Allah!

TE – Well, let me go to the market in *Kemeralti*,⁸⁷ do some shopping, buy you gifts, and dance *harman daltı*⁸⁸ in the wedding, and you watch! Goodbye, now.

K – Goodbye, now.

TE – (*yells exiting*) Yeh!

K – Don’t yell, Fellow! Look at this guy! He’s yelling like a March cat,⁸⁹ Fellow!

DH – (*enters*) What happened, Mr. Karagöz?

K – What could happen, Fellow. Your brother came.

DH – Aah! What happened?

K – By Allah’s commandment, I asked for your hand and he gave it to me. And then he made a vow to renounce alcohol, and he won’t beat you up anymore.

DH – Aahh! I’m happy to hear that. And I gathered my belongings and moved to

⁸⁷ A market in Izmir.

⁸⁸ A traditional dance.

⁸⁹ Acat in heat.

your house. May we be lucky, Sir! Did you go to the *kadı*?

K – I did, Miss, I did.

DH – Well, let's sing a song in honour of our marriage. Look! Mr. Şinasi is also here.
Let's sing *The Small Stones of Bursa*.

K – Let's sing, Miss! Let Mr. Şinasi sing too!

DH – Well, carry on! Let's hear you play, Mr. Disc!

K – It's playing! It's playing, Miss.

DH – Well, let's carry on!

(*both sing*)

The small stones of Bursa;

The small stones of Bursa;

(*to audience*)Where's the hand-clapping?

My sweetheart's hair is remarkable;

It's remarkable, it falls on her shoulder.

Her hair is on one shoulder;

It falls on her shoulder;

Her hair is on one shoulder;

[*inaudible*].

To our beautiful brunette sweetheart,

[*inaudible*].

Let's walk around Bursa, let's go

To Mr. Şinasi, to Çekirge!

DH – Oh! Mr. Karagöz! By Allah, your voice is very beautiful! Now I'm going home. I'll see you. (*exits*)

K – Ohhh!

H – (*enters*) My Karagöz! What happened?

K – What could happen, Fellow? A lot! A lot! Guests came, the guy from *Karadeniz*⁹⁰ came, a quilt maker. He gave me a quilt as a gift. The dentist came. He'll take care of all my teeth. Beberuhi came.

H – Oh! Sir, all the neighbourhood likes you, respects you. May you be lucky! And you are ridding yourself of bachelorhood!

Epilogue

⁹⁰ The Black Sea.

H – Sir, you tore down the curtain.

K – I did?

H – Let me go to the owner and tell him! (*exits*)

K – You watched a play in the Traditional Theatre Festival. Thank you. (*exits*)

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אוניברסיטת תל-אביב
הפקולטה לאומנויות ע"ש יולנדה ודוד כץ
החוג לאמנות התיאטרון

עולם האחר: ליצנים, אלים, וזרים בתיאטרון צלליות

חיבור לשם קבלת "דוקטור לפילוסופיה" (Ph.D.)

מוגש על ידי

צוא פא צ'ינג אברט

הוגש לסינאט של אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

אפריל 2004

העבודה הוכנה בהדרכתו

של

פרופ' יעקב רוז

תקציר

Je est un autre

Rimbaud

בעולם הבדיוני של הקולנוע והקרקס, שם מתוודעים רוב הילדים לדרמה, הגיבור ניצב במוקד תשומת הלב וזוכה בכל התהילה. אבל אני זוכרת בבירור איך תמיד התרשמתי, כנערה צעירה בין קהל הצופים, ש"האיש הרע", ז"א 'האחר', הוא לאמתו של דבר הדמות הקובעת. בלעדיו ובלי תחבולותיו המחוכמות לא היתה מתקיימת שום עלילה, והחיים היו מתנהלים על מי מנוחות אך באורח חדגוני. רושם זה נשמר אצלי כשגדלתי וראיתי הצגות למבוגרים, על הבמה ועל מסך הקולנוע. משמעותו והגדרתו של 'האחר', (כפי שהוא ידוע כיום) נעשתה ברורה לי יותר, ונוכחתי לדעת שהוא יכול ללבוש צורות רבות ושונות. אך בכל זאת הוא המניע הבסיסי של הפעולה, ולעתים קרובות הוא דמות מורכבת ומעניינת יותר מן הגיבור האמיתי. אני מצרפת הערה אישית זאת, משום שדעה זאת היא שהובילה אותי בסופו של דבר אל נושא המחקר הזה.

'האחר' נידון בהרחבה במדעי החברה ובמדעי הרוח במשך יותר ממאה שנים (למשל, אוֹפֶלְהֶרְטִי 1988, רוֹ 1992). במונחים הפשוטים ביותר, 'האחר' הוא כל מי ששונה במראהו או בהתנהגותו מן הרוב השליט - הוא הזר, הנכרי. הוא נמצא הן בשולי החברה, הזר הוא הדוגמה המובהקת ביותר, והן בתוכה, כלִין, הומוסקסואל, כפושע מנוודה וכו'. בדרך כלל, עמדתו של הצבור כלפי 'האחר' היא משתמעת לשתי פנים; יראים מפניו ודוחים אותו, אך הוא גם מעורר סקרנות ואולי אפילו קנאה. הוא עלול להיות מסוכן, מפני שהסטייה שלו מאיימת להפר את האיזון של הסטאטוס קוו; אך בה בעת, אקסוטיות שלו מביאה חידוש ומרמזת על הבטחה להתחדשות. לפיכך הוא גם מצודד לב. יתר על כן, כנעלם חשוד הוא משמש מושא שעליו אדם משליך את פחדיו ואת מאווייו הכמוסים. בדרך כלל מקשרים אותו עם אדם או קבוצה אלוהיים/דמוניים, וכדמות שכזו הוא קיים

במישור פסיכולוגי או דתי (מיתולוגי).

התאטרון, שהוא השתקפות החיים, מכיל את כל גוני הקשת של הנפשות הפועלות

בהם. מבין הסוגות הרבות, בחרתי בתאטרון צלליות כדי לחקור את 'האחר'. מחזה

הצלליות, לדעתי, הוא המדיום התאטרוני פאר אקסלאנס של 'האחר'. החוויה היומיומית

התקנית שלנו היא תלת-ממדית; הצל, היות שהוא דו-ממדי, הוא הייצוג ההולם של

'האחר'; כלומר, הוא דומה לדמויות בעולם המוכר לנו, אבל עובדת היותו מסוגנן ומופשט

מקנה לו איכות מסתורית שמרמזת על רמת מציאות אחרת. השילוב של פשטות טכנית⁹¹

ותחכום אומנותי בתאטרון צלליות הוא אידיאלי למסירת קשת רחבה של דברים לא

מוחשיים, החל בחברה דמיונית וכלה בפעולות התת-הכרתיות של הנפש, וכך מאפשר לתת

תאור גרפי של עולם 'האחר' בצורות שונות. אכן, בתחילתו היה תאטרון צלליות קשור ככל הנראה בפולחן

האבות, ועם התפתחותו, נושאים ודמויות מסורתיים - אמונות הפולחן ואלי העבר - התמזגו בסוגיות ההווה.

כדי לבסס את טענתי שתאטרון צלליות הוא אחד האמצעים התאטרוניים העיקריים

לתיאור 'האחר', אציין איך הוא משרת מטרה זו בתקופות ובתרבויות שונות מאוד. דבר זה

יובהר מן הסקירה התמציתית שלי, החל במקורותיו באסיה ובהמשכו עד לימינו אלה. בחרתי

בשלוש דוגמאות לדיון מקיף יותר: ה- *וואיאנג קוליט* בִּנְוָה, *קֶרְגִּיז (Karagöz)* בתורכיה,

ותיאטרון המולטימדיה של פִּינְג צ'וּנְג מן המאה העשרים. אבל מחקר זה אינו השוואתי

במהותו; מטרתו העיקרית היא לצטט ולנתח תופעות או נושאים מסוימים שחוזרים

בעקביות בסגנונותיו השונים של תאטרון צלליות בהקשרים היסטוריים ותרבותיים נבדלים

בתכלית.

אני מציעה את הרעיון האומר, שתאטרון צלליות מייצג את 'האחר' בשלוש הצורות

הבסיסיות (הקשורות זו בזו) של זרים, אלים ולצים. הזר הוא האב-טיפוס של מישהו שונה

ממך. האלים הם זרים על אנושיים, רחוקים מטבעם מבני האדם, אבל, כפי שמסופר

במיתוסים, מתערבים ללא הרף בעניינים ארציים. לעתים קרובות הם נחשבים לאבות אלוהיים,

⁹¹ אין בו אלא מסך שקוף שמאחוריו מקור של אור מאיר בובה או שחקן, כך שהקהל רואה את הצללית שלו.

למייסדים של מסורות ואמונות, ולפיכך הם דואגים לשלומם של צאצאיהם. הלץ הוא דמות ידועה של חצר המלכות המופיע תכופות בתפקידים דרמטיים; אבל בהקשר הנוכחי הוא מקבל משמעות רחבה יותר, הכוללת את ההיבט הקומי שלו. כתאטרון צלליות הוא מפעיל בדרך כלל כוחות שמחוץ לדרך הטבע, אבל מאחר שהוא מעשי ומציאותי יותר, "אנושי" יותר, הוא משמש כמתווך בין העולם הבדיוני של הבמה ובין הקהל, וכך הוא יכול למלא תפקיד של פרשן (ברכטיאני) לשאלות בעלות עניין אקטואלי.

ניסיתי לפתח את התזה שלי בקווים שיטתיים: להתחיל בדיון במושגים העיקריים שבהם אני משתמשת, אחר כך לעיין ביישומם לתיאטרון בכלל, ובסוף ביישומם לתאטרון צלליות בפרט. לאחר קביעת המונחים הבסיסיים של הטעון שלי, אני ממשיכה בניתוחן של שלוש הדוגמאות שבהן בחרתי.

פרק I מציג את הבסיס התיאורטי של מושג 'האחר'. מכיוון שניתן להגדיר מושג זה רק במונחים של 'העצמי', היה צורך להסביר איך אני מבינה את זה האחרון. אני חושבת את 'העצמי' לישות דינמית ומורכבת, ומאחר שמחזות הצלליות הנדונים כאן משתייכים לתרבויות המזרח והמערב כאחד, בניתי דגם המכיל אלמנטים חברתיים ופסיכולוגיים המגשרים בין השקפות כל אחת מהן לגבי האדם והחברה. ביססתי את התיאוריה שלי בדבר 'העצמי' על מספר פירושים קשורים הדדית: ג'. אָ. לְסֵטֶר (העצמי המרוכב) ומ.ג'. אָפֶטֶר (תיאוריית ההיפוך) מבקשים להסביר את ההתנהגות הפרדוקסאלית ומלאת הסתירות של היחיד; האמאגוצ'י אָסִינן מציע גישה ל'עצמי' המתמקדת ביחסים בין-אישיים, בניגוד להשקפה המערבית הרגילה, המדגישה את האינדיבידואליות; ובסוף, מושג ה-יֶן האינטגרלי של פרנסיס ק. קֶסו מציע את 'העצמי' בכל הרמות של פעולות הגומלין שלו - מן הרמה האישית העמוקה ביותר ועד לפעולות המודעות ובעלות המעורבות החברתית.

המודלים התיאורטיים בתזה זו לקוחים ממושג הגבוליות (liminality) של ויקטור טרנר (1982) שהוא רלוונטי למושג של שוליות (marginality), ומן המושג בעל המגמה הפסיכולוגית בדבר הופעת 'האחר' של סאנדר ל. גילמן (1985).

המלה גבוליות מציינת את הסף, האמצע, "לא כאן ולא שם", בין שני מצבים יציבים יחסית. זהו תחום של עמימות, של חוסר זהות, והוא בעל אופי של משפט תנאי, של היפותזה, השערה, ושל אפשרות. ויש בו גם מאופי הבניינים החוזרים של הפועל (בנין התפעל), כלומר, הוא יכול להיות נושא ומושא בעת ובעונה אחת. זהו מצב שבו ניתן לתמרן בחופשיות את האלמנטים המרכיבים את אישיותך ואת תרבותך, וכך לתת מקום לציירופים חדשים. מצב זה של להיות לא כאן ולא שם מקביל לעמדתו של 'האחר' כלא שייך (זר, אֵל או לֵץ), ומסבה זו הוא מגלה את האסור והקוסם כאחד, וכמו כן אפשרויות בלתי מוגבלות. גבוליות מתרחשת בזמן "טקסי המעבר" (rites de passage) המציינים את חיי האדם הרגיל, אך בשביל אותם בני אדם שהם שוליים לסדר החברתי, מצב זה הוא מצבם הקבוע.

לפי גילמן, 'העצמי' שואף לשמור על זהותו הנתונה בלי הרף ללחצים מבחוץ. בשביל הילד, מושגי "הטוב" ו"הרע" חופפים את יכולתו או אי יכולתו לשלוט בסביבתו. הוא מפנים קוטביות זו והופך להיות 'העצמי' "הטוב" וה"רע" בהתאם. בבגרותו גדלים הלחצים החיצוניים ומאיימים על לכידותו העצמית של היחיד. לפיכך הוא משליך את חרדותיו על רעיון לא ממשי בדמות 'האחר', שלו הוא מעניק את התכונות "הטובות" ו"הרעות" של העצמי, זאת אומרת, סימנים סטריאוטיפיים. גילמן טוען שאדם אינו יכול לחיות ללא סטריאוטיפים, שכן הם מסייעים לו להתמודד עם המתחים שבהם הוא נתון. סטריאוטיפים אלה אינם לא אקראיים ולא ארכיטיפיים, אלא כוללים סדרה לא משוכללת של ייצוגים מנטליים הכרוכים בהקשר החברתי וההיסטורי שלו. אך מאחר שהם משקפים ביסודם את מתחיו הפנימיים, יתכן של'אחר' יהיו תכונות שאין להן קשר, או רק קשר רופף, למציאות. הדגם הפסיכולוגי של גילמן המתאר את התהליך שבאמצעותו מעביר 'העצמי' את תכונותיו שלו ל'אחר' הוא שימושי עד מאוד בניתוח תאטרון צלליות על צורותיו השונות.

פרק II עוסק בתפקידו של 'האחר' בתאטרון, במיוחד בתאטרון צלליות. היכולת

המיוחדת של תאטרון צלליות להציג את 'האחר' היא שהובילה לבחירתו כנושא למחקר זה. מאחר שהקהל אינו רואה את הנפשות הפועלות במישרין אלא את צלליותיהן הנעות

בלבד, הן לובשות צביון מגי ומסתורי; כאילו אנו צופים לא רק בכובות שטוחות, אלא בדמויות מוזרות בעלות צורה וטבע לא אנושיים. אריכות ימיו של תאטרון צלליות בתרבויות רבות מעידה, לדעתי, על יעילותו, שהביאה לשימורו של אוסף שלם של מסורות תאטרוניות. לתאטרון בן זמננו – של בובות או שחקנים – נוספו חידושים במחזה הצלליות, על ידי שימוש בטכנולוגיה מתקדמת יותר, המשלבת הקרנת שקופיות, קלטות, סרטים ותאורות שונות.

פרק III דן ב-'אחרות' של שלוש הקבוצות הנכללות בעבודה זו – זרים, אלים

ולצים - ובתפקידן בעיצוב האופן שבו תופס הקהל את ההצגה. בדרך כלל, אף אחת משלוש דמויות אלה מהווה הדמות המרכזית במחזה, אך תפקידן והשפעתן הם משמעותיים ולעתים קרובות מכריעים, שכן הם מוסיפים ממד מיוחד במינו. השוליות המשותפת להם היא הסיבה לכך שנבחרו למחקר זה. כולם גבוליים וכולם משתמעים לשתי פנים, אבל לכל אחד ואחד יש אפיונים מיוחדים. האלים הם הקרובים ביותר ל-'עצמי', הם משקפים את פחדיו ואת צרכיו האינטימיים ביותר של האדם; במשך מאות בשנים הם שימשו להתגלמות כוחות שאין הוא יכול להשפיע עליהם, מתופעות הטבע ועד לרגשות מורכבים, שלעתים קרובות הם בלתי ניתנים לשליטה. הם בעלי יכולות על אנושיות והם בני אלמוות. האלים הם בוראיו ומגיניו של האדם, אך הם גם עלולים להיות הרסניים. התערבותם בחיי האדם תועדה מאז היווצרות הדרמה היוונית הקדומה, כמו בהופעת ה- *Deus ex machina* – האל יורד אל ארצות האדם כדי לפתור איזה מצב מסובך, או בגלל גחמה כלשהי, והוא מתערב באירועים ומשנה את תוצאותיהם. הלץ קיים למעשה בכל תרבות. הוא קורא תגר על בעלי הסמכות ומפר נורמות; הוא מפתיע ולפעמים מדהים, אך כמעט תמיד הוא מעורר צחוק. הקבוצה כוללת שוטים, להטוטנים וליצנים, אך תת-חלוקה נוספת עשויה לעזור להבנת הניואנסים. השוטה מטבעו, למשל, הוא לעתים קרובות איש תם, ולפיכך מעמדו נופל בחלקו מלידה; השוטה המלאכותי, לעומת זאת, הוא לעתים פקח מאוד, והוא בוחר בתפקיד מרצונו.

הזרים הם אולי האמביבלנטים מבין שלושת הסוגים, והם מעוררים רגשות חזקים מאוד של פחד ומשיכה. ניתן גם לחלק קבוצה זו לתת סוגים. הנס מאייר מבחין בין 'הלא-שייך בכוונה', מי שמבדיל את עצמו מרצונו מן החברה, ובין 'הלא שייך הקיומי', שמצבו נגזר עליו (ובזה דומה

הבחנה זו להבחנה בין השוטה מטבעו והשוטה המלאכותי). י. רז עימת את 'האחר שבפנים', הנמנה על חברה נתונה אך מנודה ממנה בגלל מעמדו החברתי הנמוך או בגלל התנהגותו הלא-תקנית (למשל, הפושע, ההומוסקסואל - לפעמים ממיינים את הנשים בקבוצה זו) עם 'האחר שבחוץ', הנכרי השונה בשל צבע עורו, שפתו או מנהגיו.

פרק IV כולל סקירה היסטורית קצרה של תאטרון צלליות, החל בסוגות הקדומות ביותר

הידועות לנו - ההודיות והסיניות - ומודגשת חשיבותן החברתית והדתית לתרבות של כל אחת מהן. לא ידוע מי מהן היא הקדומה יותר, אבל השפעתן על מחזות בובות בארצות שונות הוכחה מעל לכל ספק. אני דנה בגרסאות של יווה ותורכיה רק בדרך אגב, כי הן יידונו ביתר פירוט להלן. אך אציין איך הגיע תאטרון צלליות לראשונה למערב בצורת ה- ombres chinoises בפריז של סוף המאה, בעיקר בקברט Chat Noir שבו התכנסו רבים מן הבוהמה האינטלקטואלית של התקופה. באותם ימים היה זה בידור חילוני בתכלית.

בפרק V, אחרי הצגת המסגרת התיאורטית של מחקרי על 'האחר' במחזה

הצלליות, אני ניגשת אל הראשונה מבין שלוש הדוגמאות הייצוגיות שלי: ה-וואיאנג קוליט של יווה. זו הצורה המורכבת והמלוטשת ביותר של תאטרון צלליות המסורתי, והוא מעמדי התווך של תרבות יווה, המוצג לעתים קרובות במשך טקסי היטהרות וגרוש שדים. הצגתו נמשכת משעות הערב המוקדמות עד זריחת החמה. הבובנאי היחיד (ה-דאלאנג), הוא איש מקצוע מכובד ביותר שהוכשר בשלל אומנויות, ועליו להיות בעל כושר המצאה ויכולת להגיב לכל קהל. מלווה אותו לכל אורך ההצגה תזמורת כלי הקשה (גאמלאן) ושני זמרים (פאסינגן). במראה החיצוני שלהן משקפות הבובות את תכונותיהן הפנימיות של הדמויות שהן מייצגות. ה-אָלִיס, האצילים, הם דקי גזרה וצרי מתניים, ותווי פניהם קטנים ועדינים; הם מגלמים את מידות הטוהר, היושר, החמלה, שליטה עצמית, מסירות למילוי חובה, חכמה, וידע טרנסצנדנטלי. לקאסארים הגסים, על פי רוב נוכלים שלעתים הם דומים לחיות פרא, יש תווי פנים רחבים ובולטים; הם מתקשרים לכוח בהמי ולאלימות. אם כי

ההצגות מיועדות להיות מבדרות, יש להן תמיד מטרה פולחנית. רבים מגיבוריהן האלוהיים למחצה נחשבים לאבותיה של האוכלוסייה של היום, ורבים מהם משמשים מופת לחיקוי. למרות העובדה שרוב בני יוזה הם היום מוסלמים, הואיאיאנג, המושפע מדת ההינדו, מוסיף להיות יסוד מוסד במסורתם. כמו כן חשוב לציין, כי בעוד שרוב הסיפורים מבוססים על האפוסים ההודיים הקלאסיים, נטמעו אפוסים אלה באתוס של יוזה, ואחדים מן האלים המקומיים ודמויות אחרות שולבו באגדות ההינדיות, וכך יצרו נושאים מקוריים. התמקדתי במחזות של יוזה שמקורם ב-*מהאבהראטה*, כי הם מהווים את החלק החשוב ביותר ברפרטואר. את שלוש הקטגוריות של 'האחר', כפי שהגדרתי אותן, ניתן לזהות בכירור *בוואיאיאנג*. האלים, הינדים במוצאם, "הולאמו" ביוזה. הם חיים בגן העדן, סוראלאָה, ובראשם באטארה גורו, האל העליון, והם מהווים הייררכיה הדומה לזו הקיימת בחברה האנושית. בדרך כלל הם אֵלוֹס, אבל אצל אלים אחדים מתגלים מומים שהוטלו בהם כעונש. הלצים שאתאר אותם, ה-*פונאקוואן*, הם המשרתים-הליצנים הקומיים הנוטים למתוח ביקורת; קרוב לוודאי שהם שרידים של הפולחן הקדם-הינדי. למרות מראה ה-*קאסאר* שלהם, הם האהובים ביותר על הקהל, וביחוד אביהם, סָמאר, אנדרוגינוס בעל גוף גרוטסקי, אך עם זאת אל כביר שבא אל הארץ כדי להגן על האדם ולשרתו. הפונאקוואן מהווים קבוצה נפרדת השובה את לב הקהל בחוסר יראת הכבוד שלה ובסגנון דיבורה העממי.

הזרים, על פי רוב מפלצות או ענקים, הם זרים מחוץ לארץ, והם קיימים כדי להיות מובסים ולההרג בידי הגיבורים. הקרבות המשעשעים עד מאוד מיועדים להפגין את כשריו של הבובנאי.

פרק VI מוקדש קָרָגִז (Karagöz), תאטרון צלליות המסורתי של תורכיה. זוהי סוגה

סאטירית, שהדמות הראשית בה, קָרָגִז עצמו, הוא מעצם טיבו 'אחר', לֵץ פְּלָפִי. אבל המחזות מתארים אותו תמיד יחד עם בן לווייתו ה"פֵטריצי", 'הָג'יוואט', וכצמד הם מהווים אחדות דינמית. קָרָגִזֵהגיע לשיא פריחתו בזמן האימפריה העות'מנית, כשחופש הביטוי דוכא בדרך כלל, אבל לתאטרון זה, החסר כל יראת כבוד והלא מוסרי מאין כמותו,

התייחסו בסובלנות והוא שגשג. למרות העובדה שחודש הראמאדן הוא הקדוש בלוח השנה הדתי של האיסלם, דווקא בחודש זה התקיימו הצגות קְּגִיז ערב ערב, בעיקר בבתי קפה, אבל גם בחגיגות בבתי פרטיים, כמו חתונות או טקסי ברית מילה. למחזות קְּגִיז היה רפרטואר בסיסי, אבל הסיפורים לא היו אלא העלילה בקווים כלליים, והם אפשרו לבובנאי לאלתר ולהתאים את ההצגה לתנאים המידיים.

קְּגִיז עצמו הוא האב-טיפוס של הליץ. הוא וולגרי וקולני, הוא פועל ומדבר באימפולסיביות. בדרך כלל הוא המעורר את התככים, שלעתים קרובות הם משתבשים, ולא פעם ולא פעמיים הוא נענש בסוף. ואף על פי כן, הרפתקאותיו משעשעות את הקהל עד מאוד. המחזות גדושים בזרים. התורכים משלו בממלכה רחבת ידיים, וקְּגִיז מוקם ברבע של איסטנבול העתיקה, שגרו בו "טיפוסים" של השכונה (זרים שבפנים) וכן הנכרים ואנשי הפרובינציות הססגוניים (הזרים שבחוץ). הקהל הכיר את הדמויות – על פי רוב קריקטורות וסטראוטיפים. הנושאים התייחסו לעתים קרובות לאירועים ולאישים שנלקחו מן הממסד הצבאי והפוליטי (אך אף פעם לא לסולטן או למנהיגים דתיים), וכולם הושמו ללעג בעולם הבדיוני של הבובות.

למרות חילוניותה של סוגה זו, יש אזכורים לאלוהים בשורות הפתיחה, ויש דמויות לא אנושיות אחדות, כמו מכשפות וג'ינים, שהם בעלי כוחות על-טבעיים, וקרוב לוודאי שהם מייצגים שרידים של מסורות קדם-איסלמיות. ובכל זאת, היבט זה של 'האחר' הוא פחות מפותח ב-קְּגִיז מאשר בוואייאנג.

עם קריסת האימפריה, איבד קְּגִיז את מסגרת ההתייחסות שלו. אך הוא מוסיף להיות סמל של התרבות התורכית העממית, וכיום יש עדיין מספר בובנאים הממשיכים את המסורת, אם כי בצורה מתונה יותר, בלי הגסות והסאטירה הנוקבת שאפיינה אותו בימי זוהרו. מתקיימים פסטיבלים שנתיים שבהם מציגים הבובנאים את עבודותיהם. צרפתי תרגום של אחד מן המחזות העכשוויים האלה, נשואי קְּגִיז, מחזה שהוצג לא מכבר בפסטיבל באיזמיר, כדי להדגים הן את החידושים והן את ההמשכיות של תאטרון צלליות התורכי.

פרק VII מוקדש לדוגמה השלישית שלי, לתאטרון המולטימדיה של פינג צ'ונג, במאי

סיני-אמריקני בן זמננו שפיתח סגנון מיוחד במינו. ב"מופעים" שלו הוא משלב תאטרון מסורתי, קולנוע, וידאו, שקופיות, הצגות בובות, מחול, ותנועה - כל מעמד ספציפי והכלי המתאים לו. תאטרון צלליות הוא רק אחד הכלים שבהם השתמש, בייחוד בעבודותיו המוקדמות, אבל הוא משמש בעקביות להחצנת ההיבטים האפלים של הזר, ובכך הוא מדגים את התזה שלי, האומרת שתאטרון צלליות הוא האמצעי האידיאלי להציג את 'האחר' בתאטרון. הזר תופס מקום מרכזי בעבודתו של פינג צ'ונג, ואני מנתחת שני מחזות בפרוטרוט - *פחד ותיעוב כגוקאם ו-זרם הומבולדט*, מחזות שבהם הוא הדמות הראשית, המופיעה גם כצללית וגם כדמות תלת ממדית. הרחבתי את הדיון לשני מחזות נוספים, שהם אמנם לא של צלליות, אבל "הזרים" שבהם מחזקים את ההבנה שאנו מבינים את הטיפוס. ב-*קְשִׁימָה*, פינג צ'ונג משתמש במחזה צלליות כדי לתאר את הלץ ברישום חי של יחסי מזרח מערב. הלץ, כמו הזר, הוא לעתים צללית ולעתים תלת-ממדי. פינג צ'ונג אינו מתאר אלים במחזה צלליות, אבל במחזהו *נסֶפֶקְטוּ* (המבוסס על סרטו המפורסם של מורנאו בשם זה), כתב אישום מר נגד החברה המודרנית, ממלאה התגלמות של הרוע תפקיד מרכזי, שאותה כללתי בדיוני, כיוון שהיא מראה בצורה גרפית כל כך איך היבט של הנפש האנושית מושלך על 'אחר' מעורר אימה.

אני חושבת שמחקר זה דן בתאטרון צלליות מנקודת ראות מקורית. סוגה זו מפרשים בדרך כלל כמעין טקס פולחן, צורת בידור, או אירוע חברתי-פוליטי. אני טוענת שזהו אמצעי תאטרוני לתאר את דמותו האוניברסלית והבסיסית מן הבחינה הפסיכולוגית של 'האחר'. הפירוש, אני מקווה, יתרום להבנה חדשה של המדיום העתיק, של תפקידו וגישתו האסתטית, ושל ערכו האמנותי.

בכתיבת תזה זו, הן בחלקיה התיאורטיים והן בדיון בתאטרון צלליות בתרבויות השונות שבדקתי, הנחת היסוד שלי היתה שה- 'אחר', בשל היותו תלוי ב-'עצמי', תופס מקום משני, חשוב פחות. יתרה מזו, כפי שציינתי, טבוע באחר שמץ של קונוטציות שליליות ומאיימות; אפילו הבטיו

"המצודדים" הם מפוקפקים, מאחר ששינויים בסטאטוס קוו מלווים כמעט תמיד במידה של אמביוולנטיות. בכל זאת יש להדגיש שהשוליות והגבוליות של ה-'אחר' מעניקות במידה מסוימת היתר להתנהגותו, היתר שממנו לא יכול ה-'עצמי' הכפוף למסד ליהנות. אם ה-'עצמי' "חוצה את הגבול" הוא הופך להיות 'אחר'. כלומר, האחר ניחן ביכולות שהעצמי, מעצם טבעו, משולל מהן. כך שאין זה מדויק לגמרי לדבר על תלותו של ה-'אחר' ב-'עצמי'; בין השניים קיימת תלות

גומלין: *Car Je est un autre* (Rimbaud).