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Towards an aesthetics of the puppet

Steve Tillis
San Jose State University

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Tillis, Steve, M.A.

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TOWARDS AN AESTHETICS OF THE PUPPET

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the

Department of Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Steve Tillis

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Approved for the Department of Theatre

Karl Toepfer

Dr. Karl Toepfer

David Kahn

Dr. David Kahn

Ethel Walker

Dr. Ethel Walker

Approved for the University

M. Lou Lewandowski

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Puppets have been used in theatrical performance around the world and throughout theatrical history. From the archaic cultures of tribes and villages to the sophisticated societies of contemporary times, wherever there has been theatrical performance, there have been puppets. Every continent boasts of its own puppet traditions, be those traditions rude, or refined, or both. But despite their ubiquity, puppets have received little attention in the theoretical study of the theatre.

This thesis will essay fundamental problems in the theory of theatrical puppetry, with the intent of establishing a theoretical basis for a general aesthetics of the puppet. Later in the Introduction I will delimit the scope of the problems to be addressed, and will explain the approach that will be undertaken; but I would like to begin by presenting some evidence of the ubiquity of the puppet, evidence to which I will refer throughout this essay.

Consider: in Nigeria, members of the Ibabio tribe assemble by day in an open, sandy area; before them are blankets, sewn one to another and hung from wooden rails;

above the wall of blankets are one foot tall figures of men
and women, each constructed of a few pieces of sculpted and
painted wood; the figures seem to move and speak for
themselves; in fact, they are each moved via sets of rods,
and the speech given them is distorted and unnatural; these
figures perform bawdy and comic scenes of "topical events
drawn from tribal culture . . . [including] scenes of
domestic life as well as a number of satirical references to
the prevailing systems of tribal and colonial government"
(Malkin 1977: 64-5).

And consider: in Java, villagers sit in the cool of
the evening to celebrate some local event; at the place of
celebration, a large white screen of cotton cloth is
stretched within a wooden frame, and behind this screen are
a burning lamp and an ensemble of musicians; but the word
"behind" is without meaning, because the villagers sit on
both sides of the screen; between the screen and the lamp
are, variously, figures of men, women, gods, animals, even
whole marching armies; these figures are elaborately cut and
painted pieces of cured water-buffalo hide, and range in
height from half a foot to four feet tall; a portion of the
audience watches the shadows these figures cast, while the
rest watch the figures themselves, and so some can see that
these figures are given motion, via rods, by a single
person, who also gives speech, variously differentiated but

without unnatural distortion, to the vast array of figures;
the music is nearly continuous, providing background
accompaniment, song, and occasional foreground respite from
the action; the figures perform a mythological story,
alternately comic, tragic, and heroic, concerning the gods;
the performance is an integral part of the celebration, and
will last through the night (Brandon 1970: 35-69).

These considerations are disparate examples of dramatic
theatre: the Nigerian performance was witnessed early in
this century, and derives from a tradition that Malkin
implies is long-lived, but does not trace back in time; the
Javanese performance occurred in the 1960's, and is derived
from a tradition of puppetry dating back perhaps to the
ninth century, and certainly to the eleventh century
(Brandon 1970: 3). The considerations share the peculiarity
of presenting objects as if they were alive. The common
word for such theatrical figures is "puppet."

Consider: in London, England, an assortment of people
taking their leisure in Regent's Park gather together before
an oblong tent, six feet high, with an opening in its front;
within that opening are one foot tall figures of a hunch-
backed man and his wife, both constructed of cloth and wood,
both seeming to move and speak of their own accord; in fact,
each is given movement and speech by a single man hidden
inside the tent; the speech of the wife is a shrill but

clear falsetto, while the speech of the hunchback is distorted and unnatural; the wife continually repeats the hunchback's words so they might be comprehended; at the moment, the hunchback is lustily beating his wife with a roll of sausages (Press 1977).

And consider: in Washington, D.C., school-children are brought by the bus-load to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; on the vast stage before them are over-sized sections of a house and garden, and behind these scenic units stand three vocalists, joined by the National Symphony Orchestra; a singing actor represents a child, while various figures serve as the child's mother and as characters of the child's fantasy-life; the figure of the mother is ten feet tall, and constructed of celastic and cloth; she is moved via poles and rods with the obvious exertion of two operators, and is given speech by one of the vocalists; the fantasy characters, including figures of the numbers one through nine, are constructed of foam rubber, are visibly manhandled by their operators, and are given speech by the remaining vocalists; the speech of the mother and the numbers is given in as natural a voice as is possible when singing opera; at the moment, the audience is seeing an argument between mother and child, and the child's subsequent refuge in the world of fantasy (Brown 1981).

Again, these considerations of dramatic theatre are quite disparate: the English performance took place in 1977, and derives directly from a puppet tradition dating to at least the seventeenth century, and indirectly from a live theatre tradition that can be traced all the way to ancient Rome (Baird 1965: 95); the American performance occurred in 1981, and derives from no single tradition, but rather, incorporates diverse practices of the contemporary theatre. Nonetheless, the considerations also share the peculiarity of presenting the theatrical figures known as puppets.

Once more, consider: in Rajasthan State, India, villagers are attracted in the evening to the steps of the local temple by the arrival of a sub-caste of entertainers who stretch a brightly covered cloth between two poles and place a lamp at each end of the cloth; in front of the cloth sits one of the entertainers, who beats upon a drum; also in front is suspended, from a bamboo pole, an array of figures, each up to two feet tall, constructed of wood and cloth; when the moment comes for them to perform, they are released from the bamboo pole and swung into action, their movements obviously controlled by the looped strings that run from them to persons standing above; their speech is no more than noise, but the noise is carefully articulated, and the drummer serves as translator of this semi-comprehensible speech, making plain what is only suggested by it; the

figures in action are an idiot clown and a girl who trans-
forms into an ogre; they perform a comic scene of love gone
wrong (Baird 1965: 46-55; Samar 1960: 64-70).

And consider: in Osaka, Japan, people from within and
without the city visit an enclosed hall dedicated to a
particular type of theatre; on the broad stage before them
is a low platform, behind which is scenery and a painted
backdrop; at one end of the platform sit two men, a narrator
and a musician; upon the platform are figures of a man and a
woman; these figures, constructed of many pieces of sculpted
and painted wood, are gorgeously costumed and bewigged, and
are approximately three feet tall; three men are visible
behind each of them, obviously giving them movement via
direct contact and rods; the speech for the figures is
provided in a stylized but natural manner by the narrator,
backed by the expressive use of music by the musician; the
narrator and musician also provide more general narration
and music; the figures are performing a complex story
concerning the suicide of two lovers, a courtesan and a shop
apprentice (Adachi 1985: 12-30).

These last considerations are as disparate as any: the
Indian performance was witnessed in the 1950's, and derives
from a tradition "centuries old" (Baird 1965: 46); the
Japanese performance took place in 1977, and derives from a

tradition dating to the late sixteenth century (Adachi 1985: 3). They also share the peculiarity of the puppet.

I offer these six considerations to evidence the extra-ordinary dimensions of the phenomenon of the puppet. In each pairing of considerations, radically different means of performance are employed; in each pairing, a performance based in popular culture is set beside one that has been elaborated with sophisticated artifice. Countless other considerations might, but need not, be set forth, for the dimensions of this ubiquitous phenomenon are undeniable: employing a radical variety of means, based in popular culture or in sophisticated art, something, generally known as a puppet, spans history and geography.

It is not my intention, however, to discuss puppetry as it is historically or geographically manifested in any particular culture; studies of puppetry in many, although not nearly enough, cultures are already available, and fre-quently succeed in demonstrating traditional usage of the puppet. Neither is it my intention to summarize these studies; that is, to provide a general history and geography of the puppet. Such a summary would be an undertaking far too vast for the limitations of space incumbent to a thesis. I will, however, take into consideration the puppet theatre of certain diverse cultures, in an attempt to discover what might be constant across all boundaries of time and space.

It is also not my intention to examine the technical practices of puppetry, such as conventional means of construction and presentation; manuals concerning the appropriate techniques for various, although not all, types of puppets are already available, and frequently succeed in explaining how to construct and present the puppet in each instance. Neither is it my intention to summarize these manuals; that is, to provide a general guide to the practical mechanics of the puppet theatre. Such a summary would be far too mundane for the expectations of scholarship incumbent to a thesis. I will, however, take into consideration the manner in which puppets are made to perform, in an attempt to discover what might be found to be constant in the possibilities of puppet performance.

The phenomenon of the puppet exists in a variety of contexts distinguishable across the boundaries of history and geography, contexts that make use of all of the technical means available to puppetry; these various contexts lend to the puppet a variety of disparate roles.

I do not intend, however, to discuss the puppet as it is found in the context of religion, where it serves as an object of ritual or of sacred obfuscation. Nor do I intend to discuss the puppet as it is found in the context of education, where it serves as a tool of learning or of constructive play. Nor, finally, do I intend to discuss the

puppet as it is found in the context of therapy, where it serves as an agent of healing or of self-exploration. Discussion of puppetry in any of these contexts, fruitful as it might be, is tangential to my immediate interest, which is puppetry in the context of the theatre, where it serves primarily to entertain. My thesis might prove useful for discussion of puppetry in any of the other contexts, but such discussion will not be undertaken here.

My intention, then, is to undertake a cross-cultural observation and analysis of the performance of the theatrical puppet; or, to put it another way, I will undertake a synchronic study of the fundamental grounds of theatrical puppetry. Thus, the central theoretical problem for this essay is: how are we to comprehend the phenomenon of the puppet as it presents itself in its various manifestations?

The solution of this problem will require scrupulous attention to the puppet itself, in all of its manifestations. Such attention is not common to writing about puppetry, but it is not unknown; indeed, one might even say that it is hallowed by time.

An ancient reference to the Javanese puppet theatre can be found in The Meditation of Ardjuna, a composition by the court poet of King Airlangga (A.D. 1035-1049):

> There are people who weep, are sad and
> aroused watching puppets, though they know
> they are merely carved pieces of leather
> manipulated and made to speak. These people

> are like men who, thirsting for sensuous
> pleasures, live in a world of illusion; they
> do not realize the magic hallucinations they
> see are not real. (qtd. in Brandon 1970: 3)

All of the basic elements of puppetry, elements that are
constant through all of the considerations given above, are
referred to in this remarkable passage: the designed
figure; the movement and the speech given to the figure; and
the audience that "knows" the figure to be an instrument of
theatre, and yet participates in the "illusion" it creates.

Let us look for a moment at the elements that are
constant in the puppet itself, and make possible the complex
response of the audience.

As the passage suggests, and our considerations demon-
strate, three types of signs make up, or constitute, the
puppet: signs of design, of movement, and of speech. One
might say that these signs, whatever their specific nature,
arise from the general sign-systems of design, movement, and
speech. The specific signs that constitute the puppet are
related to signs that might be recognized as signs of life;
that is, as signs one generally associates with the presence
of life. To give a simple example: the puppet might have a
mouth, as living beings have mouths; the mouth might be made
to open and close, as the mouths of living beings open and
close; and from the mouth might be suggested the delivery of
speech, as living beings deliver speech. But when these
signs are presented by the puppet, they no longer signify

the actual presence of life. The signs have been <u>abstracted</u> from life, and are now presented by something that is without life of its own. It is in response to these signs, which normally signify life, that the audience accords the puppet its spurious life.

This essay will follow the example of the court poet of Airlangga and attempt to comprehend the puppet by examining how the deployment of abstracted signs creates an "illusion" of life that the audience "knows" is not real. It will attempt to comprehend the puppet through a concept I call "double-vision," which postulates that an audience sees the puppet in two ways at one time: as a perceived object and as an imagined life.

My approach will be <u>synchronic</u>, as opposed to <u>dia-chronic</u>, for a simple reason: diachronic study, the study of a subject through its historical and geographical development and/or diffusion, with due consideration of the details of its technical practices, as it is manifested in all of the contexts in which it arises, presupposes that a <u>methodology</u> for such study exists; synchronic study, the study of the underlying principles of a subject, attempts to develop precisely that methodology through careful and comprehensive observation and analysis. Such a methodology for the study of the puppet has yet to be articulated with much success. Thus, synchronic study is necessary as

prologue, extended as it might be, to any rigorous dia-
chronic study; synchronic study will attempt to develop a
methodology by isolating and exploring the fundamentals, the
constants, of the puppet as in all of its theatrical
manifestations. Only with such a methodology might a
comprehensive study of the aesthetics of the puppet have
some chance at success.

As I have suggested, despite the precedent set by the
court poet of Airlangga, there is a marked absence of
theoretical discussion in the literature of puppetry; and
nowhere is this absence more remarkable than in the English
language literature. In literatures such as Russian,
Hungarian, Czech, and Polish, theoretical discussion of
puppetry has developed a certain liveliness, no doubt in
response to the vitality of native traditions and/or contem-
porary developments in the puppetry of those nations. But
in the English language literature, despite native tradi-
tions and contemporary developments only a bit less vital,
the theoretical aspect of puppetry has evinced little
interest. Problems of the most fundamental nature have been
given only cursory attention, as writers seem to assume they
have been solved; but the problems remain. How is the
puppet to be defined; or, what is to be considered a puppet?
How is the puppet to be described; or, what taxonomic system
offers a satisfactory vocabulary for comparing and con-

trasting various puppets? How is the puppet to be
explained; or, what is the basis of the enduring appeal of
the puppet through its historic and geographic diversity?

I will examine the standard solutions that are given to
these problems by testing them against the six considera-
tions given earlier, as well as against other examples of
puppetry, which I will supply, as necessary, along the way.
In doing so, I will not pretend that any particular manifes-
tation of the puppet is an ideal form of puppetry; rather, I
will be concerned with the puppet itself as a broad and
variegated phenomenon. This examination will point up the
strengths and weaknesses of the standard solutions. And
then, taking stock of these strengths and weaknesses, I will
develop my own solutions, testing them as well against the
six considerations and other examples of puppetry. Through
it all, I will offer detailed reference to the previous
scholarship and to the considerations and examples given; my
procedure will be predicated upon thorough observation and
analysis. And through it all, I will maintain a synchronic
approach that searches for what is constant throughout the
phenomenon of the puppet.

But is a synchronic approach appropriate to the study
of puppetry? Henryk Jurkowski, a Polish scholar and
producer who has served with great distinction as Secretary

General and as President of UNIMA (l'Union Internationale de la Marionnette), has serious doubts:

> [Such] an approach happens to be applied
> rather often by contemporary scholars who
> discuss the characteristics of the puppet
> theatre. Puppetry for them seems to be a
> synchronically unified monolith, although
> contemporary puppet theatre is a rich and
> differentiated totality, taking in cultural
> elements of different provenience [sic] and
> from different epochs. (Jurkowski 1983: 127)

Indeed, the central point of Jurkowski's essay on "Trans-codification of the Sign Systems of Puppetry" is that the puppet can be found variously in the "service" of "neighbor sign systems," of the "sign system of the live theatre," of the "sign system of the puppet theatre," and of a theatre based upon "the atomization of all elements of the puppet theatre" (Jurkowski 1983: 131-132). Jurkowski argues that synchronic approaches ignore this variety of employments for the puppet, and so inevitably misunderstand the realities of the puppet as it exists in "concrete theatrical epoch[s], determined by territory and cultural tradition. . ." (Jurkowski 1983: 127).

What's more, even if a synchronic approach were viable, Jurkowski suggests that its value would be minimal:

> If one takes this entire range of puppet
> theatre as a field of scientific investi-
> gation, a preliminary task is to make a
> register or index of its various elements. .
> . . This register may be of some use as a
> demonstration of the puppet theatre's means
> of expression, but I am afraid it will not

> tell us much more about puppetry than we know
> already. (Jurkowski 1983: 127)

How is one to respond to these remarks?

First, the scholar whom Jurkowski cites as the foremost exponent of the synchronic approach, Petr Bogatyrev, never actually undertook any systematic study of puppetry; neither did he create any kind of register or index of puppetry (see Bogatyrev 1983 [1973]). Bogatyrev implied the usefulness of such endeavors, but if they ever have been undertaken, there seems to be no reference to them in either the English language literature or in the translated foreign language literature of the subject.

Second, regardless of what Bogatyrev may or may not have done, to undertake a synchronic analysis of the puppet is not necessarily to consider puppetry as a "synchronically unified monolith." Granted that some, even most, discussion of puppetry is guilty of hypostatizing some idealized form of the puppet, a synchronic approach might be fully aware of the diachronic, multi-cultural diversity of puppetry and still seek for whatever might be found to be constant throughout that diversity. The most obvious stability, of course, is that of the puppet itself: Jurkowski himself is able to identify something as a puppet.

Third, the creation of an index of the puppet's "means of expression" would be of far greater usefulness than Jurkowski allows. It might well be that such an index would

tell Jurkowski little more than he "knew already." This should not be surprising, as Jurkowski is one of the world's foremost scholars of puppetry. Although in the course of this essay I will be in substantial disagreement with him over a number of issues, my comprehension of puppetry would have remained impoverished without the stimulation that learning from and disagreeing with Jurkowski has provided. But neither should it be surprising that few people, be they practitioners, scholars, or audiences of puppetry, know as much as Jurkowski, and that they might find a certain value in a work that can explain what is, in fact, constant throughout the diachronic diversity of the puppet. An index of the "means of expression" available to the puppet will provide the basis for discussion about how particular puppets and puppet traditions create theatre; it will provide the basis, that is, for an understanding of the puppet's full range of performance possibilities, and for a meaningful comparison of the various manifestations of the phenomenon of the puppet. Additionally, it will demonstrate the manner in which puppetry is a distinctive form of theatre; a form of theatre, that is, that provokes its audience to consider fundamental questions of what it means to be an object and what it means to have life.

And so, despite Jurkowski's misgivings, my approach will be a synchronic one. But I will be cautioned by

Jurkowski's warning against taking puppetry as a "monolithic whole," and will be challenged by his claim that such an approach can scarcely teach much to anyone. In Chapter Five of this essay I will return to Jurkowski's arguments against the synchronic approach, and will use them as a test of the solutions I have formulated concerning the theoretical problems of puppetry; in Chapter Six I will develop the sort of index Jurkowski denigrates, and will show how such an index can, indeed, advance our comprehension of the particular theatricality of the puppet.

Whatever disagreements I might have with Jurkowski, no doubt we agree that the purpose of our studies is to assist in the general comprehension of the phenomenon of the puppet. Sergei Obraztsov, arguably the most important puppet-artist of the twentieth century, has written: "We must not forget how many people think [puppetry] is not worth taking seriously, that those who study it are wasting their time" (Obraztsov 1967 [1965]: 17). I will attempt to show that puppetry is indeed worth taking seriously, as it is a unique and vital mode of theatrical art, and as it is an art that, by its very nature, leads to a fresh understanding of humanity as the maker and breaker of myths about itself and its world.

CHAPTER 2

Standard Definitions of the Puppet

What are people talking about when they talk about puppets? The word "puppet" is immediately comprehensible to anyone familiar with the English language, and no doubt conjures up in everyone's mind a definite idea; after all, almost everyone has observed, at one time or another, a puppet-show. But is there any consistency, from one mind to the next, to these ideas of the puppet that arise from individual observation? The burden of definition is to suggest the common idea, rooted in common observation, that gives meaning to a word. Definitions, however, can be curious things.

The word "puppet" is a case in point: the puppet has been around for upwards of three millennia, and yet remains without precise definition. Perhaps, given the puppet's diachronic diversity, and the ensuing diversity of observations and ideas, it might not be possible to construct such a definition; but perhaps it might.

Paul McPharlin, the most important twentieth century American scholar of puppetry, gives the basic etymology of the word:

> Puppet . . . comes from pupa, Latin for
> "girl" or "doll" or "small creature." The
> -et makes it diminutive, a small small crea-
> ture. . . . The word marionette, of Italian-
> French origin, [meaning] "little little
> Mary," does not differ from puppet in basic
> meaning. . . . A comparative newcomer to
> English, it has struck showmen as having a
> more elegant look than plain old puppet.
> (McPharlin 1949: 5)

This matter of "elegance" being the sum of the acknowledged

difference between the two words, it will be best to follow

contemporary usage and stick with "puppet" for the general

phenomenon under discussion, and reserve "marionette" for a

particular type of puppet.

Obviously, the definition implicit in this etymology is

inadequate; but one cannot expect etymology to explain the

full and current meaning of a word, owing to linguistic and

practical developments over time. So let us turn to the

professional makers of definitions and their dictionaries.

Dictionary definitions of the word "puppet" are con-

structed with an astonishing lack of precise observation,

and are nothing short of risible: "A figure (usually small)

representing a human being: a child's doll. . . . A human

figure, with jointed limbs moved by means of strings or

wires: a marionette. . ." (Oxford English Dictionary); "A

small figure of a human being, that by means of strings or

wires is made to perform mock drama; a marionette . . ."

(Funk and Wagnalls). Other dictionary definitions, being

little different, need not be adduced.

What's wrong here? It's not the confusion with the word "marionette," which is but a quibble. What's wrong is that regardless of the etymology of the word, the puppet need not be "small"; the puppet need not "represent a human being"; the puppet need not be like a "child's doll"; the puppet need not be moved "by means of strings or wires"; and the puppet, in performance, need not "perform [in] mock drama," whatever "mock drama" might be construed to mean. It is untenable to suggest that these definitions are imprecise because they follow common usage, or misusage, for it is quite common to hear of large puppets, of puppets that represent animals, of puppets that are highly sophisticated, and so on. Perhaps the makers of dictionaries suffer from some sort of cultural or aesthetic myopia, making precise observation impossible; or perhaps they simply are satisfied with unobservant imprecision. In either case, their definitions cannot be taken seriously. To regain contact with reality, let us turn to those who have some under-standing of the word; let us turn to those who actually think about, and work with, the puppet.

McPharlin, whose etymology we followed, defines the puppet as "a theatrical figure moved under human control. . ." (McPharlin 1949: 1). Bil Baird was one of the most popular and influential producers of twentieth century American puppetry; he defines the puppet as "an inanimate

figure made to move by human effort before an audience"
(Baird 1965: 13). The majority of definitions given by
scholars and artists of puppetry only restate, at best, the
elements that are explicit or implicit in these definitions;
so let us work with them.

These definitions are obviously superior to those
offered by etymology or the dictionaries. They correctly
observe the puppet as "theatrical" and existing "before an
audience," thus making a fundamental distinction between the
puppet that performs and the doll with which a solitary
child might play. Such a doll indeed might be used as a
puppet, but not all dolls are puppets, and not all puppets
are dolls. They also correctly observe the puppet as "under
human control" and "moved by human effort," thus making a
fundamental distinction between the puppet that is respon-
sive to immediate and variable control and the automaton
that is motivated via mechanical device to perform, unre-
sponsively, a narrowly limited series of actions. Again,
such an automaton might be used as a puppet, but not all
automata are puppets, and not all puppets are automata.
Finally, the broadness of these definitions is a great
advance over those suggested by etymology or offered by
dictionaries: these definitions allow for the vast scope of
activity that people are talking about when they talk about
puppets. But still, they suffer from three serious prob-

lems, the first of which arises from their failure to fully
consider the possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-
system of design, the second of which arises from their
failure to fully consider the limitations inherent in the
puppet's sign-system of movement, and the third of which
arises from their failure to consider, to any degree at all,
the puppet's sign-system of speech.

The first problem exists despite the broadness of the
definitions. McPharlin writes that the puppet is a "the-
atrical figure," but throughout his work (see McPharlin 1938
and 1949) he takes for granted what Baird makes plain: that
the figure of the puppet is "inanimate." But need the
puppet, in fact, be inanimate?

Let us take as an example the theatrical figure of a
baby, brought on-stage by a living "father" who obviously
operates him, and who sings to him a lullaby; he looks
around at the audience, plays with father, and rocks back
and forth. His head is carved wood, and his body a cloth
sack. When he descends into sleep, he rolls over and
exposes his naked behind, which is nothing other than the
back of the operator's hand. And let us take as another
example the figure of a drunkard, who sings, in a wobbly
voice, a lyric of drunken sorrow, while pouring himself one
glass vodka after another, before giving out in utter
despair. His head is stuffed cloth, with a mouth that opens

and closes; the hand that does the pouring, connected to his body by a sleeve, is the actual hand of his operator. Neither of the theatrical figures in these examples are entirely inanimate, as both of them incorporate the living flesh of their operators; yet few people would deny that they are puppets. The possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-system of design are not exhausted by figures that are entirely inanimate.

More extreme examples can be presented. Let us take as an example the theatrical figures of two lovers. To the off-stage accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's "We were sitting alone by a murmuring brook," a song whose lyric reflects the outlook of the male figure, they meet one last time; they approach one another, laugh and cry, sigh with regret, hug and kiss, and finally part. Their heads are little more than small spheres of wood, while their bodies are nothing more than the two hands of their operator, to which, upon one finger of each, the wooden spheres are affixed. And let us take as an example the figures of two combatants: without a word spoken, they argue and fight, and one is subdued while the other is triumphant. But the figures are nothing more than living human hands. The triumphant hand becomes a wall; the subdued hand makes a fist and knocks against it; the wall will not give, and the subdued hand falls away; the triumphant hand now makes a fist; and then they both spread

out, open-palmed, in a gesture that silently asks "Why?"
There is little or nothing "inanimate" about the figures of
these examples: living hands dominate the performance. And
still, these hands, as used here, are generally taken to be
puppets, for the hands are not thought of by the audience as
pairs of hands, but rather, as something other than hands.
The possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-system of
design encompass figures that are not predominately inani-
mate, and even figures that are not at all inanimate.

The last of these examples is a sketch about the Berlin
Wall, presented by Burr Tillstrom to the 1980 International
Puppetry Convention (Tillstrom 1980); the three previous
examples are sketches by Obraztsov (Obraztsov 1950: 184 ff).
Obraztsov writes, "The principle of [the hand-puppet]
consists of two elements only: the human hand and a
puppet's head. [The puppet's body] is only a costume. But
strip a hand puppet of its costume and leave your hand
exposed with the puppet's head on your finger and the puppet
remains a puppet" (Obraztsov 1950: 186). This principle is
correct: the puppet not only need not be entirely inani-
mate; it need not, in fact, have anything inanimate about
it. As we have seen, one might go so far as to strip the
puppet of its head, and the human hand can still remain a
puppet. But if this is so, and the design possibilities of
the puppet go so far as to abjure any use of the inanimate,

then how are we to allow for the actor as puppet, while maintaining the distinction between actor and puppet?

Obraztsov makes a telling remark concerning his sketch with the figure of the baby:

> My right hand, on which I wear the puppet, lives apart from me with a rhythm and a character of its own. . . . [It] conducts a silent dialogue with me or, ignoring me altogether, lives its independent life. (Obraztsov 1950: 155)

This "living apart" of the puppet, with "a character of its own," is a vital point. It seems apparent that when an audience sees the back of the operator's hand as the baby's behind, it perceives the hand not only as a hand, but, more importantly, as part of the figure of the baby. Similarly, when an audience sees the operator's hand as the puppet character's hand, it is perceived not only as a living hand, but also as the hand of the figure. In each case, the hand that wears the puppet "lives apart," and is perceived apart, from the actor, and partakes, in the perception of the audience, of the same nature as the rest of the figure. That is, it is perceived not only as hand, but also as if it were an object. This principle extends to the hands that Obraztsov uses as puppets' bodies, and to the hands that Tillstrom uses to signify bodies, a wall, and the ideas of anger, supremacy, and mental anguish. Because of the manner in which the hand is employed in the design of these puppets, even if, as with Tillstrom, it is the sole element

of design, and because of the manner in which the puppet is
given movement and/or speech, the hand of the actor is
perceived to be "apart" from the actor. And this is how we
can solve the problem of allowing the actor as puppet, while
still distinguishing between the actor and the puppet: the
actor may be called a puppet when he presents him or herself
in such a way that the audience perceives him or her, not
only as alive, but also, in whole or in part, as an object.

A corollary question might here be asked: how are we
to distinguish between the actor who is perceived as an
object and the actor who merely performs in mask and/or
costume? Or, to give a simple example, is the Mickey Mouse
who greets visitors at Disneyland to be considered a puppet?

This question is made especially difficult to answer by
the desire of many people involved with the puppet to annex
the mask into the field of puppetry. Baird writes:

> Masks . . . are just an evolutionary step or
> two away from the puppet. When a single
> masked dancer began to appear as a performer
> . . ., it was the beginning of theatrical
> performance and a stepping-off place for the
> mask to become a puppet. Gradually . . . the
> mask moved upward, off the head, and was held
> in front of the body. Later, it moved
> farther away and was made to live by . . .
> manipulation. (Baird 1965: 30)

The anthropological basis for Baird's assertion is disput-
able, and the blurring in his account between the contexts
of religion and theatre is confusing; but the gist is that

there is precious little difference, from the very begin-

ning, between the actor in mask/costume and the puppet.

Peter Arnott, a British performer and scholar who

specializes in presenting the classical repertoire with

puppets, would obliterate even that little difference, and

take the case one step further:

> We may say . . . that whenever an actor dons
> a mask--either literally, as in Greek and
> Roman plays, or figuratively, as when he
> plays a strongly typed part--he is abnegating
> his individuality and making of himself a
> puppet. (Arnott 1964: 77)

Annexation such as this certainly goes too far, as it would

turn a goodly portion of what is universally presumed to be

live theatre into puppetry. The definition of the puppet

can scarcely be stretched to this extent without snapping

altogether, severing the word from any particular meaning.

To distinguish clearly between the actor subsumed in

the puppet and the actor wearing a mask/costume, we must

consider the perception of the audience: if the audience

perceives the mask/costume to be nothing more than an object

of dress worn by a living actor, then that is all it is; but

if the audience perceives the actor in the mask/costume to

be but a part of the object, then it must be recognized as a

puppet. Our Mickey Mouse is surely not perceived as an

object, and so is not a puppet, but simply an actor in

mask/costume.

The first problem, then, can be solved with the realization that the possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-system of design transcend the inanimate. The puppet is an "object" only in the perception of the audience. It will be useful, when not explicitly noting the perception of the audience, to employ the quotation marks, reminding us that the word is not limited to the inanimate, but, rather, implicitly refers to the audience's perception of the figure in question.

If this first problem with the definitions of McPharlin and Baird exists despite their broadness, the second problem exists because of their broadness. In trying to open up the concept of what should be called a "puppet," they open it up too far. When McPharlin writes that the puppet is "moved under human control," and Baird that it is "made to move by human effort," they suggest that any theatrical figure so moved is a puppet. But is this true?

Let us take a mundane theatrical example: a chair sits upon the stage, and upon that chair is a lady's fan; at some point, stage-hands come and move the chair down-stage left; they carry the fan off-stage. The chair and the lady's fan are certainly "theatrical figures" and "inanimate figures"; they certainly have been "moved under human control," or "made to move by human effort." Yet it could scarcely be imagined that anyone would want to call them puppets. It

is, of course, perfectly possible to have chairs and fans as
puppets; it is possible, it might be argued, to have
anything as a puppet. But clearly, in the example before
us, the chair and the fan are not puppets. Somehow, the
puppet must be distinguished from scenery and prop. The
possibilities inherent in the sign-system of movement are
not so inclusive as to render every object that happens to
be moved upon the stage a puppet.

A solution to this problem is implied by McPharlin's
use of the word "theatrical," which might be taken to
suggest something of a different nature than that of scenery
and props. Marjorie Batchelder, a major force in American
puppetry as both a scholar and producer, does not settle for
mere suggestion: "[T]he puppet is an actor participating in
some kind of theatrical performance. . ." (Batchelder 1947:
xv). This is to the point, as neither the chair nor the
lady's fan can be construed to be acting. But this solu-
tion, although not an attempt at annexation of the sort just
discussed, sets up a semantic problem: the puppet is
certainly an actor of some sort, but as we have seen, it
must be distinguished from the living actor. Batchelder
makes this distinction by referring to the puppet's
"mechanical means" of motivation (Batchelder 1947: xv).
This, however, is problematic: hand-puppets, as well as
hands used as puppets, are given motivation without any

"mechanical means"; what's more, the semantic confusion between "puppet" and "actor" lingers despite the distinction. To avoid this, it will be useful to examine precisely how the puppet can be construed to act.

Look again at Baird's use of the word "inanimate." Such a word compels consideration not only of itself, but of its opposite. Obraztsov writes about "[t]he process by which the inanimate becomes animate. . ." (Obraztsov 1967 [1965]: 19). If the puppet is "inanimate," then its theatrical significance is not created by its being "moved," as such, but by its being "animated." Neither the chair nor the lady's fan of the example just offered can be construed to have been animated. This solution, however, which is quite common, sets up semantic difficulties of its own. To "animate" something means, in the root sense of the word, to give it the breath of life. As a metaphor, this is precisely what a performer does with a puppet; but non-metaphorically, it is an absurdity; for, of course, the puppet does not actually live. There is a secondary semantic difficulty as well: the word "animation" has been taken over to a large degree by the film industry, with its animation of cartoon figures. These semantic difficulties can be avoided by speaking of the puppet as something that is given movement in such a way that it seems to have life. And this is how we can solve the problem of distinguishing

the puppet from scenery and props: although both might be given movement upon the stage, the movement given to the puppet is of a sort that encourages the audience to imagine that the puppet has life.

Another corollary question might be asked: is the puppet a puppet when it sits at rest, in some closet or museum? We honor various objects at rest with the title "puppet," but on what authority? Michael R. Malkin, an American scholar and producer, reports that:

> African puppets often bear little relation-
> ship to Western concepts of how puppets
> should look, [and so] clear, unequivocal
> identification of many figures [as puppets]
> is often difficult to obtain. (Malkin 1977:
> 71)

The implications of this are clear. It is only as a result of being aware of particular traditions of puppetry that we are able to identify certain objects as puppets. In that a vast variety of objects, of various sizes, shapes, and materials, have been used as puppets, throughout history and around the world, it follows that the accordance of the title "puppet" upon any object at rest, or, more properly, not in performance, is problematic. The puppet cannot be defined simply in terms of its design. Rather, the puppet must be defined as something other than an object or a class of objects characterized by physical form; it must be defined, that is, with reference to the additional sign-systems that help the audience imagine it to have life.

Malkin himself understands this; as he states the case

a few years later:

> [T]he animated object becomes a puppet not
> [even] when the operator assumes complete
> control of it, but at the infinitely more
> subtle moment when the object seems to
> develop a life force of its own. (Malkin
> 1980: 9)

The second problem, then, can be solved by the realiza-

tion that the possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-

system of movement are not so all-encompassing as to confer

the imagination of "life" upon everything in the theatre

that happens to be moved. Indeed, it will be useful, when

not explicitly noting the imagination of the audience, to

employ the quotation marks, reminding the reader that the

word does not refer to any real life in the puppet, but,

rather, implicitly refers to the audience's willful use of

imagination when viewing the figure in question.

The third problem with the definitions of McPharlin and

Baird exists because of their suggestion that movement is

the defining characteristic of the puppet. McPharlin states

categorically that "[i]t is movement, actual or illusory,

which gives a puppet animation" (McPharlin 1938: 81). Move-

ment, of course, is one of the three sign-systems whose

signs constitute the puppet; and, following McPharlin, it

might well be the most significant of the sign-systems. As

Louis Duranty, a nineteenth century Frenchman, writes,

"[W]hat the puppets do entirely dominate what they say"

(qtd. in Veltrusky 1983: 97). But still, the puppet in performance can remain motionless for an extended time, and can, on rare occasions, remain without actual motion for the duration of its performance, and yet be something other than a mere figure of design; that is, something other than a statue. This is because the sign-system of speech is also available to the puppet, and in the absence of puppet movement, the possibilities inherent in this sign-system can allow the audience to imagine the puppet as having life.

Henryk Jurkowski, whose attack on the synchronic approach was discussed in the Introduction, offers a radically different definition of the puppet theatre that incorporates all three sign-systems available to the puppet:

> The puppet theatre is a theatre art, the main and basic feature differentiating it from the live theatre being the fact that the speaking and performing object makes temporal use of the physical sources of the vocal and motor powers, which are present outside the object. The relations between the object (the puppet) and the power sources [the speakers and/or manipulators] change all the time and their variations are of great semiological and aesthetical [sic] significance. (Jurkowski 1983: 142)

In giving this definition, Jurkowski appears to be making just the sort of synchronic statement he seems to have previously disparaged. Be that as it may, his definition suggests that the basis for definition of all theatrical puppetry is the separation of the object from its source(s) of movement and speech.

This definition would be an advance over McPharlin's and Baird's if only because of its recognition of each of the three sign-systems. But it goes further. Its insistence on the importance of the separation of and relationship between the object and its "power sources" prepares the way for analysis of how the sign-systems operate independently and corporately. There are, however, three problems with this definition as well.

The first problem is that while the definition recognizes the three separate sign-systems, it seems to contend that both speech and movement must be present if we are to construe an object to be a puppet: "[T]he speaking and performing object"; "[T]he physical sources of the vocal and motor powers" (my emphasis). What's more, contrary to McPharlin's categorical assertion about movement, Jurkowski is categorical about speech. Charles Magnin, a nineteenth century French historian of the theatre, argues that "the separation of word and action is precisely that which constitutes the puppet play" (qtd. in Proschen 1983: 20). Jurkowski refines this argument: "The separability of the speaking object and the physical source of the word . . . is the distinctive feature of the puppet theatre" (Jurkowski 1983: 142). But consider two cases: in the first, a narrative dance is presented by inanimate figures that are given movement on-stage to the accompaniment of music; in the

second, a narrative dance is presented on-stage by live dancers, to the accompaniment of character voices. In the first case, despite the absence of any given speech, the figures on-stage could scarcely be thought of as anything but puppets; in the second case, despite the presence of a separate source of speech, the live dancers could scarcely be thought of as anything but live dancers. Jurkowski's insistence that the sign-systems of speech and movement operate always in tandem leads to a denial of what is obviously a puppet. By refining Magnin's argument with the assertion that the separation is between speech and object, rather than speech and action, Jurkowski avoids total absurdity; but his insistence on the primacy of speech over movement tends in that direction. The problem of the relations between the two sign-systems can, however, be easily solved, by emphasizing neither of the two sign-systems over the other, _a priori_, but rather by allowing their signs to exist separately or together, in conjunction with the designed object itself, in the constitution of the puppet.

The second problem with Jurkowski's definition is that when he speaks of the puppet as an "object," he means precisely that: something of a wholly inanimate nature. As such, puppetry cannot incorporate any part of the live actor in the puppet. In fact, as we will see in the next Chapter,

Jurkowski would go so far as to disallow the hand-puppet as a puppet, because there the focus of the audience's attention is the puppet-operator's hand, and the puppet upon it is but a costume for the mime of the hand (Jurkowski 1988 [1979]): 21-2). Thus, Jurkowski places a severe limit on the possibilities inherent in the puppet's sign-system of design; what's more, he defies the general understanding of what is meant by the word "puppet." This problem, as we have seen, can be resolved by taking seriously the perception of the audience: what is perceived to be an object, regardless of its true nature, can indeed be a puppet.

The third problem with Jurkowski's definition is that while it accounts for all three of the sign-systems of the puppet, it does not refer to the result that these sign-systems aim to achieve: the creation of something that an audience will imagine to have life. Jurkowski is not unaware of this purpose, for he writes of puppets as "scenic characters" (Jurkowski 1983: 141). But this awareness is not to be found in his definition. This problem can be solved with the simple acknowledgement of the desired theatrical result: the imagination of life for the puppet that occurs when the sign-systems are competently deployed.

Before setting forth the basis for a new definition of the puppet, let us briefly summarize the foregoing analysis, for the ideas developed in it will recur throughout this

essay. It will be recalled that the first problem with the definitions of McPharlin and Baird is that, despite their broadness, they do not allow for the actor *as* puppet, and therefore are not able to distinguish between the actor and the puppet, because they fail to do justice to the possibilities inherent in the sign-system of design. This problem is resolved with the realization that the living actor can present him or herself, in part or in whole, in such a way that the audience perceives him or her just as it perceives the rest of the figure: as an "object."

The second problem with these definitions is that, in their broadness, they fail to distinguish between scenery and props and the puppet, because they overstate the importance of the sign-system of movement. This problem is resolved with the realization that the puppet is given movement for the explicit purpose of encouraging the audience to imagine that the puppet has something that, in fact, it does not have: its own "life."

The third problem with these definitions is that with their emphasis on movement, they entirely ignore the puppet's sign-system of speech. This problem is resolved with the realization that speech is, indeed, one of the three basic sign-systems of the puppet.

Jurkowski's definition solves this third problem, but gives it a new twist by contending that the sign-systems of

movement and speech must be used in tandem, and that of the two, the sign-system of speech is the more significant. Further, this definition is plagued by the familiar problem of whether the designed object might incorporate the living actor. Finally, this definition fails to acknowledge the theatrical effect of the puppet. But as we have seen, these problems also can be resolved.

Taking all of these solutions in hand, the way is at last clear to answer the question that was posed at the start of this Chapter: when people talk about puppets, they are talking about figures perceived by an audience to be objects, that are given design, movement and/or speech in such a way that the audience imagines them to have life.

The formulation of this answer is just the starting point for a full definition of the puppet. Before such a definition might be developed, it will be necessary to explore how the puppet has been described, and how the puppet has been explained; for the problems of description and explanation are intertwined with that of definition. Only then will we be able to comprehend the particular aesthetic nature of the puppet as perceived object and imagined life.

CHAPTER 3

Standard Descriptions of the Puppet

When people talk about puppets, whether or not they can articulate precisely what it is they are talking about, they use particular terms to describe how one puppet or puppet-show is similar to another puppet or puppet-show, and different than yet others; after all, every work of art exists within the general context of its art, and a full appreciation of it requires an understanding of its relationship to that context. But what are the terms that are used to make distinctions among works of puppet art, and how do those distinctions shape discussion about puppetry? The burden of description is to provide a vocabulary that might be used to compare and contrast. Unfortunately, the descriptive vocabulary for the puppet is limited and confusing.

The simplest method of description involves little more than an efflorescence of adjectives applied to specific puppets and puppet-shows: this puppet is small, that one large; this show is colorful, that one theatrically complex. An example of this method, out of the vast number that might

be adduced, can be found in the writing of Nina Efimova, an
early twentieth century Russian puppet-artist:

> The gypsy girl moves majestically. Her
> radiant face is white, utterly without color.
> The hair is made from frayed rope, dipped
> into black paint and curled into ringlets.
> The soft dress is of fustian dyed canary-
> yellow and of lilac muslin. (Efimova, 1935:
> 149)

Such description contains information which is useful for
recreating, in the imagination of the reader, the puppet
that is being described. But it is of limited use for
comparing and contrasting this puppet with other puppets;
unless, of course, the effect of "frayed" rope, as opposed
to that of rope that has not been frayed, is at issue. This
simple method of description is limited in that, however
much information it might purvey, its vocabulary is not
especially suited for comparing and contrasting. It is not
concerned with what might be called systems of description;
that is, taxonomic descriptions that allow for the comparing
and contrasting of puppets. Yet it is only within such
systems, such taxonomies, that a general vocabulary of
description might be developed.

Taxonomy is a misunderstood science. Stephen Jay
Gould, Professor of Biology and Geology at Harvard Uni-
versity, and an eminent science-writer, explains its
importance in his book <u>Wonderful Life</u>:

> Taxonomy (the science of classification) is
> often undervalued as a glorious form of

> filing--with each species in its folder, like
> a stamp in its prescribed place in an album;
> but taxonomy is a fundamental and dynamic
> science, dedicated to exploring the causes of
> relationships and similarities among organ-
> isms. Classifications are theories about the
> basis of natural order, not dull catagories
> compiled only to avoid chaos. (Gould 1989:
> 98)

Of course, this essay is not concerned with the natural

order of organisms, as is Gould's when he discusses the

taxonomy of Precambrian fauna. Nonetheless, the principles

of "the science of classification," are of significance to

the study of puppetry, as they are to the study of all human

arts; the problem of describing "relationships and similari-

ties" requires taxonomic theory. And, as Gould suggests

throughout his book, taxonomies, and the theories that are

imbedded in them, powerfully shape the way people discuss

their subjects. The simple method of Efimova seems predi-

cated on the theory, if it might be called a theory, that

each puppet is a unique work of art; this is certainly true,

but only in a literal sense. Despite such uniqueness, each

puppet is in some manner like and unlike other puppets, and

we can understand more about the unique value of each puppet

if we understand its place in the general world of puppets.

Puppetry, as has been noted previously, and as every

writer on puppet theatre is compelled to note, has tradi-

tional roots in many cultures. Perhaps this is why one of

the two predominant methods of taxonomy uses tradition as

its organizing principle. This method is diachronic in its
approach, and might be called "historic-geographic."

Bil Baird's expansive book The Art of the Puppet
employs the historic-geographic method to great profit. It
is not only one of the best-selling books on puppetry ever
published, but is also an insightful and delightful overview
of the phenomenon of the puppet. An examination of the
book's Table of Contents makes plain its method: Chapter
Three, "Eastern Heritage," deals with puppet traditions of
India and Indonesia; Chapter Four, "Angels, Devils &
Everyman," deals with those of Northern and Eastern Con-
tinental Europe; Chapter Five, "Karaghioz: A Turkish
Delight," with those of Southeastern Europe; the next three
chapters deal with traditions, of, respectively, England,
Italy, and "the Orient," meaning China and Japan; and the
final three relate the history of Western puppetry in,
respectively, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,
the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the
mid-twentieth century (Baird 1965: 5).

The Art of the Puppet proves the organizational value
of the historic-geographic method, especially for a popular
work. Such value, however, does not result in a useful
taxonomy of the puppet, for such a system of description has
two problems, one practical, the other theoretical.

The practical problem is that the historic-geographic method breaks down upon close examination of the history and geography involved. The historic periods that Baird postulates are purely artificial constructs. To take one example: Baird's chapter on the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is entitled "The Impact of Genius," and discusses the role in Western puppetry of such luminaries as Gluck, Gozzi, Seraphin, Sand, and Bizet; but the temporal proximity of these people in no way suggests any unity of thought towards the puppet by them or their time. Baird is engaging in nothing more than a glorified form of name-dropping to advance the argument that, at last, puppetry was being taken seriously; but in fact, as Baird is aware, none of these people was actually involved in puppetry in any significant way, and they formed no particular school of thought concerning the puppet. The historical period that they exemplify, and that is encompassed in Baird's chapter, exists, ultimately, only in Baird's mind.

The geographic areas that Baird postulates are even more problematic, both for what they take in and what they leave out. Again, for one example: Baird's taking together of the many traditions of Indian puppet theatre is, at the least, bold; when he takes with that group of traditions the many puppet traditions of Indonesia, his boldness becomes foolhardy. He takes these diverse traditions together

because they are, in a broad sense, geographically proxi-
mate, and because most of them have been influenced by Hindu
literature; but as Baird himself suggests, the relationships
between the various traditions in India alone are quite
unclear (Baird 1965: 46-60). Moreover, the relationship of
any of them to the various traditions of Indonesia is the
subject of substantial controversy. As Brandon reports,
"The Indian origin of Wajang theory [that is, of Javanese
shadow-puppets] has been widely debated, with inconclusive
results" (Brandon 1970: 3).

And then there is the matter of what must be left out.
Again, to take an example: between the geographic borders
of Baird's chapters on "Eastern Heritage" (India and
Indonesia) and "Oriental Tradition" (China and Japan), are
located some fascinating puppet traditions that cannot be
incorporated in either chapter: the Thai tradition of Nang
yai, using shadow puppets as large as seven feet high and
four feet wide, usually manipulated in front of the shadow
screen; the Burmese tradition of Yoke thay, using mari-
onettes controlled with up to sixty strings, relating
stories based upon Buddhist lore and Burmese history; and
the Vietnamese tradition of water-puppets, operated by long
bamboo rods and extravagant contrivances of strings, that
perform on a stage that rises, amidst bursting firecrackers,
in the middle of a lake (Malkin 1977: 120-133).

The geographic areas that Baird calls the "East" and the "Orient" exemplify the practical troubles of the historic-geographic method: each takes in traditions that are relatively independent, while together they leave out traditions that are significant in their own right.

There does not seem to be any immediate solution to this practical problem of history and geography. While Baird's oversimplifications are unfortunate, a thorough classification of puppets on the basis of history and geography is impossible, owing to a dearth of accounts relating the details of any number of puppet traditions: Baird's bibliography contains but six works that discuss puppetry outside of Western traditions, and only two of these focus on particular non-Western traditions (Baird 1965: 249); Malkin's <u>Traditional and Folk Puppets Around the World</u> offers only a dozen or so additional non-Western sources, of which half focus on particular traditions (Malkin 1977: 187-91). The problem is not with the research of Baird and Malkin, for they have gleaned what information they could from any manner of source-material; the problem is that adequate observation and analysis of many puppet traditions simply does not exist. And until it does, the historic-geographic method must, of necessity, resort to artificial historic periods and geographic regions, if it is to seem comprehensible.

The theoretical problem with the historic-geographic method is that if every manifestation of puppetry is to be viewed primarily within the context of its historic-geographic tradition, then the puppets themselves cannot easily be considered outside of the context of their traditions. Or, to put it another way, the historic-geographic method eschews interest in comparison between puppets of differing traditions. Again, to take one example: the Karaghioz tradition, common in the Southeastern Europe, makes use of what are generally known as shadow-puppets; so do a number of traditions in India and Indonesia; so does a particular tradition in China; and then there is the use of shadow-puppets in the contemporary puppet theatre in Europe and America. In what ways are these various shadow-puppets alike, and in what ways different? The historic-geographic method obscures the obvious similarities between these puppets by focusing attention on the obvious differences of their history and geography. But might not an examination of their similarities shed light not only on shadow-puppets in general, but on the choices behind, and the implications of, the shadow-puppet traditions themselves? In fact, Baird offers a brief comparison of a few of these shadow-puppet traditions; he notes that the manner in which the control-rod is connected to the shadow-puppet differs in some of the traditions, thus enabling different movements for the

puppets (Baird 1965: 79). It is revealing, however, that the comparison itself must rely upon the taxonomic method soon to be discussed.

It might seem unfair to apply criticism of this sort to a popular work such as Baird's. It should be said, though, that popular works are nearly the only works on puppetry available in the English language, and that such works embody the discussion that has preceded them, and shape the discussion that will follow. For these reasons, such criticism seems not only fair, but necessary. The two basic problems identified in Baird's book might be noted in any historic-geographic method of taxonomy: the former has instilled a habit of over-generalization about puppetry, while the latter has led to a balkanization of puppet study. The goal of the historic-geographic method, to comprehend the development and interaction of various puppet traditions through time and across space, is certainly laudable. But with the lack of adequate source-material, and the lack of an adequate vocabulary with which to compare and contrast the various traditions, the method has yet to yield the results of which it might be capable.

It should be reiterated, however, that the historic-geographic method has ample value when writers maintain their focus on a particular historic-geographic area. Works such as Brandon's <u>On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow</u>

Plays, Adachi's Backstage at Bunraku, and Linda Myrsiades'
The Karagiozis Heroic Performance Greek Shadow Theatre, are
invaluable guides to the traditions they examine. When a
score or two additional such works, treating of other tradi-
tions, can be cited, the historic-geographic method might at
last come into its own for developing a taxonomy of the
puppet.

This essay has regularly used descriptive terms that
have their basis in another taxonomic method, one that
currently dominates English language discussion of the
puppet; indeed, the terms are regularly employed even in
historic-geographic writing, as in Baird's work. The method
from which these terms derive has so profoundly shaped
discussion of the puppet that even to speak of it as one
method among others might seem striking. This method,
taking a synchronic approach, follows from the observation
that the puppet is a physical construct that must be manipu-
lated, and might be called "object-control."

The object-control method to taxonomic classification
of the puppet begins with a fundamental division. As Cyril
Beaumont, a mid-century English puppet-artist, puts it:
"All puppets fall into two main groups: round or three-
dimensional puppets, and flat or two-dimensional puppets"
(Beaumont 1958: 17). This division is based upon what would
seem to be the most obvious of criteria for classifying

puppets as objects, and is observed, either explicitly or implicitly, by most of the writers who bother to discuss the subject in any formal way (for example, Blackham 1948: 1-5, and Veltrusky 1983: 69; McPharlin 1938: 85-92, and Arnott 1964: 58-65).

After this division, the object-control method then places puppets in a number of classifications, predicated upon the manner in which they are controlled. The following is Beaumont's version of this taxonomy (Beaumont 1958: 17):

<u>Flat</u> [Two-dimensional]   <u>Round</u> [Three-dimensional]
1. Paper or board puppets 1. String Puppets, or marionettes
2. Shadow puppets   2. Rod-puppets
                              3. Jigging-puppets
                              4. Glove-puppets or hand-puppets
                              5. Magnetically controlled puppets
                              6. Japanese three-man puppets

Most of these terms will be familiar; a few might seem idiosyncratic. The familiarities and idiosyncracies will be pointed up by a look at other object-control taxonomies.

Olive Blackham, a mid-century English writer on puppets, offers the following "classification of puppets," here given in summary form (Blackham 1948: 1-5):

      <u>Flat</u> [Two-dimensional]
      1. Puppets of Which the Substance is Seen
          (e.g. "the Toy Theatre")
      2. Puppets of Which Only the Shadow is Seen
          (e.g. "shadow figures")
          a. "opaque" figures casting a "black shadow"
          b. "translucent and colored" figures casting
             a "colored shadow"

      <u>Round</u> [Three-dimensional]
      1. Puppets Worked from Above by Means of Strings
          (e.g. conventional marionettes)

2. Puppets Worked from Above by Means of Rods
   (e.g. "the puppets of Liége" and "of Sicily")
3. Puppets Worked from Below by Means of Rods
   (e.g. conventional rod-puppets)
4. Puppets Worked from Below by Means of Cords,
   Pulleys, and Other Devices
   (e.g. "the large Japanese puppets"; presum-
   ably, Bunraku puppets)
5. Puppets Worked on the Hand from Below
   (e.g. "glove puppets," or hand-puppets)

Blackham's terminology is rather clumsy, but the clumsiness

arises from her desire to provide a systematic logic to the

taxonomy. Distinctions are made between the possible loca-

tions of the puppet-operator (above or below the puppet),

and between the actual means of puppet control (strings,

rods, etc.). The effort is well-intentioned; but for

reasons that will become clear, it does not succeed.

In his thesis, "Aesthetic of the Puppet Revival,"

McPharlin does not chart out a formal taxonomy; nonetheless,

it pervades his writing, and he makes reference to mari-

onettes, hand-puppets, and "the other five principle types

of puppets" (McPharlin 1938: 33). When he reviews them,

however, he discusses a total of only six types. They are,

in his order of discussion (McPharlin 1938: 85-92):

1. String-puppets
2. Stick or rod-puppets
3. Jigging puppets
4. Hand-puppets
5. Paper or board puppets
6. Shadow-figures

Elsewhere in his thesis, McPharlin makes brief mention of

the Bunraku puppets of Japan, "four-foot-tall puppets of

such mechanical elaboration that they may raise their eyebrows and clench their fists . . ." (McPharlin 1938: 56); as he makes no mention of the overhead rod-puppets of Liége and Sicily, one might reasonably assume that the Bunraku puppet is the seventh type he has forgotten to list.

Finally, Arnott is satisfied to enumerate "four main types of puppets . . ." (Arnott 1964: 58). To give them, again, in his order of discussion (Arnott 1964: 58-65):

1. Glove-puppets
2. Shadow-puppets
3. Rod-puppets
4. Marionettes

No doubt that these are the terms that have been most familiar throughout this discussion of the object-control taxonomy. And yet all of the terms used by the various writers are worthy of consideration; for the most idiosyncratic tell as much about this method as the familiar.

Following Beaumont's taxonomy, the first type is that of flat "paper or board puppets," also mentioned by Blackham and McPharlin. According to Beaumont:

> The best known [of this type] is probably
> that associated with the Juvenile Drama, that
> robust lively toy theatre of the second half
> of the nineteenth century, in which youthful
> producers acquired their actors from the
> "penny plain and twopence coloured" sheets.
> (Beaumont 1958: 19)

Although the British version of the "Juvenile Drama," better known as "Toy Theatre," is most famous, Beaumont also notes continental versions, which differ only in minor details.

Blackham notes that this type is "in origin a toy for children" (Blackham 1948: 1). McPharlin dispenses with it quickly, stating that "it is too restricted in movement to give much scope to the artist; and when he plays with them, he is apt to spend more energy on the scenic panoply than on the figures themselves" (McPharlin 1938: 91).

According to the analysis of the preceding chapter, and indeed, according to all of the definitions discussed there, the Toy Theatre is not, properly speaking, puppetry at all; it is, essentially, child's play with cut-out dolls, having nothing to do with theatre as a presentational art, but merely with the child's fantasy of theatre. The Toy Theatre enters into some object-control taxonomies because there persists in British thought an association of it with the puppet. This association, however, seems to be unfair both to the puppet, which is a figure of actual theatre, and to the Toy Theatre, which is, or was, a manifestation of childish interest in the glamor of Victorian theatre.

Lost in all of these references to "flat" puppets "of which the substance is seen" are two related types of puppets that fit into none of the other conventional types. Although they have no generally accepted names, they might be called "cut-out-puppets" and "panel-puppets."

The cut-out-puppet is nothing more than its name suggests: the outline of a figure is cut out of some

material such as cardboard or wood and given a coat of paint or a rudimentary costume. Bob Brown's production of <u>The Enchanted Child</u>, the consideration from Washington, D.C. given in the Introduction, makes effective use of such cut-out-puppets for minor characters who are perceived by the main character to be stiff and "unlife-like"; they are either moved as units or given one or two joints to allow them moving arms as well. All movement is given via rods, by the operator who supports them. Although their movement possibilities are somewhat limited, their design and their speech, along with such movement as they have, allow the audience to imagine them having life.

The panel-puppet is a bit more complex. In the Budapest State Puppet Theatre's production of Kodály's <u>Háry János</u>, many of the figures are, in the words of György Kroó, a member of the company, "one-dimensional [<u>sic</u>] figures . . . [that are] movable and could on occasion be used as screens" (Kroo 1978: 54). By "one-dimensional," Kroó means that the puppets present only one aspect to the audience. While the cut-out-puppet separates the figure of the character from the panel of cardboard or wood from which it is cut out, the panel-puppet maintains the figure upon what is essentially a unit of free-standing unit of wall-panel. Its movement can be supplied in two ways: the unit with the figure might have one or two movable aspects, such as a

cloth sleeve into which the operator can place and move his
or her arm, or a mechanical device that causes the puppet to
open and close its eyes; and the unit, as a unit, can be
wheeled to various locations around the stage. It is this
second kind of movement that allows these puppets to be
"used as screens," as any unit of wall-panel might be used.

Cut-out-puppets and panel-puppets have limited history
in the puppet-theatre; there seems to be no mention of any
tradition that regularly employs them. Nonetheless, it
would seem that by every definition of the puppet previously
discussed, these are indeed puppets. One might imagine that
cut-out-puppets have, in fact, some history, if only in
rudimentary and undocumented forms of impromptu theatre; but
whether they do or do not, they are as much puppets as the
figures in the Toy Theatre are not.

Next on Beaumont's list of puppet types comes "shadow-
puppets," which have a place on all of our lists. The list-
makers note, with Blackham, that the shadows cast by these
puppets can be black or colored, and, as we have seen with
Baird, that there is some variety in their means of control.
McPharlin comments that they, like the Toy Theatre, "might
be considered restricted in movement were it not for their
fascination." And what is that fascination?

> [A] light shines through the screen, and the
> screen is always in a dark room. We turn
> toward the light as surely as sunflowers. . .
> . [Shadow-puppets] never give the illusion

> of actual life. They create a realm of fan-
> tasy with which we, reality, are permitted to
> merge. (McPharlin 1938: 91-2)

It is only a quibble to point out that many shadow-shows,

such as the Javanese show considered in the Introduction,

take place not in a "dark room," but outdoors in the dark of

night. McPharlin's point is that the shadow-puppet fasci-

nates because the shadow is a fantastic presence upon a

screen suffused with light; the shadow is uniquely free from

life-like imitation, in that it has but two dimensions.

Interestingly, neither McPharlin nor any of our other

list-makers acknowledge that, in many shadow traditions,

some of the audience, if not all, frequently, if not always,

views the puppet itself, and not the puppet's shadow. The

Nang yai tradition of Thailand, in which most of the

performance takes place in front of the shadow-screen, has

already been mentioned; and it will be recalled that in the

Javanese consideration given in the Introduction, the

audience regularly sits on both sides of the screen. When

the puppet itself is viewed, it is scarcely distinguishable

from versions of the cut-out-puppet discussed previously.

Jiří Veltruský, a member of the Prague Linguistic

Circle, acknowledges that sometimes the shadow-puppet itself

is watched; but despite this acknowledgement, he would

banish the shadow-puppet from the realm of puppetry. As he

writes in "Puppetry and Acting":

> [T]his article deals only with puppets
> properly so called, that is, three-dimen-
> sional puppets. . . . The shadow theatre has
> been left aside . . . [for although in Java
> men watch the puppet and not the screen],
> there is no doubt that in the shadow theatre
> in general it is the shadow projected on the
> screen, not the object itself as in the
> puppet theatre, that focuses the attention.
> In [Charles] Magnin's felicitous formulation
> [1862 (1852): 181], the shadow theatre is not
> in the nature of mobile sculpture, as the
> puppet theatre is, but of mobile painting.
> (Veltruský 1983: 69)

The very qualities that, in McPharlin's estimation, make the

shadow-puppet unique, render it, according to Veltrusky and

Magnin, not a puppet at all. How is one to resolve whether

the shadow-puppet is or is not a puppet?

One might begin by noting a fundamental error of

perception committed by both McPharlin and Veltruský:

although the shadow projected upon the screen is, indeed,

two-dimensional, the puppet that casts the shadow is not.

Despite the convention of dividing puppets into two and

three dimensional classes, it is obvious, given a moment of

thought, that no physical object can have only two dimen-

sions. Although the shadow-puppet's third dimension, that

of depth, is quite insubstantial, it nonetheless exists.

Indeed, the same holds true for cut-out-puppets and panel-

puppets as well: all are physical objects, and all have a

certain amount of depth. It is a vital point that, contrary

to the object-control taxonomy, there is no such thing as a

two-dimensional puppet, and that the shadow-puppet is as much an object as any other puppet.

One might continue by noting that, even if the audience were never to view the puppet directly, the viewed shadow is the creation of the puppet interposed between the shadow-screen and the light-source. In Javanese shadow theatre, the puppet, generally moved parallel to the screen, might also be moved between the screen and the light-source, causing the shadow to grow larger and more diffuse, or smaller and more well-defined; it might also be pivoted against the screen to face in the other direction, causing its shadow to diminish to a mere line before filling out again; more rarely, the light source might be given motion, with the puppet remaining stationary, causing the shadow both to change shape and to move across the screen (Brandon: 1970: 35). Whatever the mode of movement, the shadow on the screen is merely the result; the cause involves the puppet. The shadow-theatre is not "mobile painting," more akin to the cinema than to anything else, as Magnin and Veltruský would have it, but is "mobile sculpture," as much as any puppet theatre is, the mobility of which, uniquely among puppets, is generally employed for the creation of shadows.

One might conclude, following this analysis, by noting that McPharlin and Veltruský commit an error of analysis by attending only to the shadow of the shadow-puppet. As

Veltruský himself admits, in some traditions it is the
puppet, explicitly, that is watched. But even when it is
not, it is the physical object of the puppet behind the
screen that is the cause of the shadow and its movement, and
the audience is always aware of this fact. The life that
the audience imagines is, in every case, created by the
puppet itself. Shadow-theatre is not a primitive form of
cinema; the shadow-puppet is in every way an object that is
given imaginary life, even if it is the shadow of that
"life" that garners most attention.

Beaumont's list next goes on to "round, or three-
dimensional" puppets, although, as we have seen, the
division between these and "flat, or two-dimensional"
puppets is unjustified. He begins with "string-puppets, or
marionettes." These, he says, "attempt to imitate all of
the movements of a human being, of which, in general, they
are representations in miniature" (Beaumont 1958: 17). The
first statement is, one hopes, an exaggeration: why use a
puppet at all, when humans can far better "imitate" human
actions? In the Indian consideration given in the Intro-
duction, marionettes of a simple form are employed. Each
has but two strings: one from the puppet's head to the
operator's hand and back down to the puppet's waist; the
other from one of the puppet's hands to the operator's and
then to the puppet's other hand. Such a puppet, though

capable of far more subtle movement than might be thought, cannot be claimed to imitate anything near "all of the movements of a human being." Beaumont's point, most likely, is that marionettes generally have bodies with all four limbs, whereas many other types do not. Arnott, a specialist in the use of marionettes, comments that they "are [the] most generally satisfactory, and the most familiar type in use today" (Arnott 1964: 60). This sense of the superiority of the marionette over other types of puppets is widespread; and the marionette might be found on all lists, not only those mentioned above, that employ the object-control method.

But what is the distinguishing feature of the marionette? Arnott, defining them, calls them "jointed figures controlled from above by strings or wires" (Arnott 1964: 60). Is the distinguishing feature the "control from above," or is it the use of "strings or wires"? It will be recalled that Blackham's list distinguishes between "puppets worked from above by means of strings" and those "worked from above by means of rods." The distinction is important, because the movement possibilities created by the different means of control are not the same. McPharlin writes:

> The string-puppet is well able to mimic in a broad fashion almost all sorts of realistic motion. Critics who complain of its stilted walk may have been unfortunate in seeing only badly made or manipulated figures. (McPharlin 1938: 85)

McPharlin also remarks that "in the field of non-realism . . . the string-puppet excels. . . . It is, by virtue of its strings, independent of gravity" (McPharlin 1938: 86). Harro Siegel, a contemporary German puppet-artist, specifies "the dream-like, floating, submissive quality of the marionette" (Siegel 1967 [1965]: 21). Note, however, that McPharlin is careful to use the phrase "string-puppet"; for this "dream-like" quality, as well as this "realistic motion," is beyond the capacity of the puppet controlled by an overhead rod. As Joan Gross tells us of the Liége tradition of marionettes:

> [T]he only instrument of direct control is a
> single steel rod which is attached to a ring
> at the top of the head. This means that the
> puppets move in a very stiff, un-humanlike
> manner. (Gross 1987: 107)

And, as Baird says of Sicilian marionettes:

> Their carriage is erect and movement is
> controlled only through the impetus of the
> iron rod, which lifts or twists the body at
> the neck. The swinging body motion also
> governs the stiff-legged stride. . . . The
> [puppet] swings a leg backward to gain
> momentum and then, with a twist of the body,
> marches forward with a thump. (Baird 1965:
> 120)

If the distinguishing feature of the marionette is its control from above, then the movement possibilities of the type cannot be generalized, and to classify a puppet as a marionette is to describe less than one might think; if the distinguishing feature is its use of strings, then a

separate type must be set forth, as is by Blackham, to account for the Liége and Sicilian marionettes, among yet others that are operated by rods.

The point of all this is that even the puppet type placed at the pinnacle of puppetry by most object-control taxonomists is not, in fact, a single and discrete type of puppet; the confusion to be found within the classification "marionette" is indicative of that to be found in most of the classifications of this method.

Next on Beaumont's list comes "rod-puppets," the distinguishing feature of which, as Blackham explains it, is their operation, from beneath, via rods; these puppets are included on all of our object-control lists. The Nigerian consideration given in the Introduction is an example of the rod-puppet, but not enough is known about it to allow for detailed discussion. The Javanese rod-puppet tradition, distinct from the shadow-puppet tradition there, exemplifies the essence of the rod-puppet. Each puppet is controlled by a spine-like central rod that is grasped from beneath and that runs into the bottom of the figure's head; two additional rods are used to control the puppet's arms (Malkin 1977: 117-118). But rod-puppets are frequently more complex than this: a number of strings might run along the central rod, levered on the bottom so that, with a simple action, the puppet might be made to close its eyes, open its mouth,

and so on; mechanical contrivances might also supplement the
central rod, allowing for additional nuance of movement.

Batchelder, in her massive study Rod-Puppets and the
Human Theatre, offers this definition:

> [T]he rod-puppet [is] a figure worked from
> below the stage floor by means of (1) rods,
> (2) rods and strings, or (3) hands and rods,
> so that carefully controlled movement can be
> obtained. (Batchelder 1947: xix)

The "carefully controlled movement" available to the rod-
puppet is noted by all of our writers. Arnott suggests that
"[a]bsolute precision of control is possible, and [that]
these figures have great dignity and beauty" (Arnott, 1964:
59). It is generally thought, as Gunter Böhmer writes:

> [T]he rod-puppet occupies a place between the
> hand-puppet and the marionette. While it has
> much of the directness and vitality of the
> one, it also has the complicated charm and
> subtle individuality of the other. (Böhmer
> 1971: 37)

The most interesting aspect of Batchelder's definition is
how inclusive it is. This inclusiveness exposes, yet again,
the problems of the object-control method: how broad a
range of puppets can be subsumed under a given type, and
what is the relationship of puppets across that range?

In the Vietnamese tradition of water-puppets, as men-
tioned previously, the puppets are operated from a great
distance, via rods. The movement possibilities of these
puppets are quite circumscribed, despite the elaborate
nature of their rod and string controls, by the distance

that must be overcome; these puppets do not share "the directness and vitality" of the hand-puppet. And yet, because they are operated from below via rods, they are considered, by this taxonomy, to be rod-puppets.

Or, alternately: Batchelder writes that puppets controlled "by hands and rods" are to be considered rod-puppets. Jim Henson's Muppets are the most successful puppet company in the United States. The distinguishing characteristic of a Muppet-style-puppet is the puppet's operating mouth. Kermit the Frog offers a good example; the operator's hand goes up through a cloth and foam body into a head with a hinged mouth; by opening and closing his or her hand, and by tilting it in various ways, the operator opens and closes the puppet's mouth, and gives its head small but expressive movement. The operator's second hand controls two rods, each of which is attached to one of the puppet's hands, giving motion to the arms of the puppet, which are appended to the shoulders (Henson 1980: 16). According to Batchelder's definition, Kermit would have to be called a rod-puppet. But just as the Vietnamese water-puppet is especially distant from its controller, the Muppet-style-puppet is especially intimate. This intimacy gives the puppet very much "directness and vitality," but does not afford it "the complicated charm and subtle individuality" of the marionette, although it certainly has its own

distinctive charm and individuality. A taxonomy that includes the water-puppet and the Muppet-style-puppet in the same classification fails to describe much of anything: the contrast between these puppets is every bit as great as their similarity.

Mention of the Muppets opens up the general problem of puppets whose moving mouths are their distinguishing characteristic. Where in the taxonomy are we to place a puppet with a moving mouth, but with arms that are sleeves and gloves into which the operator, and sometimes an assistant, place arms and hands? Or again, with a moving mouth, but with no arms at all, such as Ollie, of Burr Tillstrom's Kukla, Fran and Ollie? Or yet again, with a moving mouth, and moving eyes and eyebrows as well, but with no other movement, such as most ventriloquists' dummies? It seems absurd to call any of these rod-puppets, but they fit no better anywhere else in the object-control taxonomy. At least one new classification is required: "mouth-moving-puppets." And given the particular qualities of the ventriloquist's dummy, a second new classification seems required as well.

Beaumont next lists "jigging-puppets," and at last we find brief respite from controversy. McPharlin also lists this type, but it is ignored by Blackham and Arnott, as by many others. McPharlin writes of jigging-puppets:

> They are the types one sees as toys on city
> street-corners before Christmas, a pair of
> feathered dancers which hop with uncanny
> life, midway along a string one end of which
> is tied to a post, the other to the anima-
> tor's knee; or the jigging darkies [sic]
> whose feet are set into flight by the
> vibrations of a board, pounded at its
> attached end by the fist of the operator.
> The movement range of such puppets is too
> restricted and little controllable for
> artistic use. (McPharlin 1938: 88-89)

The latter of the two examples given by McPharlin is also known as a marrionette a la planchette (Beaumont 1958: 18).

McPharlin's dismissal of the artistic value of the jigging-puppet is harsh but appropriate: these puppets can, indeed, do little but jig. It might be questioned whether they are not merely toys, rather than theatrical figures at all. No doubt that they are most often used as toys; but, given the context of street-corner performance as described by McPharlin, they must be considered puppets, according to all of the definitions discussed in the preceding chapter.

The jigging-puppet exemplifies another yet problem with the object-control method: such a minor type of puppet scarcely seems worthy of mention alongside such types as the shadow-puppet and the marionette. But because it is unique in being controlled by semi-random vibration, and because it has a long, if not illustrious, history in the West, the object-control method usually gives it desultory mention.

Following on Beaumont's list comes "glove-puppets, or hand-puppets," and once more we must re-enter the fray. The

distinguishing features of the hand-puppet are universally

agreed upon. As Arnott explains:

> The figures have a hollow head and arms and a
> long, sleeve-like body; the operator inserts
> his hand in the body and controls head and
> arms with his fingers. (Arnott 1964: 58)

The consideration from England given in the Introduc-

tion, a performance of Punch and Judy, is the archetypical

example of hand-puppetry, and the hand-puppet appears on all

of our lists of puppet-types. And yet, in an essay on the

history of puppetry, Jurkowski comments, in passing, that

"the glove puppet and the shadow puppet . . . stand outside

the art of puppetry" (Jurkowski 1967 [1965]: 26). He does

not articulate his objection to the shadow-puppet, but it

would seem that it is similar to Veltruský's, as discussed

above. He does, however, elsewhere explain his objection to

the hand-puppet.

Building upon the work of the early twentieth century

German scholar Fritz Eichler, Jurkowski argues that:

> [T]he glove puppet [or, hand-puppet] is not
> to be considered as "pure" puppet, for it is
> actually the hand of the puppet-player which
> is its soul. The glove puppet is thus a
> "prolongation" of the actor . . . [and should
> be considered] as an extension of mime
> theatre. (Jurkowski 1988 [1979]): 21-2)

The argument is predicated upon the idea that the operator's

living hand inside the figure is the real focus of the

audience's attention, and that what is perceived as the

hand-puppet is no more than a costume for that hand; the

figure is not "separated from the body of its manipulator,"
and does not follow "its own mechanical laws" (Jurkowski
1988 [1979]: 22). Thus, Punch is not actually a puppet at
all; neither, for that matter, is Kermit, who is scarcely
more than the costumed hand of its operator. How is one to
resolve whether the hand-puppet, and all puppets that are
based upon the operator's hand, are or are not puppets?

One might begin by admitting that the human hand is,
indeed, the "soul" of the hand-puppet, but that the hand-
puppet remains something other than the human hand. As we
have seen in the preceding Chapter, Obraztsov suggests that
this other-ness arises from the perception of the audience
that the living hand is "apart" from its operator "with a
rhythm and a character of its own" (Obraztsov 1950: 155).
Or, to put it another way: the audience perceives the
figure presented by the hand as if it were an object, in the
same manner as it would perceive any object. In mime
theatre, the audience perceives the mime as a whole living
human figure; in hand-puppetry, the audience perceives the
operating hands as divorced from the human operator, and as
objects in their own right. This perception of the hand,
whether costumed or bare, distinguishes it from mime.

One might continue by noting that Jurkowski himself
makes a concession along these lines:

> [F]or the public [hand-puppets] are puppets
> because they are artificial creatures, they

> behave in their own typical way, and they are
> able to present different characters on the
> stage. (Jurkowski 1983: 139)

This concession, although grudging, exposes an important

point: the dismissal of the hand-puppet is based upon an a

priori assumption that the puppet must be a wholly inanimate

object operated from some unspecified distance; but what is

the basis for this assumption? The popular standard relies

only on the audience's perception of the puppet as an

"artificial creature," regardless of its true status; what

matters is that it is perceived as if it were an object.

One might conclude by noting that Jurkowski's con-

cession speaks of the hand-puppet as being able "to present

different characters on the stage." This ability of the

puppet, to present a character that the audience might

imagine to have a spurious life of its own, inescapably

separates it from mime theatre. The puppet is able to be

imagined to have life owing to its combination of deployed

signs of design, movement, and/or speech; it is, in fact,

nothing other than these signs. The mime, to the contrary,

is actually alive; and whatever performance signs he or she

might employ, that life is never in question. The object-

control method, because it classifies most puppets according

to their nature as objects and their manner of control,

makes objections such as Jurkowski's possible. But neither

the nature of the object nor the manner of control has any

bearing, contrary to Jurkowski, on whether a particular theatrical figure is a puppet.

Jurkowski's objection, and the mention of Kermit, introduces the question of how broad a range of figures should be classified as hand-puppets. We have already seen how the Muppet-style puppet defies classification as a rod-puppet; no less does it defy classification as a hand-puppet. Despite being based upon its operator's hand, it is in many important ways quite different from the traditional hand-puppet, most obviously, with its moving mouth. The object-control taxonomy simply cannot account for it.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, Obraztsov suggests that "the principle of [the hand-puppet] consists of two elements only: the human hand and a puppet's head" (Obraztsov 1950: 186). As we also saw, even the puppet's head might be removed, and the human hand alone be the puppet. The problem with Kermit is troubling enough; but how might the object-control method classify a puppet that exists without the presence of an object or the need for control?

It is not only puppetry such as Burr Tillstrom's sketch on the Berlin Wall that presents this problem. The pervasive, if undocumented, use of living hands in conjunction with a light source to create shadows on a screen or a wall has no place in the object-control taxonomy. Nor has the equally pervasive and undocumented use of bare living fists,

clenched so that the moving of the thumb represents the movement of a mouth. It would seem absurd to classify these as hand-puppets, given the universally accepted description of the hand-puppet; but what else might they be called? The object-control method can neither classify them nor give them names, but it would seem that they are, indeed, puppetry, if only of the most rudimentary kind.

Jurkowski's objection also introduces, or re-introduces, the question of whether the living actor, in costume and mask, can be called a puppet. Consider a character such as the Muppet's Big Bird, in which the operator is entirely inside the theatrical figure, giving direct motivation to the figure in its entirety (Henson 1980: 9, 16). Following Jurkowski's objection, Big Bird would have to be seen as an "extension of mime theatre." But following the analysis of the preceding chapter, it would be recognized as a puppet; this is because its design and movement make it seem unlike any living being, while the Mickey Mouse discussed previously is far more clearly the costume and mask of a living actor. How might Big Bird be classified? The contemporary American puppet-artist Bob Brown calls this type a "humanette" (Brown 1980). But the object-control method offers no classification that might contain the humanette. Yet another new type must be created.

Next on Beaumont's list comes "magnetically controlled puppets." This is the most idiosyncratic of Beaumont's classifications, and it is found on none of our other lists. Beaumont himself mentions only one example of it, in the work of a "Mr. Cecil Brinton," before giving up the subject (Beaumont 1958: 18). The immediate problem is similar to that with the jigging-puppet: is this type to be considered alongside of those that span history and geography? If anything, the case here is worse, for at least the jigging-puppet has existed in the work of more than one man.

The distinguishing characteristic of the magnetically controlled puppet seems not to be the magnetism itself, but the fact that the control is effected without physical contact between the controlling mechanism and the puppet. If Beaumont were writing today, he would probably broaden this classification to include electronically-controlled-puppets, or, "animatronic-puppets," which are similarly motivated, at least in part, without direct contact between the electronic mechanism of control and the electronic mechanism inside the puppet (Henson 1980: 13).

Discussion of puppets that are controlled, via magnetism or electronics, without physical contact, re-introduces the problem of distinguishing the puppet from the automaton. The rather sedate figures that wave to pleasure-seekers on the rides at Disneyland, and the notoriously loud

figures that assault the sensibilities of adults who take their children to eat at Chuck E. Cheese pizzerias, seem to be automata rather than animatronic puppets; what is the basis for this distinction?

No inherent distinction can be drawn in terms of their design: the Chuck E. Cheese musical ensemble looks more or less like "The Electric Mayhem," the Muppet's musical band. Neither is there an inherent distinction in terms of speech: music is directly attributed to both groups, and in both cases, the music is pre-recorded. There is, however, an inherent distinction in their movement, or, more precisely, in their movement possibilities: the Chuck E. Cheese ensemble can move only in the manner and sequence that they have been programmed to move; the Muppet musicians are responsive to the control of their operators, and their movement can never be predicted in to manner or sequence.

It should be noted that this comparison is somewhat misleading, in that the Muppet band is not, in fact, electronically controlled. But even if it were, and even if this control limited the manner of their movement, the sequence of their movement would still be at the discretion of their operators.

The distinction, then, between the automaton and the puppet is one of movement potential. Although a brief viewing of the two might lead the audience to believe that

they are functionally interchangeable, prolonged viewing
will expose the fact that the former cannot sustain the
audience's imagination of life, owing to its relative
poverty of movement possibilities, while the latter can.

To return to Beaumont: the listing of the magnetically
controlled puppet exposes the fundamental weakness of the
object-control method, the weakness that has betrayed it, as
we have seen, time and again: there is an infinite number
of possible objects that might be used a puppets, and an as
yet unknown number of means of control. The object-control
taxonomy has no way of allowing for new objects, new means
of control, or new combinations of object and control. The
best it can do is to simply add each new type to the list,
as Beaumont has added the magnetically controlled puppet.
But such a list, endlessly added-on to, is worse than
cumbersome: it fails, ultimately, to allow for meaningful
comparison and contrast of puppets.

Beaumont's final listing is of "Japanese three-man
puppets," or, as they are more commonly known, Bunraku
puppets. As mentioned, McPharlin seems to have forgotten to
include them in his list. Blackham seems to be referring to
them when she writes of "large Japanese puppets fixed upon
stands . . . [and operated] by an intricate system of cords
and pulleys, etc" (Blackham 1948: 4); but if she is, she has
misunderstood how they are, in fact, operated. Arnott

leaves them off his list entirely, although he is aware of
their existence (Arnott 1964: 79-80); perhaps he realizes
the futility of fitting them into a system of description
dominated by Western concepts. A Bunraku show was given as
the consideration from Japan in the Introduction, and the
type need not be discussed at length. It is sufficient to
note that the object-control method classifies it as _sui
generis_, essentially giving up and adopting the methodology
of the historic-geographic method.

Thus is exhausted, in more ways than one, Beaumont's
list of puppet types. As we have seen, it groups together
puppets that are quite dissimilar, and ignores many other
puppet types entirely. Its descriptive terms are limited to
a false distinction between two and three dimensional
objects, and then to an inaccurate set of problematic
distinctions between manners of control.

The theory imbedded in the object-control method is, as
will be obvious by now, that puppets are inanimate objects
of a limited number of types, and that the manner of their
control is the most important element to them. As should
also be obvious by now, the theory is untenable. Puppets
may or may not be inanimate objects, the number of their
types is subject to no limitation, and the manner of their
control describes surprising little about them.

Beyond the matters of object and control, the method offers little descriptive vocabulary. There is but limited discussion of the design and movement possibilities available to the puppet, and no discussion at all of the speech possibilities, object and control having no bearing upon them. It seems astonishing that a theory of puppetry would be willing to forego detailed discussion of design and movement, and any discussion of speech, but such is the case with the object-control method.

The two taxonomies we have examined in this Chapter are not adequate to the purpose of describing the puppet, but neither are they wholly expendable; they furnish most of what vocabulary we have for the discussion of puppetry. The terms that are useful in them must be retained, if thoroughly augmented with new terms; the theories that undergird them that must be improved upon.

The standard definitions of the puppet, as we have seen in the preceding Chapter, are implicitly predicated upon the idea that puppets make up a discrete and identifiable class of objects; the standard descriptions of the puppet, as we have seen in this chapter, explicitly divide that class of objects into sub-classes, either by tradition or by type. But puppets are not a class of objects, and discussion of tradition and type fails to provide an adequate vocabulary of description for them.

A new taxonomy will have to be developed along new
theoretical lines, which might be discovered in what,
following from the preceding Chapter, we can assert about
the puppet: that it is perceived as an object, yet imagined
to have life, owing to its deployment of abstracted signs of
life in the three sign-systems of design, movement, and/or
speech. But before we can develop a new system of descrip-
tion for the puppet, it remains to be explored how the
puppet has been explained, for the problem of explanation
will have great bearing on how we are to understand the
sign-systems that allow the perceived object of the puppet
to be imagined to have life.

CHAPTER 4

Standard Explanations of the Puppet

We have explored what people talk about when they talk about puppets, and what descriptive vocabularies they employ in their talk; but why is it that the puppet exists to be talked about at all? As Batchelder sets out the problem:

> One is led to wonder what qualities inherent
> in the puppet theatre have given it suffi-
> cient vitality to maintain itself as an
> independent art, and what fundamental appeal
> it contains which has insured its popularity
> among so many different kinds of people.
> (Batchelder 1947: 278)

After all, there must be some "qualities inherent in the puppet theatre" that account for its persistance. The burden of explanation is to demonstrate what those qualities are; or even to demonstrate that a single quality is involved in all puppetry. There can be no doubt that the puppet theatre has any number of particular qualities; but is there any explanation of its endurance and appeal that depends upon a single quality that might prove to be constant, existing beside or beneath all others?

Previous writers have proposed solutions to this problem, but these solutions have rarely been reviewed systematically, and so the relationships between them are

not clearly established. This review will consider the proposed solutions in three groups, with each group focusing on one of the major components of a puppet production: the artist, the puppet, and the audience. It should be noted that some writers have proposed solutions that involve more than one of these groups, and that the purpose of this review is not so much to categorize possible solutions as it is to find a coherent way to bring those solutions to light.

The Artist

There is no question that puppetry offers a distinctive array of possibilities to the theatrical artist. These possibilities are of two basic types: first, the puppet theatre offers the artist a remarkable opportunity of control over his or her medium; second, the puppet theatre offers the artist an equally remarkable freedom from restraint in his or her subject-matter.

In puppetry, the artist can, and frequently does, perform every task necessary to the production of a play. As David Currell, a British puppet-artist, puts it:

> The puppeteer is . . . a unique combination
> of sculptor, modeller [sic], painter,
> needleworker, electrician, carpenter, actor,
> writer, producer, designer, and inventor.
> (Currell 1987 [1985]: 1)

The puppet-artist can be assured that collaborators will not impose upon his or her singular artistic vision by dispensing with the need for any collaboration. Arnott suggests why an artist would want to go it alone:

> The besetting problem of those who would create a work of art in the theatre is unity. . . . It follows that . . . unity is easiest to achieve when only one creative mind is involved. (Arnott 1964: 74)

And, as Batchelder notes, puppetry offers the theatrical artist the best chance to exercise control, in that "[t]he puppet show is usually built on a smaller scale than a play for human theatre, hence synthesis is more easily attained" (Batchelder 1947: 280).

When artists suggest that there is a problem in attaining "unity" and "synthesis" in artistic expression, they are suggesting that collaboration is more of a hindrance than a help. The collaboration most resented is that which takes place with the actor. As Arthur Symons, a turn-of-the-century American writer on the theatre, explains:

> The living actor, even when he condescends to subordinate himself to the requirements of pantomime, has always what he is proud to call his temperament; in other words so much personal caprice. (Symons 1909: 3)

Symons was a significant influence on E. Gordon Craig, the British theatre visionary, who takes this line of reasoning to its logical, if highly rhetorical, extreme: "The actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure--the

Übermarionette we may call him. . ." (Craig 1911: 81).

Craig, in the ecstasy of his vision, would have complete

control over his theatre; and though he would have others

operate his "Übermarionettes," his control, nonetheless,

would be undiminished, for as Irene Eynat-Confino suggests:

> In the "Über-Marions" notebooks Craig gives
> several reasons for inventing the Über-
> marionette. . . . [Among them is the desire
> to] eliminate the element of chance in
> acting. . . . Since Craig intended to provide
> carefully worked out plans for all movements
> . . . the human failings of the [operators]
> were of no consequence. (Eynat-Confino 1987:
> 89)

It is perhaps worth noting that Craig never actually

produced any shows of this Übermarionette Theatre, and at

least one of the reasons for this is plain: it would be

extremely difficult for any one person to maintain absolute

and personal control over a substantial theatrical venture.

Thus, Batchelder remarks on the "small scale" that is a

desirable aspect of puppetry; thus, also, the productions of

Peter Arnott are invariably one-man shows.

The virtues of complete artistic control also seem to

be applauded by Heinrich von Kleist in his enigmatic essay,

"On the Marionette Theatre." Kleist suggests that the

puppet "[is] never guilty of affectation" as are so many

performers. What's more, the puppet allows the artist

control not only over the medium, but also over nature:

> [T]hese puppets have the advantage that they
> are for all practical purposes weightless. .

> . . Puppets need the ground only so they can
> touch it lightly, like elves, and renew the
> swing of their limbs through this momentary
> check. (Kleist 1978 [1810]: 1211-2)

There is something facile in glorifying the puppet's presumed mastery over nature. Consider two performances of Peter Pan. In the first performance, Peter is played by Mary Martin, a living actor who obviously is not able to fly of her own volition. When indeed she does fly across the stage, thanks to mechanical contrivance, the effect is startling: here is a person in flight, a cause for wonder. In the second performance, Peter is played by a marionette that obviously is able to fly, as it is controlled from above by strings. When this marionette flies across the stage, the effect is not nearly as startling; even the youngest school-child realizes that marionettes can fly, and so the act of flying no longer provides the same wonder in itself.

The aesthetic difference between human flight and puppet flight is substantial: in the former, it is the act itself that the audience contemplates with wonder; in the latter, the act is of interest only in the general context of the play. The puppet's presumed mastery over nature is in no way comparable to that of the live actor's; thus, comparison of the two, with the suggestion that an advantage belongs to the puppet, is ill-founded.

Kleist, of course, is not really concerned with overcoming nature; his true concern is with overcoming human self-consciousness. We will soon take up his notion that the puppet is without such consciousness. For now, it is enough to suggest that mastery over nature is hardly unique to puppetry. It is the essence, for example, of most circus acts; in these acts, such control is by no means facile, but is won at the risk of death.

To return to the more general point of the artist's control over the medium: a puppet-artist might aspire to create a unified, synthetic art through the exertion of a total control that approximates that of the painter or sculptor. But it is strange to assume that the finest art exists only as the expression of the solitary artist. Collaboration in the theatre has certainly produced great art; greater, surely, than any solitary theatre artist has produced. And such art has attained "unity" and "synthesis" despite, or even because of, the various egos and visions of the collaborators. It might well be that these egos and visions, along with the talents that accompany them, have a symbiotic effect on one other, resulting in a work far greater than any one of them could have achieved.

More importantly, complete artistic control is not a general characteristic of the puppet theatre. Among the considerations given in the Introduction, the British Punch

and Judy show was a one-man performance, and that performer,
Percy Press, Jr. was responsible for every aspect involved,
even if some of those aspects were traditional, and merely
required his mediation. But all of the other considerations
were collaborative efforts. The Japanese performance
involved the largest number of artists: two or three
operators for each puppet, with as many as three puppets on-
stage at one time; at least one, and sometimes three or four
musicians, on-stage and off; at least one narrator, and
sometimes three or four, on-stage and off; and backstage,
any number of costumers, head-carvers, wig-makers, prop-
builders, and so on. The Osaka Bunraku Troupe consists of
eighty-four performers (Adachi 1985: 9 ff).

Also, it is worth pointing out that any live one-man
show might offer the artist the same control as is offered
by the one-man puppet show. Spalding Gray's production of
Swimming to Cambodia is as self-contained as any puppet
theatre production might be.

It might also be noted that the opportunity of control
that puppetry offers the artist is frequently taken up less
for artistic reasons than for financial ones, particularly
in America. Given the economic realities for puppet produc-
tion, it is often only by working alone that an artist can
earn a living; collaboration risks financial ruin.

The opportunity of control, then, is not an opportunity invariably taken up in the puppet theatre, and is not an opportunity unique to the puppet theatre. As valuable as it can be, both artistically and economically, and as frequently as it is employed, it is not a single quality that can explain the enduring appeal of the puppet.

The puppet theatre also offers the artist a remarkable freedom from restraint in regard to his or her subject-matter. This freedom finds expression in one general and in two specific ways.

The general freedom the puppet avails its artist is through its license. The puppet, not being real, cannot bear real responsibility for its actions; yet its actions are not directly those of the puppet-artist, and so neither does he or she seem to bear responsibility for them. Thus, the puppet has license to act as it will, regardless of social conventions or consequences. Two examples might show the degree to which this freedom is taken.

Bart Roccoberton, Director of the Institute for Professional Puppetry Arts, tells a story of his visit to the home of a famous American puppet-artist, which was to include a viewing of the artist's collection of puppets, and a dinner. Upon arrival, Roccoberton was greeted at the door by the artist's most famous puppet. It was this puppet, operated, of course, by the artist, that guided him along

through the collection, while the artist, in his own voice,
offered only a few stray comments. When dinner time neared,
Roccoberton witnessed an argument between the artist and his
puppet. The artist suggested they have a drink and then
dine, but the puppet protested that he needed his rest, and
wished the wearisome visitor to leave him in peace.
Roccoberton was astonished when the artist reluctantly
agreed with the puppet; and shortly thereafter the artist
showed him to the door, apologizing only that the puppet
tended to be a bit moody (Roccoberton 1982).

Bogatyrev reports on a similar sense of license:

> A certain puppeteer was subpoenaed, accused
> of making political attacks from a puppet
> stage. The puppeteer appeared in court
> carrying the puppet Kasparek and announced
> that it was not his fault, but Kasparek's.
> (Bogatyrev 1983 [1973]: 54)

Unfortunately, Bogatyrev does not tell us whether the
puppeteer's explanation was accepted by the court.

These examples are, of course, extreme, but the puppet
in performance does retain an extraordinary freedom. Recall
the consideration of the British Punch and Judy show: Punch
was beating his wife with a roll of sausages. At another
point in the show, he beats his baby with a stick, and then
throws the baby out a window. Such action would be almost
insupportable in a show performed by live actors; but the
puppet is free to act as it will, and throwing a baby out a
window becomes cause for laughter, not concern. And the

license of the puppet on-stage is not limited to physical

action. As McPharlin notes, "Certainly Punch may go further

without offense in making quips upon delicate subjects, than

could a living actor" (McPharlin 1938: 16).

If the puppet offers the artist a general freedom of

license, it also offers him or her the freedom to engage in

two specific types of subject-matter, both of which might be

taken to be forms of that license.

The first is predicated upon the realization that since

the puppet is not bound to reality, it can be made to

represent beings that are in no sense real. Malkin writes:

> [P]uppetry has played a vital role in the
> development of what can be called the
> dramatic concept of the <u>plausible impossible</u>.
> . . . [This] is the link between the world of
> the real and the realm of pure fantasy.
> (Malkin 1975: 6)

Batchelder considers this freedom to be the key to puppetry:

> The enduring success of the puppet theatre
> rests, I believe, upon the facility with
> which it brings into juxtaposition the real
> and the imaginary, endowing both with equal
> plausibility. (Batchelder 1947: 292)

The significance of this freedom is borne out in the

experience of everyone who currently works in the American

puppet theatre: fantasy and folklore, replete with impos-

sible characters, are the basic staple of puppetry as it is

presented here in children's theatre.

Of course, the "plausible impossible" is not limited to

theatre for children. Recall the considerations given

earlier: in the Indian show, the figure of a girl is

transformed into that of an ogre; in the American show,

numbers themselves are given "life." Throughout the world,

puppet-artists performing for children and adults alike have

taken advantage of the puppet's ability to mingle together

the worlds of reality and the imagination.

The second type of subject-matter the license of the

puppet offers to the artist is that of satire/parody, and is

predicated upon the realization that since puppet is not

bound by reality, it is free to present a corrosive portrait

of it.

> Arnott, in a comment on Obraztsov's work, observes:
>
>> [I]t is in the field of satire that the
>> puppet theatre seems to have established its
>> widest adult appeal. Puppets lend themselves
>> obviously and easily to caricature. (Arnott
>> 1964: 50)

Obraztsov himself makes a distinction between three

different kinds of satire/parody at which the puppet is

especially adept: the "'portrait' parody . . . [a] parody

of a definite character, [in which] pure imitation [of some

feature or behavior] is the kernel of the portrait"; the

"'generalized' parody . . . [a parody of] a group of people

who have common professional, social, or other distinguish-

ing features . . ." in which it is those group features that

are caricatured; and the kind of parody "which consists in

parodying a given subject . . . or rather, theme" and which might be called thematic satire (Obraztsov 1950: 164-5).

Portrait parody works in a simple manner that need not be detailed; it need only be noted that for it to be successful, the audience must be familiar with the person being parodied. Generalized parody is well illustrated by an example given by Obraztsov:

> There are some opera and concert singers . .
> . for whom the performance is only a pretext
> for displaying their talents. . . . They
> consider it necessary to display their
> breathing, so they drag their _fermata_ for
> half a minute. . . . I wanted to make fun of
> a singer of that sort. Of his "magnificent"
> voice, his "immense" temperament, of his
> swaggering walk, his hands clutching the
> crumpled music . . . and the exaggerated
> stretch of the neck for the "brilliant" high
> notes. (Obraztsov 1950: 167)

Obraztsov constructed a puppet of such a singer: it came on-stage full of pompous self-glory, indulged in every manner-ism appropriate to that glory in the course of a song, and consummated the song on a note so high and long that the puppet's neck stretched four times its original length (Obraztsov 1950: 167-8). Obraztsov also gives examples of thematic satires he has created, but they need not be detailed; the Nigerian consideration given in the Introduction will serve as example. In addition to its portrait parodies of tribal members, it presented as well a broad satire on the themes of tribal life and governance.

Clearly, then, the puppet offers the artist the freedom to indulge in satire/parody in a manner that seems to be especially capable of pointing out the foibles, on every level, of humankind. And the significance of this freedom is also borne out in the experience of everyone who works in the puppet theatre in America: satire/parody is the basic staple of puppetry as it is presented here for adults. And of course, such satire/parody is not limited to the puppet theatre for adults; the consideration given earlier of the British _Punch and Judy_ show contains elements of parody. Is not Judy a generalized parody of the long-suffering wife? Later in the show, Punch has disputes with a policeman and a hangman, and these characters are also generalized parodies.

The freedom from restraint that puppetry offers to the artist is a significant factor in the enduring success of the puppet; but can such freedom be identified as the quality that might explain the puppet's enduring success?

In that freedom from restraint is specifically localized in the subject-matters of fantasy on the one hand and satire/parody on the other, it is obvious that neither of these subject-matters, in themselves, offers us that single quality: it is enough to note that our Nigerian and Japanese considerations are not essentially concerned with the fantastic, while the Indian and Javanese considerations are not essentially concerned with the satirical. But still,

there is the encompassing freedom from restraint to be
considered.

The importance of the puppet's license cannot be
underestimated; but neither should it be overestimated. In
the Japanese consideration, neither fantasy nor satire/pa-
rody are of essential concern. Nor is there any sense of a
special license inhering to the performance as a puppet
performance. This seems a telling point, as the Bunraku
theatre is often taken to be the highest achievement in
puppetry. It should be noted that Bunraku upon occasion
does indeed avail itself of the fantastic and the satiric;
but these aspects are not the essence of the art.

Other traditions of puppetry also eschew emphasis upon
the license of the puppet: among them, the Belgian puppet
theatre tradition of Liége and the Sicilian puppet theatre
tradition are both fundamentally concerned with the presen-
tation of historical romances, in which elements of fantasy
and satire are subordinate to the telling of tales about
their heroes (Malkin 1977: 24-34).

And the live theatre is not without similar resources.
If it does not have recourse to the broader license of the
puppet, still, there is a theatrical license that allows for
the portrayal of incidents that would not be condoned
outside of the theatre: one need only what the reaction of
the public would be to a real-life Macbeth. Neither does

the live theatre hesitate to approach the more specific subject-matters of the fantastic and satirical. Production of works such as Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream and James Barrie's Peter Pan suggests that the live theatre is fully capable of treating of the fantastical when it so chooses. Likewise, production of such works as Jonson's Every Man in His Humour and Carol Churchill's Serious Money, as well as the work of innumerable comic impersonators, suggests that the live theatre is equally capable of partaking of the satirical. That it does not make a habit of choosing such subject-matters is more likely the result of disinterest than of disability: the live theatre is capable of working a far broader vein of subject-matter, most particularly that involving realism, than is puppetry.

Freedom from restraint, then, in its general sense of license and its specific aptitude for the subject-matters of fantasy and satire/parody is not a freedom invariably taken up in the puppet theatre, and is not a freedom unique to the puppet theatre. And so, despite its undisputed importance to puppetry past and present, it is not a single quality that can account for the persistance of the puppet.

The Puppet

The second group of possible solutions to the problem of the puppet's enduring appeal as a distinct form of theatre centers upon the puppet itself, and the three sign-systems that constitute the puppet: design, movement, and speech. How do these sign-systems create a "life" for the puppet? Can the puppet be explained by its ability to represent something that it is not?

Batchelder, as noted earlier, contends that puppetry endures because of its "facility [for the] juxtaposition [of] the real and the imaginary." This "facility," she suggests, arises from a particular trait of the puppet:

> Direct characterization is the puppet actor's
> strongest quality. There is no pretense. A
> puppet is the character it portrays; it is
> not a human being dressed up and pretending
> to be that character. (Batchelder 1947: 288)

The ability to directly characterize, Batchelder contends, allows for the juxtaposition of real and imaginary elements: they are both presented to the audience without the interfering pretense of live actors.

The contention that the puppet offers "no pretense," however, is untenable, for the puppet is certainly engaged in pretense, albeit a different pretense than that of the live actor. The actor pretends to be someone other than he or she is; the puppet pretends to be something other than it

is, by pretending to have life. Such pretense is funda-

mental to all puppetry, and cannot be overlooked. Contrary

to Batchelder, then, an explanation of the puppet must

account for how the puppet is capable of the pretense of

life.

It is commonplace to observe that puppetry has achieved

such a pretense by re-creating live theatre, which itself

imitates life. McPharlin writes:

> The history of the puppet theatre, until its
> revival as an independent art, was a course
> of imitation of the larger theatre. It took
> over Punch when he was nearly played out on
> the stage. It presented medieval moralities
> far into the Renaissance. It celebrated
> naval engagements and sieges until they had
> become legendary. It perpetuated dances and
> vaudeville turns when they were hoary. This
> made it a minor and reflective branch of the
> theatre. (McPharlin 1949: 395)

The rationale for this small-scale re-creation of live

theatre, this taking over of its "played out" aspects, is

simple: live theatre, being of greater scale and expense,

could be mounted with regularity only in certain urban

centers; the puppet theatre, which could travel, in many

cases, on a single man's back, could recreate and reproduce

it endlessly in the rural hinterlands. The sense that

puppetry is a rude and derivative, rather than a refined and

original, form of theatre derives from this history.

The revival to which McPharlin refers took place around

the turn of the century, and might be characterized as an

affirmation of puppetry as an original, rather than a derivative, form of theatre. In Jurkowski's terms, the puppet developed its own theatrical "sign system" (Jurkowski 1983: 139 ff). To note that the word "revival" suggests some previous period of original puppetry in the Western world is merely to quibble, although no such period existed.

The history to which McPharlin refers is affirmed by Jan Malík of Czechoslovakia, who has served as secretary-general of UNIMA:

> For many centuries . . . the puppet theatre .
> . . represented a kind of miniature edition
> of the live theatre. . . . Indeed, to this
> day we find among marionette operators a
> tendency to make their puppets as close as
> possible to human reality. (Malik 1967: 7)

Malik's condemnation of today's performers is not that they are guilty of re-creating, in miniature, the live theatre, but, rather, that they are guilty of attempting to imitate human reality itself.

Let us pause to contemplate puppet theatre as a miniature re-creation of live theatre. No doubt that such re-creation occurred; no doubt, even, that puppets occasionally were substituted _in toto_ for live actors. As Jurkowski informs us, "References in Poland indicate that Italians in 1666 performed one day as comedians and another day as puppeteers" presenting precisely the same show (Jurkowski 1983: 134). But even if the show was the same, is it possible that the audience was unaware of what it was

seeing? It seems likely that, while the actors intended to
present the same show, but with puppets, the audience was
seeing a show that, despite such intention, was not the
same. The difference was the presence of puppets rather
than live actors. Even if the puppets attempted to imitate
the design, movement, and speech of the live actors in every
way possible, still, the puppets could not be mistaken _for_
the life actors. Whatever else the show offered its audi-
ence, there was now the added pleasure, or displeasure, of
seeing puppets attempt to perform _as if_ they were live
actors. This is not to suggest that such re-creation is a
good thing; but surely it is not a simple thing to be
dismissed as merely derivative. The miniature re-creation
of live theatre is complicated by the fact that puppets,
after all, are not people.

Let us also contemplate the matter of the puppet's
miniature re-creation of live theatre from a non-European
perspective. Among the considerations given in the Intro-
duction, only that of the British _Punch and Judy_ performance
might be identified as a latter-day, miniature re-creation
of a live theatre tradition, that of the _Comedia_. It might
well be argued that the traditions of puppet theatre repre-
sented in the considerations from Nigeria, Java, Japan, and
India, either preceded or were contemporaneous with local
live theatre traditions. As Malkin notes in this last case:

"[A] complete history of India's theatre would be largely a
history of India's complex and diverse forms of puppet
theater" (Malkin 1975: 4). Similar notations might be made
concerning puppet traditions throughout the non-European
world. The commonplace observation that the puppet is an
imitation of live theatre is true, perhaps, of some European
puppetry; it is not, however, true of the general phenomenon
of the puppet around the world, where puppetry has generally
been original in itself, rather than derivative of live
theatre.

But, as Malík suggests, the miniature re-creation of
live theatre is not the immediate problem, in that it is not
practiced very much these days, when movies and television
regularly bring theatrical performance to the most remote
hinterlands of the world. Rather, the problem is the puppet
as an imitation of human life. Such imitation might be
characterized as the desire, by the puppet-artist(s), to
have the puppet be as life-like in design, movement, and
speech as possible. Vsevelod Meyerhold, in an essay that
implores actors to "find scope for personal creativity,"
makes this extended reference to puppetry:

> There are two puppet theatres: the director
> of the first wants his puppets to look and
> behave like real men. . . . In his attempts
> to reproduce reality "as it really is," he
> improves the puppets further and further
> until he finally arrives at a far simpler
> solution to the problem: replace the puppets
> with real men.

> The other director realizes that his
> audience enjoys. . . [the puppet's] actual
> movements and poses which, despite all
> attempts to reproduce life on the stage, fail
> to resemble exactly what the spectator sees
> in real life. . . .
>   I have described these two puppet theatres
> in order to make the actor consider whether
> he should assume the servile role of the
> puppet . . . or whether he should create a
> theatre like the one in which the puppet
> stood up for itself and did not yield to the
> director's efforts to transform it. The
> puppet did not want to become an exact
> replica of man, because the world of the
> puppet is a wonderland of make-believe, and
> the man which it impersonates is a make-
> believe man. (qtd. in Bogatyrev 1983 [1973]:
> 54)

If the value of imitation from life was once generally
accepted by puppet-artists, and if there remains a lingering
tendency towards it in the puppet theatre of today, as Malik
complains, still, contemporary puppet-artists are in general
accord on the matter. Larry Engler, an American performer,
presents the settled opinion:

> Puppets that attempt to imitate human
> movements often create a superficial sense of
> realism. [But] once this novelty has worn
> off, the audience usually becomes aware of
> the difference between puppet actions and
> human actions. Puppets that create the
> illusion of life by using movements exclusive
> to their construction can more easily
> encourage an audience to accept the living
> existence of an otherwise inanimate object.
> (Engler 1973: 16)

Baird states, with even more emphasis:

> When puppeteers try to copy the human animal,
> they fail. The mechanical copy of life may
> be amazing, curious, or even frightening, but
> it doesn't live, whereas the suggestion

> contained in a puppet may be full of life.
> (Baird 1965: 15)

The analysis is sound: puppetry is certainly limited
when its intention is simply to imitate; it is far livelier
when it is free to "create the illusion of life" by "sugges-
tion." But despite this analysis, it ought to be recalled
that, within such theatrical limitations, the imitative
puppet can provide pleasure not only by the verisimilitude
of its imitation, but by its very act of imitation,
including its failures of verisimilitude; the audience is
free to enjoy the attempt at the dramatic scene as well as
the dramatic scene itself.

Another analysis might be applied to imitation. Take,
for example, a comedian who imitates famous people: to a
substantial degree, the audience is not interested in what
he or she is saying, but rather in the references that are
made to the model, and in the verity of the imitation.
Similarly, when a puppet attempts to imitate human life, the
puppet as a dramatic character is of less importance to the
audience than is the spectacle it presents, through its
referential abstracted signs of life, as it attempts its
imitation.

This analysis points up a basic reason why it is impos-
sible to consider imitation as the quality responsible for
the puppet's endurance: such imitation might be useful in
parody, as in the consideration from Nigeria, where it seems

the element of parody outweighs all other elements; but even in parody it is not always found, as in the consideration of the Punch and Judy show, which, despite that show's use of parody, does not attempt to imitate "realistic" people.

And, of course, the desire for verisimilitude is certainly not involved in every puppet performance, as shown in the considerations from the United States, Japan, India, and Java: the American and Japanese shows disavow imitation of reality by allowing the audience to see the movers of and the speakers for the puppets, and by having those puppets move and speak in highly formalized ways; the Indian and Javanese shows disavow such imitation by allowing "off-stage" puppets to hang lifelessly in full view of the audience, and by giving, in the Indian show, a distorted and unnatural speech to the puppets, and in the Javanese show, a distorted and unnatural movement to the puppets.

It will be recalled that the subject-matter of fantasy is one, along with parody/satire, at which the puppet is particularly adept; and this suggests another reason why the puppet cannot be explained as an imitation of reality. The puppet can scarcely be said to imitate something that does not exist. The Devil appears in a later moment of the Punch and Judy show, an ogre in the Indian show, and "living" numbers in the American show: can such fantastic characters actually be imitated?

Miles Lee, a performer from Great Britain, develops

Meyerhold's argument that there are two approaches to the

puppet theatre. The first is based on imitation, while:

> The other approach is impressionistic. Its
> aim is not to give a photographic picture but
> an interpretation. This is achieved by the
> selection, exaggeration, and distortion of
> significant characteristics. It exists not
> to win approval by its technical cleverness
> but to express a poetic idea or emotion.
> (Lee 1958: 35)

This "other" approach of Lee's follows up on Meyerhold's

"other" puppet theatre by suggesting that the puppet's

"actual movements and poses" are not a matter of "technical

cleverness," but of artistic expression that makes use of

"selection, exaggeration, and distortion" to allow the

puppet its "wonderland of make-believe."

This "other" approach is the one that most contemporary

puppetry, and much traditional puppetry in non-European

cultures, has chosen to follow. The word "impressionistic,"

however, has not received general acceptance as a descrip-

tion of it. Indeed, no single word has gained general

acceptance. We saw earlier that Obraztsov writes about the

puppet as a "generalization," while others refer to the

puppet as a "symbol." Stantscho Gerdjikov, former director

of the Sofia (Bulgaria) Puppet Theatre, adds yet another

word when he writes that "[t]he puppet has an indisputable

advantage over all other actors: its innate and unlimited

possibilities for stylization" (Gerdjikov 1967 [1965]: 42).

It would be only fair to note, in passing, that this is
not an "indisputable advantage" as much as it is a differ-
ence in the relative strengths of puppets and live actors.
It is unclear whether Gerdjikov means to take the argument
as far as would Craig, who suggests that "the body of man is
by nature utterly useless as a material for an art" (Craig
1911: 61). If it is easy to point out the limitations of
the live actor, it is just as easy to suggest commensurate
limitations for the puppet. But without going to extremes,
the point is still well taken: the "possibilities for
stylization" are certainly inherent in the puppet, for the
artist is free to create the puppet as he or she chooses.

The terms "impressionism," "generalization," "symbo-
lism," and "stylization" are all intended to describe the
non-imitative approach to puppetry; but what is actually
described? It will be worthwhile to analyze the means by
which both the imitative and this "other" approach operate.

Imitation from life would have the abstracted signs
that constitute the puppet be as life-like in quality and
quantity as possible: thus, the design of an imitative
"human" puppet would include the appropriate bodily parts,
such as arms and legs, represented and proportioned in a
life-like manner; the movement of this puppet would be as
free from evidence of the mechanical as possible, so that
the puppet itself seemed responsible for its motivation, and

would include as great a level of detail, such as a moving

mouth, rolling eyes, hands that can grasp, as possible; and

the speech of this puppet would be the normal human speech

appropriate to it, delivered in such a manner that the

puppet itself seemed responsible for its delivery.

The "other" approach to the puppet, impressionistic,

symbolic, whatever, eschews the attempt at imitation; but it

has no new or different means available to it. Abstracted

signs of life, within the three sign-systems of design,

movement, and speech, are still the means by which the

puppet purports to have "life." In this "other" approach,

however, these signs are not given an especially life-like

quality: the eyes might be orange buttons, the hands

grossly oversized; the movement might be obviously mechani-

cal, the speech presented from an obviously external source.

Also, the abstracted signs of life need not have a life-like

quantity: the head might consist of nothing more than a

sphere with a notional nose, the legs not exist at all; the

puppet might be allowed only a limited range of movement

and/or speech, or might be denied one of them entirely.

These, then, are the differences between the two

approaches: the imitative approach uses abstracted signs of

life in such quality and quantity as to simulate life as

closely as possible; the "other" approach uses abstracted

signs of life of various quality and limited quantity,

realizing that true simulation is impossible.

Following from this analysis, if the one approach is

called "imitative," the other might be called "conceptual,"

in that the puppet is given abstracted signs of life of a

quality that present the concept of more fully realistic

signs, and of a quantity that present the concept of the

full quotient of realistic signs. All of the various terms

for the non-imitative puppet devolve, essentially, to the

puppet's conceptual, as opposed to imitative, capacity.

But the polarity between these two approaches, which

would seem to exist regardless of what we called the "other"

approach, is a false one, and arises only out of the desire

of many involved in puppetry to anathematize imitation. In

fact, as demonstrated, the means available to all puppet-

artists are the same: the quality and the quantity of

abstracted signs. Imitative and conceptual puppets are but

the extreme poles of the continuum of puppetry, which might

be called, in its fullness, "representation." The location

of a puppet along this continuum of representation depends

upon the quality and quantity of the abstracted signs with

which the artist chooses to invest the puppet.

An explanation of the puppet based upon its representa-

tional nature seems to follow upon this analysis. Indeed,

in each of the considerations given earlier, the puppets

most certainly represent, through the quality and quantity of abstracted signs, characters that range the continuum from the imitative to the conceptual. As representations, the puppets are invested with any quality and/or quantity of abstracted signs, and this investiture allows the audience to imagine the puppets to have life.

An explanation of the puppet as "representation" also has the virtue of suggesting a basic way in which puppetry is distinct from live theatre. As Gerdjikov and others suggest, the puppet-artist can consciously invest the puppet with abstracted signs of life of the quality and quantity he or she chooses; the live actor might take on mannerisms and disregard aspects of the signifying possibilities of acting, but nonetheless he or she is limited in the choices that might be made. The live actor cannot escape his or her physical limitations: the actor's appearance can be designed only so much before exhausting the arts of make-up and costume; the actor's motion can be given only in the manner that bones and muscles will allow, even with the aid of mechanical contrivance; and the actor's speech can be delivered only with so much variation of voice, and, in general, is only delivered by the actor him or herself.

Even more importantly, the live actor, despite all his or her possible exertions, remains but an actor: a person pretending to be another person. As Obraztsov suggests:

> [The power] of a puppet lies in the very fact
> that it is inanimate. . . . On stage, a man
> might portray another man but he cannot
> portray man in general because he is himself
> a man. The puppet is not a man and for that
> very reason it can give a living portrayal of
> man in general. (Obraztsov 1967 [1965]: 19)

It is this general representative capacity of the puppet, as much as its capacity to represent through particular abstracted signs, that appealed at one time to Maeterlinck:

> Maeterlinck felt that human actors, because
> they were restricted by their physical
> characteristics, were not appropriate
> vehicles to portray the archetypical figures
> with which he peopled his stage. (Knapp
> 1975: 77)

Is representation the single quality that explains the enduring appeal of the puppet? Perhaps it might best be described as necessary to such an explanation, but as not sufficient for it.

It will be recalled that the imitative puppet directs the attention of the audience not to the puppet as a dramatic character but rather to that which the puppet imitates, and to the puppet as a figure that, for better or for worse, is engaged in imitation. The puppet as representation avoids these pitfalls. But as has been suggested, the puppet as representation is a continuum that stretches from imitative to conceptual. And what remains unchanging along that continuum is the focus on the puppet as something that the audience perceives as a representative object. The explanation of representation allows the puppet to represent

characters of the real world and the world of the imagina-
tion through the quality and quantity of its abstracted
signs of life; but in its focus on the puppet as an "object"
constituted of those signs, whether in the particular or the
general, it does not give full credit to the puppet as a
"living" dramatic character. To suggest that the enduring
appeal of the puppet might be explained by its ability to
represent "life" begs the question of why the audience is
willing to translate the representations of the "object"
into that "life."

Thus, although we have isolated the constant of
representation in all puppet performance, this constant, by
itself, is not the single quality that explains the puppet.
Puppetry involves something more than just the representa-
tive capacity of the puppet. And that something concerns
the how and why of the audience's imagination of life for
the puppet.

The Audience

The audience of a puppet performance does something
that seems, upon examination, to be extraordinary: for the
sake and duration of the performance, it chooses to imagine,
at least to a certain degree, that the "objects" presented
before it on-stage have "life." As we have seen, the puppet

encourages such an act of imagination by making use of representative abstracted signs of life. But the imagination of life does not necessarily follow from its representation. Perhaps the single quality that might explain the enduring appeal of the puppet concerns the audience's willingness to make the leap from the perception of representative abstractions to the imagination of life.

McPharlin notes two traditional solutions to the problem of the audience's willingness to imagine that the puppet has life, before supplying one of his own:

> [T]he puppet has exercised a fascination for mankind since the invention of theatre. . . . It may have something of maternal feeling if puppets are dolls which have deserted the nursery to go on the stage, as Charles Nodier believed [Revue de Paris, November, 1842]; it may have something of religious awe if they be the progeny of divine images . . . as Charles Magnin preferred to think [Histoire des Marionnettes en Europe depuis l'antiquite jusqu'a nos Jours. 2nd ed. Paris: Michael Levy Freres, 1862]. . . . But when they become alive in their theatre the overwhelming appeal is that of theatre only. (McPharlin 1938: 1)

It will be best to begin with McPharlin's solution, that "the overwhelming appeal [of the puppet] is that of theatre only." In a later work, he elaborates:

> When puppets come alive . . . one ceases to think of wood and wire; one is absorbed in the action. . . . The audience, accepting the convention of puppets, projects itself into them with the same empathy that it feels for any other actors. (McPharlin 1949: 1)

His solution, then, is that the "life" of the puppet is not,
in fact, problematic at all: it is merely the acceptance of
a particular theatrical convention. One is reminded by this
of Coleridge's famous maxim about his poetry:

> [M]y endevours [are] directed to persons and
> characters supernatural, or at least roman-
> tic; yet so as to transfer from our inward
> nature a human interest and a semblance of
> truth sufficient to procure for these shadows
> of imagination that willing suspension of
> disbelief for the moment, which constitutes
> poetic faith. (Coleridge 1951 [1817]: 527)

McPharlin seems to have this "willing suspension of dis-
belief" in mind when he suggests that the audience, "accept-
ing the convention of puppets," thinks not of the actual
nature of the puppet, but "projects itself into them with
the same empathy that it feels for any other actors."

Coleridge coined his maxim to describe his own poetry,
as opposed to that of William Wordsworth; in this limited
sense, it does not seem applicable to puppetry. But
Coleridge also applied the maxim to the workings of the
theatre, as Marvin Carlson notes in his survey, Theories of
the Theatre:

> [Coleridge, in "Progress of the Drama,"]
> speaks of a "combination of several, or of
> all the fine arts to a harmonious whole
> having a distinct end of its own," this end
> being that "of imitating reality (objects,
> actions, or passions) under the semblance of
> reality." The key word is "semblance," and
> this requires a contribution from the
> spectator. Plays "are to produce a sort of
> temporary half-faith, which the spectator
> encourages in himself and supports by a

voluntary contribution on his own part."
(Carlson 1984: 221)

For McPharlin, "the willing suspension of disbelief," or,
alternately, "a temporary half-faith," works in two steps:
the puppet is taken as if it were a live actor, and the live
actor is taken as if he or she were the character portrayed;
and so the puppet-as-live-actor is taken to be the character
it portrays.

McPharlin wants to legitimize the puppet as an instru-
ment of theatre, and feels, perhaps, that such legitimacy
can be maintained only if the distinction between the puppet
and the live actor is abolished. Certainly the audience can
feel as much "empathy" for the puppet as for the live actor;
but does the audience ever completely "cease to think of
wood and wire"? Coleridge suggests that, in live theatre,
the audience is able, without difficulty, to take the actor
to be the character represented; McPharlin suggests,
likewise, that in puppetry, the audience is able, without
difficulty, to take the puppet to be the character repre-
sented. But this would require more than a poetic suspen-
sion of disbelief; it would require the audience to deny
what is plainly before its eyes. In live theatre, a person
represents a person; in puppetry, an object represents a
person. The mode of representation is, thus, fundamentally
different. The power of theatrical convention is not
without limit, and if it seems extreme to suggest that any

audience would deny what is plainly before its eyes, it seems absurd to suggest that every audience is willing to make such a denial. As has been suggested, the replacement of the actor with the puppet is anything but neutral, in that, simply, the actor is alive, while the puppet, regardless of the quality and quantity of its abstracted signs of life, is not. No audience above the age of five will be able to completely overlook this essential fact. For this reason, McPharlin's solution, that the audience accepts the puppet conventionally, and responds to it as it would respond to a live actor, cannot be maintained.

One might come at this point from another direction. If, as McPharlin argues, there is no fundamental difference between the audience's acknowledgement of the actor and the puppet, then what is gained by the use of the puppet instead of the actor? This question becomes especially acute when puppets are employed in dramas written for actors, such as the Greek tragedies or Shakespearean drama. Why would the artist desire to employ the puppet, and the audience desire to see the puppet, if the drama is known to work perfectly well with actors? Only some fundamental difference between the puppet and the actor can account for the impulse to employ and to see the puppet instead of the actor. The powers of theatrical convention certainly work in puppetry, but not in the same manner that they work in live theatre.

There is an interesting variation on the argument of convention, which is implicit not only in McPharlin, but in some of the previously discussed solutions as well. It maintains that, in the conventional, artificial world of the theatre, only a conventional, artificial actor might be appropriate.

When a live actor is surrounded by what obviously are nothing more than stage-props and stage-flats, he or she can seem ludicrous, taking seriously what no audience would so take. This is a major problem in live theatrical representation. A common solution is to avoid the regular usage of props and scenery, and to rely instead upon suggestive description and mime. But here, too, the live actor can seem ludicrous, speaking of and "handling" things that plainly do not exist. The problem remains that the live actor is of a different nature than anything else on the stage.

But as László Halász, a psychologist associated with the Budapest State Puppet Theatre, suggests:

> The contradiction which is always present
> between the "naturalistic" living actor and
> the anti-naturalistic sets designed by
> artists ceases to exist in the puppet world;
> here the anti-naturalistic puppet character
> and the anti-naturalistic surroundings merge
> in perfect harmony. (Halász 1978: 59)

The convention of the puppet is in harmony with the convention of its theatrical environment. This might be the

quality that explains the puppet's persistence: the puppet

intrinsically conforms to the artificiality of the theatre,

wherein, by convention, the audience is willing to imagine

the puppet as having life, just as it is willing to imagine

the props and scenery to be that which they represent.

Among the considerations given earlier, the most

sophisticated of the productions lend credence to this

solution: the Japanese and American considerations in

particular are fine examples of the integration of the

puppet and its environment, as in each case a unique

theatrical world is established that cannot be duplicated by

live theatre. The less sophisticated of the productions,

however, expose a serious limitation to this argument: in

neither the English nor the Nigerian shows is any substan-

tial theatrical environment created, for in each case the

use of props and/or scenery is severely limited. If no

environment is created, how can the puppet's integration

with the environment be of central importance?

Deszö Szilágya, one-time director and "theoretician" of

the Budapest Puppet Theatre, contends that integration is

not, in fact, a sufficient explanation:

> For a long time it was argued that puppetry
> was the ideal integrated art. . . . True
> enough, this . . . provides a particular
> enjoyment for the spectator. But the basic
> prerequisite for this refined aesthetic
> appreciation is the existence of an approp-
> riate culture. If this is so, why then does
> the puppet have such an elemental and

> powerful impact on an unsophisticated
> audience, mainly on children? The answer
> must be that in puppetry it is not the
> aesthetic experience that is the primary
> factor but the puppet's immediate psycho-
> logical impact. (Szilágya 1967 [1965]: 35)

Szilágya uses the term "aesthetic experience" as if this were something that can come only of vast sophistication; the term might be used in a simpler, more fundamental sense. His contention, however, is well-taken: puppetry can make use of, but does not require, integration of the conventions of the puppet and the theatre. Rather, the puppet has a broader psychological impact upon every type of audience, sophisticated or not.

That impact might be recognized in the two arguments that McPharlin mentions, only to disregard without further comment: the puppet as "progeny of divine image," and the puppet as "doll" that has "deserted the nursery."

The argument that the puppet owes its enduring appeal to its derivation from the religious figure receives its most enthusiastic support from Craig:

> Today, in [the puppet's] least happy period
> many people regard him as rather a superior
> doll--and to think he has developed from the
> doll. This is incorrect. He is a descendent
> of the stone images of the old temples--he is
> to-day a rather degenerate form of a god.
> (Craig 1911: 82)

It was Craig's desire to restore puppetry, and, through puppetry, all of theatre, to religious stature through the use of the Übermarionette. Such a desire is, ultimately,

mystical, and is not susceptible to argument. One might
note, however, that both puppetry and live theatre have
somehow carried on, with great success throughout this
century, irrespective of Craig's injunctions.

The anthropological argument of the puppet's "descent"
from the religious figure is debatable. No doubt that many
cultures have used inanimate figures in worship and ritual;
it might be doubted, however, whether the moving and/or
speaking religious figure is in fact the progenitor of the
puppet, or is simply a figure that moves and/or speaks in a
manner similar to that of the puppet. Nonetheless, the
similarity between the two suggests that the religious
figure might indeed lend to the puppet something of its
sacred aura.

Certain types of puppets seem especially reminiscent of
the religious figure: the sheer formal stature of greater-
than-life-size and near-life-size puppets might suggest to
the audience the presence of deity; the slow and stately
movement of the marionette might suggest the dignity of the
divine; and the flickering appearance of the shadow puppet
might suggest the shadow of a god upon the face of the
world. The very smallness of the hand-puppet, however, with
its penchant for fast and furious activity, is hard to
imagine as partaking of any such elevation.

Or perhaps it's not any physical reminiscence between the puppet and the religious figure that entwines the two, but rather a psychological association: as the gods endow life in, and exercise control over the lives of humanity, so humanity endows and controls the puppet's "life." This takes us rather far afield from Craig's anthropological speculations, but seems more convincing. Although many audiences for puppetry have little involvement with religious figures, and can scarcely be expected to recall in the puppet any idolatrous or ritualistic origins, all audiences for puppetry have some notion, however attenuated, of the life-giving and controlling power of the gods, and might associate the puppet with this.

The problem with this associative argument is that it is not sufficiently ample to accommodate the diachronic diversity of puppetry; its limitations are exposed by the Nigerian and English considerations given earlier. The former, with its emphasis on satire, and the latter, with its emphasis on outrageous mischief, are oblivious to any religious association: are audiences led to reflect upon the divine by lewdly satirical representations of copulation and grossly comical representations of wife-beating?

If the supposed religious descent of the puppet is a noble one, the supposed ascent of the puppet from the nursery doll is unhappily ignoble. Such an ascent, to Craig

as well as to others, would suggest that the puppet is nothing more than an overdeveloped child's toy. In light of this, few puppet-artists are willing to accord the argument any credence, and follow McPharlin and Craig in offering but a few words of disparagement before moving quickly on.

As with the previous argument, the argument that the puppet has enduring appeal owing to its derivation from the nursery doll does not, ultimately, depend on any proof that the puppet is literally ascended from the doll. Such an ascent is as likely or unlikely as a descent from the religious figure. Rather, the argument is based upon the obvious similarity of certain types of puppets to the child's doll, and suggests that the doll might lend to the puppet something of its personal charm.

In analyzing definitions of the puppet earlier, a formal distinction was made between the puppet and the doll on the basis of the theatrical usage of the former; such a distinction does not deny the similarity between the two, but points up their differing functions, with the latter having only a private one. It remains to be seen if the puppet's charms are somehow derived from those of the doll.

Certain types of puppets seem especially reminiscent of the doll: the small size and simple movements of the hand-puppet might evoke in the audience a remembrance of childhood toys; rod-puppets and hand-and-rod puppets, although

larger, are still scaled down from life in a doll-like manner. But other types of puppets are less reminiscent of the doll: smallness, of course, is not an invariable characteristic of the puppet, and near-life-size and larger-than-life-size puppets can be considered doll-like only with great difficulty, and tend to be anything but charming; also, the physical distance between the puppet-operator and the marionette, as well as certain other types of puppets, seems very unlike the proximal relationship between the child and the doll.

Or perhaps it's not any physical reminiscence between the puppet and the doll that binds them in the imagination, but rather a psychological association similar to that advanced in the previous argument: as the child believes in, and exercises control over, the charmed life of the doll, so humanity believes in and controls the charming puppet's "life." Despite the low regard with which this argument is held, it seems to have much validity as the previous argument. Although many audiences for puppetry are far removed from playing with dolls, all such audiences have some notion, however attenuated, of the life-giving and controlling power of childhood fantasy, and might associate the puppet with this.

The problem with this associative argument is that it also is insufficiently ample to accommodate the puppet's

diachronic diversity; its limitations are exposed by the
Japanese and American shows considered earlier. The former,
with insistently formal and non-realistic representations of
life, is worlds away from the charming power of childhood
belief, while the latter, despite its representations of
life growing directly out of the child's imagination, scorns
the very idea that the child has any control over them: are
audiences led to remember the charm of childhood dolls while
viewing an intense portrayal of a double suicide or a child
being made mockery of by the figures of his imagination?

The arguments that the puppet descends from the
religious figure or ascends from the nursery doll are, on
first impression, mutually contradictory; but as we have
seen, the actual lineage of the puppet, one way or the
other, is not as important as the psychological associations
that the puppet invites in its audience. The associations
suggested by these arguments are similar, in that both are
concerned with man's willful imagination and control of the
puppet's "life" through association with either the reli-
gious figure or the nursery doll. Although neither of these
arguments suggests a single quality that explains the appeal
of the puppet, the underlying psychological association that
they share is pregnant with meaning.

Otakar Zich, a Czech semiotician, offers an analysis of
the audience's response to the puppet that contains curious

echoes of these two arguments; but the point that he makes
is of a different nature entirely:

> [T]he puppets may be perceived either as
> living people or as lifeless dolls. Since we
> can perceive them only [emphasis in the
> original] one way at a time, we are faced
> with two possibilities:
>   a) We perceive the puppets as dolls [and]
> stress their inanimate character. It is the
> material they are made of that strikes us as
> something that we are really perceiving. In
> that case . . . we cannot take seriously
> their speech or their movements . . . hence,
> we find them comical and grotesque. . . . We
> perceive them as figurines, but they demand
> we take them as people; and this invariably
> amuses us. . . .
>   b) [Or] we may conceive of the puppets as
> if they were living beings by emphasizing
> their lifelike expressions, their movements
> and speech, and taking them as real. Our
> awareness that the puppets are not alive
> recedes, and we get the feeling of something
> inexplicable, enigmatic, and astounding. In
> this case, the puppets seem to act mysteri-
> ously. . . . [H]ere we are faced with
> something utterly unnatural--namely, life in
> an inanimate, inorganic material. (qtd. in
> Bogatyrev 1983 [1973]: 48)

Zich's first "possibility" of "perception" seems
related to the argument that the audience associates the
puppet with the nursery doll, while his second "possibility"
seems related to the argument that the audience associates
the puppet with the religious figure. In fact, his point is
more subtle yet more dogmatic: whatever associations the
audience might make, the puppet can be taken only as either
"comic and grotesque" or "inexplicable [and] enigmatic."

Bogatyrev makes a number of criticisms of Zich's

analysis (Bogatyrev 1983 [1973]: 49 ff), and they themselves

are criticized by Jurkowski (Jurkowski 1983: 123 ff) and

Veltruský (Veltruský 1983: 108-9). But as Veltruský writes,

"one [criticism] remains valid, namely, that there exist

puppet performances that are neither comic nor mysterious,

but simply serious" (Veltruský 1983: 109). This criticism,

even if it must stand alone, is devastating: Zich suggests

that an audience can view the puppet in only two ways, and

he is plainly wrong. The consideration from Japan suggests

that its audience perceives the puppets as neither "comic

and grotesque" nor "inexplicable [and] enigmatic," but, in

Veltruský's words, as "simply serious." Zich's either/or

fails to account for the puppet in all its diversity; the

appeal of the puppet need not be either one way or the

other. And there remains Zich's point that the puppet can

be seen in "only one way at a time." Is this, indeed, the

case? We will be returning to this crucial point in the

next Chapter.

For the moment, we remain concerned with the appeal of

the puppet, and it will be best to begin at the most

fundamental level of audience perception. Miles Lee

suggests what this is:

> A puppet, however cunningly manipulated by
> the puppeteer, is never fully alive until
> given additional stimulus through the
> imagination of its audience. (Lee 1958: 8)

Only the imaginative contribution of the audience allows the puppet to have "life." This is surely the point where the "temporary half-faith" suggested by Coleridge applies to puppetry, but as a half-faith different than that applied to live theatre. Maeterlinck also feels that puppets only "come to life only when the spectator projects his unconscious content onto them" (Knapp 1975: 77). One might quibble with the semantics of "unconscious content," but the suggestion is correct. The puppet is but an object constituted of abstracted signs in the perception of the audience; it is the audience that gives meaning to these constitutive signs, and, by an act of the imagination, imagines for the puppet the life that the abstracted signs purport it to have. Without such audience imagination, the puppet remains nothing more than an "object," regardless of the quality and quantity of its signs.

But if this is the case, it remains to be seen why the audience is prepared to lend its imaginative will to the puppet. Why does the audience trouble to take seriously the puppet's abstracted signs of life? As we have seen, the impact of psychological associations of the puppet with the religious figure and the childhood doll offer two possible reasons, but neither is sufficiently inclusive on its own; together, however, in keeping with Szilágya, they suggest that it is the impact of psychological association that

prompts the audience to imagine the puppet as having life.

Szilágya suggests that there are two aspects to the

psychological impact the puppet has upon its audience:

> [1] On the puppet stage, before the specta-
> tor's eyes, the supreme act of creation is
> taking place--lifeless, dead matter is turned
> into life. . . . [2] The puppet . . . no
> matter in what form it may appear, is, deep
> down in the human mind, a primordial symbol
> of the human being. (Szilágya 1967 [1965]:
> 35)

The impact of psychological associations involving the

puppet as religious figure and the puppet as childhood doll

are here united and enfolded into a more general psycho-

logical association. The audience is willing to imagine the

puppet as having life because to do so fulfills the basic

human desire to understand the world through the prism of

human consciousness. And this, of course, brings us back to

Kleist; now, however, we are concerned with the puppet's

lack of consciousness not for any freedom it offers to the

artist, but for the opportunity it presents to the audience

to supply precisely that consciousness which the puppet, as

a perceived object, is lacking. Kleist is fascinated by the

puppet's lack of consciousness, but only implicitly suggests

that it gains its "life" through consciousness supplied by

its audience. Szilágyi and Maeterlinck, among others, make

that suggestion explicit. It is for the fulfillment of the

desire to understand the world through the prism of human

consciousness that the audience imagines the puppet to have life.

Is the psychological desire to imagine life the synchronic explanation of the puppet for which we have been seeking? Perhaps it might best be described, as was the explanation of puppet as representative "object," as necessary, but not sufficient, for such an explanation.

The psychological desire that leads the audience to imagine that the puppet has life is not, in fact, operative only with the puppet: as we have seen, religious figures, in themselves, and childhood dolls, in themselves, can just as easily be imagined as having life; indeed, "life" might be imagined as inhering to the house that sits across the street, to the smoke that curls up from a cigarette or pipe, and even to the computers upon which people write. The half-shuttered windows of the house might be imagined to be the sleepy eyes of a hulking giant; the wraith-like smoke of the pipe might be imagined to the vaporous form of some spirit of the air; the performance of complex tasks by the computer might be imagined to be the product of intelligence; and yet none of these, as they exist, are in any way puppets. Religious figures, dolls, houses, smoke, and computers, along with a myriad other commonplaces of the world, are all without consciousness, and all present, most often without the least intention, signs that might be

imagined to indicate life. If the psychological desire to imagine life is the explanation of the puppet, it follows that not only can everything be a puppet, but that everything is a puppet; and this, of course, is absurd.

The psychological desire to imagine life might be characterized as promiscuous, willing to lavish its attention upon every object that happens into view, rather than to limit its attention to the more specific "object" of the puppet. More than that, this promiscuity of desire obliterates the perception of the object so that it might be imagined to have life; the object itself is rendered mere stimulus for the joy of imagination.

It will be recalled that McPharlin argues that the audience responds through convention to the puppet as if it were a live actor, that is, as a dramatic character, and that this argument fails because it ignores the actual "object" of the puppet. The argument of psychological desire, although more subtle and persuasive, ultimately falls prey to the same failure: the focus remains on the "life" of the puppet as a dramatic character, and overlooks the way in which that imagination of life is stimulated. To suggest that the enduring appeal of the puppet might be explained by its ability to foster the imagination of life begs the question of how the audience is able to translate the representations of the "object" into that "life."

Thus, although we have isolated the constant of the audience's psychological desire for the puppet to have "life" in all puppet performance, this constant, by itself, is not the single quality that explains the puppet. Just as puppetry involves something more than the puppet's representative capacity as perceived object, it also involves something more than the audience's desire to imagine that the puppet has life. That something more can be identified when we consider the perception along with the imagination, the "object" along with the "life."

CHAPTER 5

The Essence of the Puppet

The reader will have noticed, no doubt, a symmetry between the "necessary but insufficient" solutions proposed at the conclusions of the final two sections of the pre-ceding Chapter: that the single quality accounting for the puppet's enduring and widespread appeal is its distinctive ability as an object to deploy representative signs; or that the single quality is the puppet's distinctive ability to satisfy its audience's desire to imagine life as pervading the world. A satisfactory explanation of the enduring appeal of the puppet, an explanation that will apply to every manifestation of theatrical puppetry, will need to be aware of both of these aspects; it will need to account for the puppet's dual nature as representative perceived "object" and as psychologically imagined "life."

Double-Vision

It will be useful to return to Otakar Zich, who, as we have seen, argues that the audience can perceive the puppet in either of two ways, as inanimate doll or as living being.

To avoid confusion with the specialized use of the word "perception" throughout this essay, let us restate for Zich that the audience can <u>acknowledge</u> the puppet as either inanimate doll or living being. Are not these "two ways" essentially the two aspects of the puppet's nature as "object" and as "life"? Zich argues that there can be no relationship between these aspects, as the acknowledgement of puppet by the audience is an either/or proposition. But can the audience, in fact, "[acknowledge] the puppet <u>only</u> [emphasis in the original] one way at a time"? Zich's argument was criticized earlier for its failure to account for puppetry that was neither "comical and grotesque," as when the puppet is acknowledged as an inanimate doll, nor "enigmatic and astounding," as when the puppet is acknowledged as a living being. The criticism now is not that there are other ways to acknowledge the puppet, but that these different acknowledgements are not necessarily antithetical. Is it not possible that the audience might acknowledge the puppet in both ways at the same time?

Thomas Green and W. J. Pepicello, American scholars of theatre and linguistics, suggest that the audience's acknowledgement is not exclusively a matter of either/or:

> [W]hile the audience knows, on some level,
> that the puppet is a mere sign (specifically
> a metonym), observers are led to disattend
> this fact by the artistic conventions of the
> art form. . . . [Yet] despite the convention
> of disattending the human presence in puppet

> plays, some traditions . . . [create a]
> tension arising from the audience's alternate
> perception of the puppet as an independent
> "actor" and as a manipulated object. (Green
> and Pepicello 1983: 155)

Green and Pepicello argue that the audience "disattends" two

distinct things: the puppet "as a mere sign"; and "the

human presence in puppet plays," presumably the more or less

obvious fact that puppets are controlled and accorded speech

by humans. The former, it seems, is always disattended,

while the latter is not disattended in "some traditions,"

such as Japanese Bunraku, that make no attempt to hide the

fact of human involvement. In these traditions, Green and

Pepicello note an "oscillation" in the audience's acknow-

ledgement "between object as actor (i.e., having life) and

acted upon (i.e., inanimate object)" (Green and Pepicello

1983: 157). This oscillation is essentially a rapid and

recurring shift between Zich's "two ways" of acknowledging

the puppet.

Although this suggestion is a significant advance over

Zich, allowing for a relationship between the two aspects of

the puppet, there are three problems with it.

The first is that oscillation between the puppet as

"actor" and "acted upon" is not considered to be universally

operative: it is implied that if the puppet-operator is not

visible, as in many traditions, no such oscillation will

occur; the universal disattendance of the puppet as "mere

sign" will predominate, supplemented by the local disatten-
dance of the invisible puppet-operator. The "life" of the
puppet, as expressed through "artistic convention," will be
valued more highly than the nature of the puppet as an
"object" constituted of signs. Or, to put it more simply:
without the visible presence of the puppet-operator, the two
aspects of the puppet will not be held in balanced tension.

The second problem is with the conflicting logic of
oscillation and disattendance: oscillation contradicts the
suggestion that, while the audience is aware that "on some
level," the puppet is "mere sign," this awareness is
ultimately disattended. Either the audience oscillates
between the two aspects of the puppet in balanced tension,
or the two aspects are not balanced, and the puppet as
"life" dominates the puppet as "object." Although Green and
Pepicello do not attempt to explain this contradiction,
their limitation of oscillation to puppetry in which there
is the "human presence" of a visible puppet-operator implies
that, as a rule, awareness and disattendance of the puppet
as "mere sign" is the more fundamental acknowledgement of
the puppet by the audience. Again, to put it more simply:
oscillation and disattendance are incompatible, and given
the choice between them, Green and Pepicello seem to suggest
that disattendance is the more common.

The third problem is with the term "oscillation"
itself: is there actually a rapid and recurring shift of
acknowledgement, in any tradition of puppetry, between the
puppet as "actor" and as "acted upon"? Perhaps this is a
only a semantic problem, but oscillation suggests an inabil-
ity on the part of the audience to maintain, at any time,
acknowledgement of the two aspects of the puppet. Is there
any reason to believe that oscillation between acknowledge-
ments, rather than simultaneous acknowledgement, is in fact
the case? If anything, it would seem that oscillation is
the less likely: how is the audience to take seriously the
puppet as "actor" if the puppet as "acted upon" continually
obtrudes its attention?

Despite these problems, there is a positive side to the
suggestions of Green and Pepicello: if only in traditions
that expose the human presence of the puppet-operator, and
if only in a manner that does not quite allow for simul-
taneous acknowledgement of the puppet's dual nature, they
help to break down Zich's imposing either/or.

Jurkowski goes further. He does not limit the acknow-
ledgement of the puppet's dual nature as "object" and "life"
to traditions that include a human presence on-stage.
Within "the sign system of the puppet theatre," he notes
what he calls "the opalescence of the puppet," meaning "the
double existence of the puppet, which is perceived (and

demonstrated) both as puppet and scenic character" (Jurkow-

ski 1983: 141). Or, as he explains it in another article:

> When movement fully dominates an object we
> feel that the character is born and present
> on the stage. When it is the nature of the
> object which dominates we still see the
> object. The object is still the object and
> the character at the same time. . . . This
> is what I mean by "opalisation" [sic].
> (Jurkowski 1988 [1984]: 41)

This explanation is not as clear as it might be. Essenti-

ally, however, Jurkowski argues that "opalescence," or

"opalisation," refers to the audience's simultaneous

acknowledgement of the puppet's dual nature, a "unity" of

acknowledgement; or, in the terms of this essay, a balanced

tension between the puppet's two aspects of "object" and

"life." This is yet a further advance over Zich. There

are, however, two problems with Jurkowski's argument, one

more serious than the other.

First, although the term "opalescence" is better than

Green and Pepicello's "oscillation," in that it does not

imply an inability on the part of the audience to maintain a

simultaneous acknowledgment of the puppet as "object" and as

"life," it is also problematic, despite, or perhaps because

of, its almost poetic quality. How is one to understand it?

Jurkowski himself seems unable to provide a lucid explana-

tion. It will be best to find a more straight-forward term,

while maintaining the idea that the puppet invites simul-

taneous acknowledgement of its two aspects.

Second, and more seriously, Jurkowski does not consider opalisation to be inherent to the puppet itself; rather, he says that it has existed only since the inception of what he calls the "sign system of the puppet theatre":

> [T]he puppet has been producing this opalisa-
> tion effect since the eighteenth century.
> The puppet was [only] then considered a
> puppet and a live character at the same time.
> (Jurkowski 1988 [1984]: 41)

We soon will consider Jurkowski's discussion of the various "sign systems" in which the puppet might be employed; for the moment, it is enough to note that in the contexts of "neighboring sign systems" and of the "sign system of the live theatre," Jurkowski believes that the puppet is acknowledged only as an "object" or as a "life." Opalescence, then, is not inherent in all puppet performance, but inheres only in a certain style of such performance. According to Jurkowski, Zich's either/or has only been abolished only in the period when that style of performance became current.

Péter Molnár Gál, a designer for the Budapest State Puppet Theatre, does not offer an explanatory term of his own, but he succeeds in doing away entirely with Zich's either/or when describing one of his theatre's "distinguishing characteristics":

> Everything is what it is, plus something
> else: a recognizable object and a trans-
> figured object at the same time. On the
> puppet stage a feather-duster may symbolize a
> fairy prince illumined by glory, but we must
> never forget that it still remains a feather-

> duster. While the objects lose their
> original purpose and become transformed into
> something else, they still faintly preserve
> their original character. (Gál 1978: 14)

One might quibble over the phrase "faintly preserve," for

according to the logic of the description, the aspect of the

puppet as "recognizable object" is held in balanced tension

with the aspect of the puppet as "transfigured object."

Excepting that, Gál is obviously dealing with what Green and

Pepicello have called "oscillation," and Jurkowski has

called "opalescence."

Once more, however, simultaneous acknowledgement of the

two aspects of the puppet is circumscribed; Gál limits it,

if only by implication, to the workings of his own theatre.

As he is not attempting to explain puppetry at large, such a

limitation is understandable: the Budapest State Puppet

Theatre consciously bases its work on the tension inherent

in the dual nature of the puppet, and Gál thinks that this

is one of his theatre's greatest strengths. He is certainly

correct; but he is not concerned with exploring whether this

tension is exists only in his theatre in particular, or

whether it is latent in puppet theatre in general.

It remains to be suggested, then, that every puppet, in

every puppet theatre, in every tradition of puppetry, and in

every theatrical employment of the puppet, invites its

audience to acknowledge, at once, its two aspects; it

remains to be suggested that through the tension inherent in

this dual acknowledgement, the puppet pleasurably exposes
its audience's understanding of what it means to be an
"object" and what it means to have "life."

Puppets, as we have seen, are not a particular class of
objects, in that almost anything might be considered to be a
puppet, depending upon its usage in performance. Puppets,
as we have also seen, are not amenable to taxonomic descrip-
tion based upon the time and place of their tradition or the
manner of their control, in that tradition and control are
static qualities, while the dynamism of the puppet is
describable only in terms of the signs of design, movement
and speech as deployed in performance. Finally, puppets, as
we have seen, cannot be explained according to their
abilities either as perceived objects or as imagined lives,
in that neither ability alone encompasses the full acknow-
ledgement of the puppet in performance.

The common denominator in all that we have seen is that
discussion of the puppet can be nothing other than dis-
cussion of puppetry in performance. This is because the
puppet, properly speaking, exists only as a process of
performance. Or, to put it another way, the essence of
puppetry is nothing more or less than a mode of performance
in which the audience perceives a theatrical figure to be an
object and at the same time imagines it to have life, owing

to the psychological stimulation provided by its represen-
tative signs.

This process is what Green and Pepicello refer to when
they write of oscillation, what Jurkowski refers to when he
writes of opalisation, and what Gál refers to when he writes
of the puppet as "a recognizable object and a transfigured
object at the same time"; contrary to all of these writers,
however, this process is not limited to any particular
style, age, or tradition of puppetry, but is central to the
phenomenon throughout its temporal and geographic diversity.
The process might be called "double-vision," for, in the
course of the performance, the audience "sees" the puppet,
through perception and through imagination, as an "object"
and as a "life," in two ways at one time.

There is a constant tension within this double-vision
created by the puppet, between the audience's perception and
its imagination, between the puppet as "object" and the
puppet as "life": each is inescapable, and yet each
contradicts the other. The puppet is and is not that which
seems to be. Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Japan's most important
Bunraku playwright, who helped to define the Bunraku style
around the turn of the eighteenth century, writes:

> Art is something which lies in the slender
> margin between the real and the unreal. . . .
> It is unreal, and yet it is not unreal; it is
> real, and yet it is not real. (qtd. in
> Brecht 1988b: 706)

The art of puppetry most certainly lies in this "slender margin," for the audience's acknowledgement of the puppet, through perception and imagination, sets up a conflict between the puppet as object and as life. What might be called the ontological status of the puppet is always within the margin of doubt; its place in that margin is its most distinctive characteristic.

Basil Milovsoroff, a twentieth century American puppet-artist, muses in a reflection upon his art that "[p]erhaps the puppet's real beauty is its native theatricality . . ." (Milovsoroff 1976: 5). What is willful in the live theatre is "native" to the puppet: a "make-believe" existence predicated on a double-vision that acknowledges the "object" of the puppet to have "life."

It would be incorrect to say that all puppetry consciously strives to create double-vision; in fact, such a striving has not been central to the phenomenon of the puppet. As we have seen in Jurkowski's example of the Italian theatre company that alternately performed live and with puppets, double-vision frequently might have been considered an undesirable side-effect of puppetry. Nonetheless, all puppetry does create double-vision, whether intentionally or not. Thus, double-vision, with the puppet simultaneously being "object" and "life," is the defining characteristic of the puppet; it is also the basis for a

synchronic explanation of the puppet, for double-vision exposes the audience's understanding of what is an object and what is life, creating the pleasure of a profound and illuminating paradox.

Following this discussion of double-vision, a full definition of the puppet may be set forth at last: the puppet is a theatrical figure perceived by an audience to be an object that is given design, movement and/or speech in such a way that the audience imagines it to have life; by creating a double-vision of perception and imagination, it pleasurably exposes the audience's understanding of the relationship between objects and life.

The paradoxical pleasure created by the puppet's process of double-vision operates on a fundamental, synchronic level, underneath and along with any number of additional pleasures the puppet might provide. These pleasures have been discussed throughout this essay, and include, generally, the pleasure provided by the "object" of the puppet through the signs of design, movement, and/or speech that constitute it, and that provided by the puppet's "life" as a dramatic character. More specifically, they include: the artistic unity the puppet allows in production; the artistic freedom of subject-matter, especially in the areas of satire and the plausible/implausible, at which the puppet is particularly adept; and the talents of untold

legions of artists who have channelled their creative
abilities through the puppet. Nonetheless, although each of
these pleasures has, in some time and/or place, allowed the
puppet to endure, only the paradoxical pleasure provided by
the puppet's process of double-vision is operative in every
time and/or place: it is the single most important constant
in all puppet performance.

It should not be thought that this ontological paradox
demands of its audience any remarkable level of aesthetic or
philosophical reflection; the process of double-vision does
not require that the audience be consciously aware that it
is taking place. And so, while it is true that the puppet
makes special demands upon its audience, these demands can
easily be satisfied by any audience of kindergarten chil-
dren, for they are nothing more than that the audience be
receptive to the abstracted signs of life that constitute
the puppet; from such reception, all else will follow.

If anything, a major problem in puppetry is the very
ease with which its special demands are met. Arnott,
contemplating why there is so much bad puppetry to be found,
concludes that "there is no doubt that puppetry is fatally
easy. There is an irresistible attraction about these
little moving figures" (Arnott 1964: 40).

What is "fatally easy" is the inherent ability of the
puppet to create double-vision: almost regardless of the

production values involved, the puppet will create a certain

amount of pleasure by provoking its audience to consider the

relationship between "object" and "life."

Arnott suggests that this ease is, ultimately, the

reason for which puppetry, at least in the West, has come to

be held in such low regard:

> When the puppet in itself is so attractive,
> does it much matter what it does? Thus a
> vicious cycle is created. The percipient
> adult comes to realize that he can expect
> only a superficial entertainment. . . . [He
> then] expects to be able to bring children,
> and troupes who make their living from
> puppetry are forced to give the public what
> it wants. Inevitably, the entertainment
> offered cannot rise above a certain level.
> (Arnott 1964: 40-1)

The paradoxical pleasure of the puppet's process of double-

vision is so easy to create that it leads to a laziness

among puppet-artists. It need only be noted that such

laziness, and the bad puppetry that results from it, is the

fault of the artists, and not of puppetry itself. As we

have seen from our considerations, when artists do not fall

prey to such laziness they are able to create powerful and

unique theatrical productions.

A Test of Double-Vision

The reader will recall from the Introduction that
Jurkowski challenges the value of any synchronic approach,
arguing that the diachronic diversity of puppetry is such
that the puppet can be comprehended only through discussion
of its employment in a variety of specific theatrical
contexts. It will be worthwhile to test the ideas of this
essay against the various contexts Jurkowski enumerates, to
see if the ideas hold up. If the puppet as a process of
double-vision can be found to be operative in each of these
instances, then it might be claimed to operate synchro-
nically in all theatrical puppetry.

To briefly review: Jurkowski argues, in his essay
"Transcodification of the Sign Systems of Puppetry," that
"the presence of a puppet is not always and inevitably
constitutive of one fixed sign system of puppet theatre"
(Jurkowski 1983: 130). Rather, the puppet can be put to the
"service" of: "neighbor sign systems," the "sign system of
the live theatre," the "sign system of the puppet theatre,"
and a contemporary sign system characterized by "the
atomization of all elements of the puppet theatre" (Jurkow-
ski 1983: 132, 134, 139, 142).

Jurkowski's use of the term "sign system" is different
than the hyphenated term "sign-system" as used in this

essay: the former refers to the general systems of signifi-
cation, as listed above, in which the puppet has been
employed; the latter refers, as should be clear by now, to
the three specific systems of signification that the puppet
has at its disposal. It is unfortunate that the hyphen of
the latter term must bear the weight of distinguishing the
two, but, for the purposes of this essay, the term "sign-
system" is unavoidable.

Jurkowski argues that the puppet maintains a different
relationship with its context in each of the sign systems in
which it serves, and that only through detailed analysis of
each instance of puppetry, in its "concrete theatrical epoch
determined by territory and tradition," can a comprehension
of puppetry be developed (Jurkowski 1983: 127). It is the
argument of this essay, however, that, regardless of
theatrical epochs and the manner of their determination, the
puppet invariably maintains its nature as a puppet, and thus
can be analyzed through a synchronic approach.

Jurkowski demonstrates the puppet's variety of service
in a short history of "the puppet's long journey through
different sign systems" in European theatre, although he
notes that this chronology is not purely sequential; that
is, as he rightly points out, there are no firm historical
markers between these various usages of the puppet, and "all
four systems still exist" (Jurkowski 1983: 131). He begins

with "the puppet in the service of neighbor sign systems."

After a brief review of puppets in classical antiquity, he

moves on to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in which he

cites the usage of puppets in "neighboring sign systems"; in

which the puppets were not, properly speaking, figures of

theatre. He prefaces this discussion with the note that:

> [F]or us "the theatre" will mean actors (live
> or puppet) who in a special space present
> imagined characters, according to a given or
> improvised drama, being seen by a public
> gathered especially or by chance. (Jurkowski
> 1983: 131)

In the period under examination, "puppet demonstrations

always lacked some elements: they did not have dramas or

the puppets were not characters" (Jurkowski 1983: 131).

Jurkowski cites two usages of the puppet in this period.

First, there was usage in which puppets "tried to be alive

like a man. Of course, they could not be alive like a man,

and thus they seemed to be caricatures of man." Second,

there were puppets "used as illustrations" by "bards and

storytellers," just as "scroll paintings" were used.

(Jurkowski 1983: 133).

The first type of usage, in a sign system that Jurkow-

ski does not name, but that might be labelled "spectacle,"

is exemplified by what Jurkowski calls "trick puppets":

> [Trick puppets] included metamorphosis
> puppets and circus puppets. . . . The
> metamorphosis puppets were technical accom-
> plishments that were shown as such to
> surprise the audience. In this they were

> successful, as were the circus puppets
> (jugglers, rope dancers, acrobats, and
> others).   (Jurkowski 1983: 139)

The trick puppet, which survives to this day, makes no
pretense of being a character in a drama: it "attempts to
be something real, and being real [it becomes] an object of
spectacular and public interest" (Jurkowski 1983: 134).
That is, the trick puppet serves as an object of curiosity.
How might double-vision apply to such a usage?

The key to an answer lies in Milovsoroff's notion of
the puppet's "native" theatricality. This native-ness was
discussed earlier, where we saw that while the basic
pretense of the actor is to be a particular character, the
basic pretense of the puppet is to be alive. In both cases,
the pretense is to be something other than one is. And so
even if the context of performance is one wherein a live
juggler would be engaging in mere spectacle, as opposed to
dramatic theatre, the puppet juggler's pretense of life
makes it into the character of "a living juggler." Although
it is only an "object," its abstracted signs, in this case,
most especially the movements characteristic of juggling,
cause the audience to imagine that it has the "life" of a
juggler. This pretense causes the act of "juggling" to
assume the dimension of a rudimentary dramatic text: the
imitation, for better or worse, of a juggler. Thus, the
puppet, by its nature as a puppet, actually fulfills

Jurkowski's dicta by creating, in itself, both drama and character.

Jurkowski does not discuss jigging-puppets, as were considered in Chapter Two, where it was noted that their movement possibilities are limited to flailing about in response to vibration. Had he discussed them, he almost certainly would have thought them the merest form of spectacle. And yet even the jigging-puppet, with its slight capacity for dramatic characterization, is both "object" and "life" when it performs its wild dance; and its native theatricality renders it a character, such as the "jigging darkie," in McPharlin's infelicitous phrase, compelled to dance while the music plays. Every puppet that performs before an audience creates its own dramatic text and character, regardless of the sign system in which it is employed.

The second type of usage cited by Jurkowski is of the puppet in the neighboring sign system of the story-teller's art. Jurkowski's example comes from Cervantes' Don Quixote; although this is a work of fiction, Jurkowski is correct in seeing this as a typical usage, and is justified in that this example will be familiar to most readers:

> The Renaissance puppet theater of Master
> Pedro (Cervantes) is a sort of story-teller
> performance. A boy stands in front of the
> retablo [puppet stage] and points at the
> retablo puppets while telling the story of
> don Gaiferos and Melissandra. The boy's text

> is mostly narration, only occasionally
> including the words of the acting figures.
> The principal role of this presentation
> belongs to the boy; he is the main actor.
> The retablo and its puppets are but illustra-
> tions. When necessary the boy responds to
> remarks made by the audience. He is then, a
> real intermediary, but he mediates the
> reaction of the public toward the text
> (words) and not toward the puppets. (Jurkow-
> ski 1983: 127-8)

This usage of the puppet is opposed by Jurkowski to that in

performances of Petrouchka, in which a musician acts as an

intermediary between the puppet and the audience, alter-

nately playing music and interpreting the puppet's words:

> There is no doubt that in the case of don
> Pedro's theater, the retablo puppet served
> the actor (storyteller), while in the case of
> the Petrouchka comedy it was the actor
> (musician) who served the puppets. In the
> first case the story is the constitutive
> element of the presentation, in the second
> one it is the puppet hero. I would dare say
> that the puppets entered into two quite
> different sign systems. (Jurkowski 1983:
> 128)

The "two quite different sign systems" are those of the

story-teller and of the puppet theatre proper. Jurkowski's

point is that this difference in service changes the way the

audience must comprehend the puppet, for in the case of don

Pedro's theatre, the puppets only do what a scroll with

pictures might do, illustrate the story, and thus lack

dramatic character of their own.

And yet, the puppets in don Pedro's theatre are not

pictures on a scroll; and although their service is similar,

it is not the same. The difference is precisely the double-
vision created by the puppet. It is indicative of this
difference that when don Quixote becomes angered by the
course of the narrative, he does not attack the story-
teller, who, as Jurkowski would have it, is the primary
actor in the production, but attacks the puppets themselves.
If the story-teller were illustrating his tale with pictures
on a scroll, it is difficult to imagine don Quixote rising
up in his rage to tear the scroll to shreds; rather, he
would then attack the story-teller. The puppets, although
in service to the story-teller, have a significance of their
own that far surpasses any significance that pictures on a
scroll might have. This significance is a function of the
double-vision that the puppets provoke, and of the theatri-
cal context in which they invariably drape themselves. Of
course, it might be noted that don Quixote is quite insane;
this insanity leads him to value the life he imagines in the
puppets over his perception of them as objects. But despite
this valuation, it is the puppets that bear the attack of
the benighted knight, such as no scroll with pictures would
ever be subjected to. The presence of the puppet in the
place of the scroll is not a neutral event; despite its
similar service, the puppet, owing to its process of double-
vision, remains distinctively a puppet, and is a dramatic
character in its own right.

Jurkowski follows the puppet through European history into the Baroque and Romantic eras, when fashionable and popular usage had it serving in the sign system of the live theatre. We have seen already how an Italian company touring in Poland alternately performed live and with puppets; in the Baroque era, puppets performing opera became all the rage:

> In announcements of the time, the puppet
> theater managers assured the public that
> their puppets would act like live actors.
> Today it is hard to believe that a puppet
> could imitate an actor so perfectly that it
> might be treated as his miniature. However,
> this was quite possible in the operatic
> puppet theater of the seventeenth century.
> The acting of live singers and actors at the
> time was fully schematic. The singers stood
> in a row at the proscenium opening and made
> schematic gestures. . . . To imitate such
> acting was easy for the puppet, especially
> since the light was not bright and the wire
> network [hung in front of the stage] hid the
> [puppet's] strings. (Jurkowski 1983: 135)

This is fashionable, as opposed to popular, theatre. In addition to puppet-operators who would give the puppets movement, live singers, as well as an orchestra, would be required, although singers and musicians might be scaled down in number. Clearly, purveyors of puppet opera hope to capitalize on an audience that specifically chooses to see "puppets [that] would act like live actors." If the audience has not been duped into attending because of misleading advertising, then such attendance is dependent,

at least in part, upon a willingness to perceive "objects"

can be imagined to have "life."

The key words in Jurkowski's description are the puppet

as "miniature" actor, and the "wire network" that hides the

means of puppet operation. The audience is plainly aware

that what it sees is not life-sized, and, moreover, that

what it sees is not presented to it without dissimulation.

That is to say, despite the producer's intention to imitate

live theatre, the audience cannot help but be aware that it

is seeing an imitation and not the real thing; it cannot

help but be aware that it is seeing puppets. That this is a

derivative use of the puppet is not in question; nonethe-

less, in the case of puppet opera, it is precisely the

process of double-vision, of the paradox of "object" and

"life," that is part of the appeal to the audience.

Although puppet opera takes over the conventions of live

theatre, the puppet maintains itself as a distinctive

theatrical figure.

Popular puppetry in the sign system of the live theatre

came, according to Jurkowski, in two stages:

> The first stage of adaptation covered the
> Baroque theatre model and the Baroque
> repertory, including Bible stories, myths,
> Evangile [sic] parables, hagiographic plays,
> and two famous Renaissance subjects, "Don
> Juan" and "Docktor Faust." . . . The second
> stage of adaptation covered the Romantic
> repertory and Romantic theatre models.
> Puppet theatres in Germany, France, Belgium,
> and Bohemia adapted the repertory, settings,

and costumes of melodrama . . ., imitating
the live theatre. (Jurkowski 1983: 138)

Jurkowski cites one characteristic of this type of

popular puppetry in particular:

> [T]he words [are] pronounced in a rather
> artificial way, as an emotional recitation.
> There is no doubt that this way of speaking
> was inherited from the live theatre. It was
> the Comedie Francaise that popularized
> chanting recitation in Europe, but when it
> was already forgotten in live theatre, the
> popular puppet theatre was still using and
> preserving it. (Jurkowski 1983: 138-9)

Jurkowski seems, here, to have forgotten his own writings on

the importance of speech and on the diachronic diversity of

the puppet. Even if the puppet's "artificial" speech were

taken from the live theatre, might it not be the appropri-

ateness of such speech for the puppet, semi-real speech for

a semi-real figure, that has allowed for its continuance?

And it is most doubtful if any imitation of live theatre was

the origin of artificial speech in puppetry. The puppet's

manner of speech in early European theatre is uncertain;

but, as our considerations from beyond Europe demonstrate,

artificial speech for the puppet is the norm for traditions

in which puppetry has been a separate or dominant theatrical

mode: in the Javanese and Japanese traditions, the speech

is declaimed in a highly stylized manner; in the Indian

consideration, it is delivered with such distortion as to

make necessary a basic translation. The artificiality of

puppet speech, in every sign system in which the puppet is

employed, is far less dependent on imitation of live theatre
than it is on the nature of the puppet itself.

Jurkowski does not give an example of puppets in the
sign system of the theatre; but such an example of his
"second stage of adaptation" would seem to be the Liége
puppet tradition of Belgium, in which the romance of
Charlemagne is presented.

As with the fashionable puppet opera, popular puppet
theatre such as in Liége is in many ways derivative of live
theatre; but again, the substitution of puppets for actors
inescapably changes the performance. Insofar as popular
puppet theatre imitates live theatre, the analysis just
given of puppet opera will demonstrate how the process of
double-vision transforms the imitation into something of a
different nature. In fact, however, the Liége tradition
goes far beyond imitation of the sign system of live
theatre. As Malkin notes:

> [C]omplete play cycles [may] require eight
> hundred elaborately carved and costumed
> figures. Usually it would take several
> months of performances given in serial
> fashion to complete the drama. (Malkin 1977:
> 24)

It might be doubted whether the sign system of the live
theatre has ever made use of so many characters over such an
extended period of performance. Although the Liége tradi-
tion employs certain live theatre conventions, it explodes
the conventions of cast-size and story-length.

And it does more than that. In the Liége tradition:

> Audiences [know] . . . that large figures
> [are] stronger or more noble than small
> figures. In this way, Charlemagne might be
> nearly five feet tall, while a minor charac-
> ter might be less than eighteen inches high.
> (Malkin 1977: 24-5)

The usage of figures of greatly disparate relative size is,

of course, impossible in the theatre of live actors. Even

in what Jurkowski calls the sign system of the live theatre,

the puppet invariably differs from the actor, and makes use

of its constitutive sign-systems to present a unique

theatrical figure.

Jurkowski's next stop in his history of the puppet's

journey through sign systems focuses on the hundred years

astride the turn of the twentieth century, when puppets,

after some pioneering efforts, enter into the sign system of

the puppet theatre proper, as "artificial creatures [that]

behave in their own typical way" (Jurkowski 1983: 139).

The distinguishing characteristic of this sign system

is that, in it, it is the puppet that is served, and the

particular nature of the puppet that is explored. This

nature is what Jurkowski calls "opalescence," and, as we

have seen, it is not dissimilar to the idea of double-

vision advanced in this essay. As such, it will not be

necessary to demonstrate that double-vision is operative for

puppets within this sign system. It will be worthwhile,

however, to note two points about the sign system of the puppet theatre, in that it has two distinct manifestations.

First, the sign system of the puppet theatre is exemplified by certain kinds of traditional puppetry, such as Punch and Judy and Petrouchka shows. The former occasionally, and the latter generally, has an actor as live intermediary between the puppet and the audience. This actor "serves the puppet," assisting in its presentation to the audience; thus, the puppet is central to its own sign system.

It is rather strange, however, that Jurkowski locates these particular traditions in the sign system of the puppet theatre, despite such service: both are based upon hand-puppets, which, as was discussed in Chapter Three, Jurkowski does not consider to be puppets at all, properly speaking. Can it be that this sign system is based upon something that is in fact an "extension of mime theatre" (Jurkowski 1988 [1979]: 21-2)? According to the definition advanced in this essay, the hand-puppet is most certainly a puppet; but we are left to wonder at Jurkowski's self-contradiction.

It is also rather strange that Jurkowski locates these two traditions where he does in that both share an ancestry that can be traced back through the live theatre Commedia to the live theatre comedy of ancient Rome (Baird 1965: 96, 103). Should they not then be located in the sign system of

the live theatre? That they are not is indicative of
Jurkowski's schema, in which the most important aspect
involves the question of service: in both traditions, it is
the puppet that is served. Our consideration from India, in
which a live musician translates for the audience the
puppets' semi-comprehensible speech, is another example of
this service. The boundaries between Jurkowski's sign
systems, based only on this matter of service, seem quite
tenuous when examined from any other perspective.

Second, the sign system of the puppet theatre is
exemplified by "artistic puppet theatres," in which the
service given to the puppet by a live intermediary is
further exploited so that the puppet may be comprehended as
being, specifically, a puppet; that is, as "'puppetlike,' .
. . [with] the puppet as scenic character and as material
object at the same time" (Jurkowski 1983: 140). Jurkowski
cites a number of productions that "confront the puppet
theatre with the live theatre, in order to intensify the
puppet theatre's characteristics"; or that allow the puppet
to be "aware of the fact that it is manipulated by some-
body," and that is "conscious" of being a puppet, thus
stressing the puppet as a "metaphor of powerlessness and
control by external forces . . ." (Jurkowski 1983: 141).

It is, of course, the argument of this essay that while
the puppet's process of double-vision is explicitly ex-

ploited by such artistic theatres, it is implicitly ex-
ploited by the employment of the puppet in every theatre.
But Jurkowski is certainly correct in identifying the
explicit exploitation of the two aspects of the puppet,
"scenic character and as material object at the same time,"
as being fundamental to the period McPharlin calls "the
puppet revival" (McPharlin 1928: i).

Jurkowski's concludes his history of the puppet's
journey through the sign systems with contemporary puppetry,
in which "all of the elements of puppet theatre [are]
atomized" (Jurkowski 1983: 130). By this, he means that all
of the traditional techniques of puppet theatre, including
the staging, the relationship between puppet and puppet-
operator(s), and the presentation of puppets and actors on-
stage together, are "taken to pieces," and that such theatre
is "characterized by the constant pulsation of the means of
expression and their relationships" (Jurkowski 1983: 143-4).

In this final kind of theatre, the elements of the
performance are "atomized," and none can be identified as
being in the service of others. This might be called the
"deconstruction" of the puppet theatre, although Jurkowski
does not use that term. Jurkowski's example of this
contemporary theatre is a Polish production:

> [Josef Krofta] directed his own script after
> Don Quixote by Cervantes. He introduced on
> the stage a number of live actors and some
> puppets. The principal characters (e.g., don

> Quixote and Sancho Panza) were doubly
> represented by men and puppets. At one time
> we saw the characters represented by men, at
> another time by puppets, and sometimes by
> both of them. The scene of don Quixote's
> defeat in the inn was performed using
> different means of expression. One actor
> with a stick in his hand beat the bench where
> don Quixote was supposed to be lying; another
> actor pretending to be beaten shrieked like a
> madman; another one was damaging the puppet
> of don Quixote. (Jurkowski 1983: 130)

It might be noted that writers on, and artists of, puppetry

find the story of don Quixote to be nigh irresistible.

Perhaps this is because it contains not only the wonderful

incident of don Pedro's puppet show, but also a recurrent

theme of ontological paradox, such as the perceived windmill

imagined to be a monster. Such an ontological paradox is,

as we have seen, essential to the puppet.

Jurkowski argues that in Krofta's production, "we may

find a new combination of the means of expression, and so,

to some extent, a new system of signs" the puppetry of which

must be comprehended on its own original terms (Jurkowski

1983: 130). But is there, in fact, anything about this

production, or about similarly atomized productions, that is

not comprehensible through the synchronic approach under-

taken by this essay?

In the inn scene just described, Jurkowski finds

significance to puppetry in the atomization of the character

of don Quixote, as represented by a location "on a bench,"

by an actor "pretending to be beaten" and shrieking "like a

madman," and by the damaging of "the puppet of don Quixote."
Surely this is a complex piece of theatrical staging; but
does the scene, in fact, even contain a puppet? The
tortured figure of don Quixote can scarcely be considered
one, even by Jurkowski's definition, in that it is accorded
neither movement nor speech. The character of don Quixote
has certainly been atomized; but the puppet has not, in that
there is no puppet. The theatrical figure of don Quixote is
nothing more than a prop, an effigy of don Quixote, sub-
jected to physical damage in a symbolic manner quite common
to effigies. The significance of such a scene to the
comprehension of the puppet is nonexistent.

Without familiarity of the production in question, it
is difficult to comment on how, or even whether, puppets, or
props similar to puppets, are used in other scenes. But let
us imagine a scene. An actor playing Don Quixote sits in an
upstage study, reading a romance of chivalry; he pauses to
stare absently towards the audience. A small puppet, also
playing don Quixote, enters downstage right, in full
knightly armor, riding upon Rocinante. As this puppet don
Quixote rides across the stage, the actor don Quixote sees
it and follows its progress. It stops briefly, mid-stage,
and the actor don Quixote speaks a line of dialogue for it.
When the puppet don Quixote exits downstage left, the actor
don Quixote puts down his book and reaches for a knightly

helmet that sits upon his desk. (This scene is suggested by one in <u>Don Quixote</u>, as adapted for the Pickwick Puppet Theatre by Ken Moses, 1980.) In this imaginary scene, the character of don Quixote is atomized in a manner similar to that described by Jurkowski. But in it, the down-stage representation of don Quixote is, by all definitions, a puppet. And despite the atomization of the character, this don Quixote remains comprehensible as a puppet. Jurkowski is correct in arguing that such an atomization of character "stress[es] . . . theatrical and metaphorical functions" (Jurkowski 1983: 144); but regardless of such stresses, the puppet remains a puppet.

Thus concludes Jurkowski's history of the puppet's journey through the sign systems. It is significant to note that Bunraku puppetry has no place in Jurkowski's schema, for although Bunraku "may be compared with the most advanced artistic puppet theatres of Europe and America of our time," it differs in that it is centuries older, and in that it is a "closed" system, while the contemporary theatre is "obviously an open system" (Jurkowski 1983: 128-30). This inability to encompass Bunraku arises from the schema's basis in European models, to which non-European puppetry fails to conform. It says something about Jurkowski's concern for the diachronic diversity of the puppet that his schema is not able to encompass the diversity of puppetry as

it is manifested in more than three-quarters of the world;
it says something about his schema as well. How seriously
are we to take it? If we were to attempt a truly diachronic
approach to the puppet, would we not have to consider puppet
performance as it actually exists throughout history and
around the world? The point is that, while Jurkowski
challenges the value of the synchronic approach, his own
approach is limited to developing European models that have
limited bearing on most manifestations of puppetry. A
thoroughly diachronic approach to the puppet would certainly
be worth pursuing; but as was suggested in Chapter Three, we
not only lack detailed information about many puppet
traditions, we also lack a descriptive vocabulary for
comparing and contrasting puppet performances. Thus, an
approach such as Jurkowski's seems inchoate; it must, in
effect, take certain traditions to be representative of all
traditions. The choice of approach, at present, seems to be
a stark one: either we can take a synchronic approach to
the puppet, based upon the puppet's process of double-
vision, and develop a comprehension of puppetry in all of
its manifestations; or we can take an incompletely dia-
chronic approach, and muddle along with Jurkowski, taking
Europe, in effect, to be the world. It seems obvious that
if we are to begin to discuss the puppet at all, the only
workable approach is a synchronic one.

The sign system of the puppet theatre, in Jurkowski's sense of the term, is one that, on a fundamental level, creates itself anew with each puppet tradition, even with each puppet performance, as the relationships between the puppet's signs of design, movement and speech are established out of the infinite variety of such possible relationships. "The relations between the object (the puppet) and the power sources [the speakers and manipulators] change all the time" (Jurkowski 1983: 142). Jurkowski is certainly correct that this distinguishes puppet theatre from live theatre, for, in the latter, the presence of the living actor restricts the number of possible combinations. Owing to that presence it is possible to postulate certain fixed aspects of a sign system of the live theatre. But Jurkowski in incorrect in suggesting that the puppet has been employed in the service of four possible sign systems; one must say, rather, that the sign systems of the puppet theatre, in its diachronic diversity, are multitudinous, and that there is no single thing that can properly be idealized as puppet theatre; and then one must isolate the puppet itself, and see how it can have such a protean nature.

Jurkowski writes in his article:

> I hope that I have succeeded in proving that the presence of a puppet is not always and inevitably constitutive of one fixed sign system of puppet theatre. (Jurkowski 1983: 130)

Indeed, he has proven that: there can be no doubt that the puppet has been subjected to a variety of theatrical usages; far more usages, even, than Jurkowski enumerates. But that is all he has proven, and it seems fairly obvious. What he has not proven, and what he cannot prove, is that the puppet itself can not be synchronically comprehended throughout all of its various theatrical usages.

The burden of this extended analysis has been to show that, regardless of the sign system in which puppetry is employed, the puppet remains a distinctive figure that inherently creates its own context as a dramatic character, and that it is susceptible to synchronic discussion. One might easily discuss, in the same breath, Bunraku puppets, Petrouchka, the characters in Master Pedro's theatre, and even the character of the "juggler" performing its trick on some city sidewalk. In every instance, the puppet is a perceived object that, through the deployment of its three sign-systems, is imagined to be alive; the ontological paradox of this double-vision creates a pleasure that accompanies any and all other pleasures afforded by the puppet.

Performing Objects and Actors

The concept of double-vision allows us to comprehend, through a synchronic approach, the essence of the puppet. But of course, the puppet is but one way of presenting theatre: throughout the world, what has been called the "performing object" is also involved in theatrical presentation; and, obviously, theatre is very frequently presented by the actor. What distinguishes the puppet from the performing object and the actor? Or, to put the question another way, how does the double-vision provoked by the puppet differ from the way in which performing objects and actors are seen by audiences?

Frank Proschan, one of the finest contemporary American scholars of puppetry, places the puppet within the category of performing objects, "objects we invest with the powers to speak and to move" (Proschan 1983: 3), which he further defines as:

> [M]aterial images of humans, animals, or
> spirits that are created, displayed, or
> manipulated in narrative or dramatic perform-
> ance. While puppetry is at the center of
> this definition, it is not alone. (Proschan
> 1983: 4)

In an earlier article, however, Proschan locates the puppet differently, and provides examples of such "images":

> Puppets are but the extreme example of
> performing objects, a category of phenomena
> which range from dolls of children's play,

> through narrated scrolls and images, to peep
> shows and magic object, and to the costumes
> and props of theatrical performance (to
> mention only a few examples). (Proschan
> 1981: 554)

Other examples he mentions are "dancers who wear masks,"

"worshippers who bear icons in a religious procession," and

"storytellers who trace images in snow or sand":

> All manifest the urge to give life to
> nonliving things, as they animate objects in
> dramatic performances and use material images
> as surrogates for human actors. (Proschan
> 1983: 3)

The category "performing object" is remarkably broad,

and, as defined by Proschan, it incorporates many practices

that might well be given categories of their own; all that

unites them is that they make use of "nonliving things" that

are made "animate." A category as broad as this might

include puppetry, although, as we have seen throughout this

essay, the very terms "nonliving" and "animate" are so

imprecise, if not outright incorrect, as to be of dubious

value. It will not be necessary to rehearse the problems

with these terms; having already discussed them at length,

to do so would be but to quibble. It is not a quibble,

however, to ask whether the puppet is a "central" example of

the performing object or an "extreme" one, for if it is

central, then the essence of the performing object must be

the essence of the puppet, while if it is extreme, then one

might suggest that the puppet's essence is different enough

to justify categorizing it in a separate way. An answer to the question of the puppet's location, however, requires a means of organizing the range of activity covered by the category "performing object." Unfortunately, Proschan does not offer any such organizational means; and so the puppet can be "central" or "extreme," depending only upon the rhetorical occasion. It will be best to analyze some of the performing objects mentioned by Proschan, so that we might understand the organization of the category, and the place of the puppet within or without it.

Two usages of performing objects mentioned by Proschan fall outside of the context of theatre with which this essay is concerned: "icons [borne by worshippers] in a religious procession," and "dolls of children's play." It is not, perhaps, coincidental that, as we have seen, the puppet has been explained as deriving out of, and as gaining its power from, the religious figure and the childhood toy. Both are, in the broadest sense, objects that are made to perform. But neither is used for "narrative or dramatic" purposes for the sake of the narrative or drama; or, to put it another way, neither is concerned with theatrical presentation in itself. As such, perhaps Proschan should not be including them; and discussion of them will not be included here. One might note only that the category "performing object" as defined by Proschan is so broad that it encompasses contexts

beyond the theatrical; and that this broadness makes it difficult indeed to find in it any sense of order or organization.

Within the context of theatre, itself dauntingly broad, are Proschan's examples of "narrated scrolls and images," which would include "storytellers who trace images in snow or sand," as well as "dancers who wear masks" and "props of theatrical performance." These three types of activity, within the category of theatrical "performing objects," might be said to use, respectively, "objects of narration," "objects of mask/costume," and "objects of staging."

We have already treated "objects of narration" in our discussion of Jurkowski's example of Master Pedro's puppet show. These objects, be they illustrated scrolls or images traced in sand or snow, are alike in that while they might be given speech, they are not, and cannot be, given movement. Their "animation," to use Proschan's unfortunate term, is so limited that one might doubt if they are animated at all; they are nothing more or less than pictorial illustrations, of the sort commonly found today in illustrated children's books.

We also have already treated "objects of mask/costume," in our discussion of whether the actor in mask and/or costume might be considered a puppet. To that discussion should now be added the note that, while objects of

mask/costume might be given movement, they are not, and
cannot be, given speech, in that any speech associated with
them will be accorded to the actor or dancer who wears them.
Again, their "animation" is so limited that one might wonder
if it exists at all; for the movement given them is but the
performance movement of the actor or dancer who wears them,
and is accorded to the performer, and not the object.

"Objects of staging" have not yet been treated.
Proschan offers little comment upon them, and no actual
examples. Veltruský, however, provides an extended dis-
cussion, and informs us that they include props and scenery,
and can "be present as real objects or as signs such as
wooden swords, cardboard columns, painted trees, etc."
(Veltruský 1983: 85). Objects of staging are:

> [A]nimated by acting when the characters are
> represented treating them as live beings or
> when they conceal live characters. . . . In
> Molière's Tartuffe III/7, after a brief
> exchange with Tartuffe, Orgon runs to the
> door through which he drove out his son at
> the end of the preceding scene and addresses
> to the door an angry speech intended for the
> son. . . . In Act IV/2, Elmire and Orgon
> move a table to a prominent place and the man
> hides under it and listens to Elmire's
> conversation with Tartuffe in the next scene;
> during that conversation the actress repeat-
> edly directs the spectators' attention to the
> table and the character hiding under it by
> producing sounds addressed to him. (Vel-
> truský 1983: 86)

This involves a broad conception of "animation" indeed, and
is only barely encompassed in Proschan's definition of "per-

forming objects," which stipulates that such objects be "material images of humans, animals, or spirits." One might take Moliere's door and table to be material images of the spirits of doors and tables. But then again, one might not. One might choose to think that the door and table have in no way been animated and are but the objects they purport to be. Veltruský himself is aware of this second choice, and warns that a "broadened concept of personification may blur the distinction between puppets on the one hand and objects perceived on the stage as agents on the other" (Veltruský 1983: 88). The object of staging is given neither movement nor speech; although it might be moved or spoken to, it is not and cannot be accorded the pretense of moving or speaking for itself, and it is animated only by the action that takes place around it.

Objects of staging seem to be at one end of the range of performing object activity, an end marked by a barely existent and highly attenuated sense of animation. Objects of narration seem to be toward the center of the range, being performing objects whose animation is somewhat existent, through the occasional imputation of speech, but is still rather tenuous. Objects of mask/costume seem to be at the other end of the range, an end marked by a more substantial sense of animation that arises from the movement which they are given.

All along this range of performing object activity, however, the object itself is perceived by the audience to be an object, and, regardless of its relative level of animation, is imagined by the audience to be nothing other than an object. This should be clear even with objects of mask/costume: a mask/costume is nothing more than an object worn by a living being, be this person an actor or a dancer; life is not imagined to inhere in the mask/costume itself, but in the living being who wears it.

And then comes the puppet. At the extreme end of the range of performing objects, beyond the extreme end of such objects, the puppet provokes double-vision in the mind of its audience: it is, like the performing object, perceived to be an object; but unlike the performing object, it is imagined to have life. In this way it is essentially different than the performing object. A case in point would be Jurkowski's example of the Polish Don Quixote production: the effigy of the unfortunate knight that is beaten by an actor is, essentially, a performing object of staging, perceived and imagined to be nothing other than an object, but given a tenuous animation by the action taking place around it; if it were to be truly animated, or, more precisely, if it were to be given movement and speech so that the audience might imagine that it had a life of its own, then and only then would it be a puppet.

And so the puppet should be located at, if not beyond, the extreme end of the range of performing object activity. It is a performing object as Proschan defines performing objects, but its essence is different than that of other performing objects.

Just as the puppet has been located within the range of the performing object, so it has also been located in what might be called the range of the actor. As we have seen, McPharlin suggests that the puppet is seen by its audience in the same manner as is the actor: "when they become alive in their theatre, the overwhelming appeal is that of the theatre only" (McPharlin 1938: 1). Batchelder states plainly that "the puppet is an actor participating in some kind of theatrical performance" (Batchelder, 1947: xv). But while the puppet's location in the range of performing object activity required some discussion before being identified at, if not beyond, an extreme end, its location in the range of acting activity is not in doubt. Even McPharlin and Batchelder would agree that the puppet is at, if not beyond, an extreme end of that range.

The actor has been the subject of much scholarship, much of it contentious; the plenitude of theory concerning live acting more than compensates for the scarcity of theory concerning the performing object. It will be impossible here to offer anything but the briefest discussion of

acting; a discussion that must rely, to a great degree,
either upon the reader's knowledge of the scholarship, or
upon his or her lack of interest in it.

Having offered that caveat, we may note, as we did with
performing objects, three places along the range of acting
activity: at one extreme, "naturalistic" acting; towards
the center of the range, "presentational" acting; and at the
other extreme, "mask/costume acting." These terms will be
clarified with some description and examples.

In "naturalistic" acting, the actor's own personality
and status as actor are subsumed within the character repre-
sented. The actor, to the greatest degree possible, desires
to be acknowledged by the audience only as that character.
The semiotician Keir Elam refers to such acting as "illu-
sionistic," with "mimetic principles 'authenticating' the
representation" (Elam 1980: 59). Such acting is commonly
seen in contemporary American movies and is basic to most
theatrical productions of the work of Eugene O'Neill and
Tennessee Williams, among many others; it relies upon the
single and surprisingly pervasive convention that the
audience will simply acknowledge what it sees as real.

In "presentational" acting, the actor's own personality
and status as actor are not fully subsumed within the
representation of a character. To a greater or lesser
degree, the actor desires to be acknowledges not only as the

character, but also as an individual and/or as actor. Elam

notes "conventions of direct address," and "metatheatrical

reference" in this type of acting, in which the "breaking of

the mimetic illusion" is a more or less frequent occurrence

(Elam 1980: 59). Bertolt Brecht is, perhaps, the most

familiar exponent of such acting, and his famous V-Effect,

which might be called "estrangement," is central to it. The

convention of reality is intentionally supplemented with

theatrical conventions that tend to undermine it.

In "mask/costume" acting, the actor neither makes a

pretense of being a naturalistic dramatic character, nor

desires to be acknowledged as a person or as an actor.

Rather, as Malkin writes, "[s]omething is interposed between

[the actor] and the audience [that] partakes of mystery,

ritual, symbol, and the intellect" (Malkin 1975: 7).

Although the actor is most certainly alive, the performance

is transformed by the mask/costume object he or she wears.

We can again make use of our homely example of Mickey Mouse

cavorting in Disneyland: no doubt we are in the presence of

an actor of an extreme type, who, if not quite partaking of

"mystery, ritual," and so on, nonetheless performs through

the transforming mediation of the mask/costume.

All along this range of acting activity, regardless of

metatheatrical conventions and mask/costume interpositions,

the actor is perceived by the audience to be nothing other

than alive; the actor is also imagined to be alive, although the imaginary life being led is not usually that of the actor. This should be clear even with mask/costume acting: the actor in mask/costume is perceived and imagined to have real life, while the mask/costume is obviously an object under his or her direct control; the object nature of the mask/costume is not perceived to inhere in the living being who wears it, but in the mask/costume itself.

And then, once more, comes the puppet. At the extreme end of the range of actors, beyond the extreme end of that range, the puppet provokes double-vision in the mind of its audience: it is, like the actor, imagined to be alive; but unlike the actor, it is perceived to be an object. In this way it is essentially different than the actor.

The puppet and the actor have the same three sign-systems at their disposal, and it would seem that the audience would acknowledge them in the same manner. But, as Bogatyrev points out:

> Despite the fact that an actor expresses
> regal dignity by his costume, the sign of age
> in his gait, the sign that he represents a
> foreigner by his speech, and so on, we still
> see him not only as a system of signs but
> also as a living person. (Bogatyrev 1976
> [1938]: 48)

Beneath the signs deployed by the actor, the audience cannot help but see the living being. Veltruský writes:

> The actor's body . . . enters into the
> dramatic situation with all of its proper-

> ties. A living human being can under-
> standably not take off some of them and keep
> on only those he needs for a given situation.
> . . . This is what makes the figure of the
> actor more complex and richer, we are tempted
> to say more concrete, as compared to other
> sign carriers. (Veltruský 1964 [1940]: 84-
> 5)

The living being of the actor complicates the artificiality

of his or her deployed signs with the simultaneous deploy-

ment of signs of real life. But the puppet has no real

life; it is nothing more or less than the signs it deploys.

Strip the actor and the puppet of their signs, and you still

have a living person, while the puppet has ceased to exist.

Alexandre Bakshy, an early twentieth century American

writer, expresses the difference between actor and puppet

with a satisfying trope:

> [W]e can never apply the same standards to
> the man and the puppet. The difference
> between them is tremendous. The puppet can
> never live unless it acts. The man can never
> act unless he lives. (qtd. in Batchelder
> 1947: 287)

The distinction between the actor and the puppet,

between the living being deploying signs and deployed signs

themselves, between the person perceived to be alive and the

puppet perceived to be an object, has theatrical ramifica-

tions that can reach into metaphysics. Obraztsov writes

that "[t]he puppet is not a man, it is an allegory of man.

Like all allegories, it has the power of generalizing

reality" (Obraztsov 1967: 20). Maeterlinck makes much the

same point, in his own characteristic way: "A man can speak
in his own name only; he has no right to speak in the name
of the whole world of the dead" (qtd. in Jurkowski (1988
[1979]: 12-3). The puppet, however, has that right, as it
is not encumbered with real life of its own. It may speak
in the name of any man or number of men. As Kleist sug-
gests, "[g]race appears most purely in that human form which
either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness;
that is, in the puppet or in the god" (Kleist 1978 [1810]).
Because the only consciousness the puppet might have is that
consciousness invested in it by an anonymous and potentially
infinite audience, it may be imagined to bear the conscious-
ness of an anonymous and infinite world.

The relationships between the puppet and the performing
object, and between the puppet and the actor, are quite
symmetrical: the puppet is generally taken to be at the
extreme end, if not beyond the extreme end, of the ranges of
both performing object and acting activities. Although the
puppet can be construed to be within either range, depending
upon the definitions of the ranges offered, the concept of
double-vision clarifies it as being, rather, a distinct
phenomenon in its own right. One might suggest that it is a
bridge between the two ranges of activity, a bridge over the
turbulent waters of conflicting perception and imagination.

Nearest the banks of these waters, if this metaphor
might be allowed and even expanded, are the performing
object of mask/costume to the one side, and the actor in
mask/costume to the other. In Chapter Two, we discussed the
attempt by those involved in puppetry to annex the mask;
owing to the proximate relations of the puppet and the mask,
this should not be surprising. Neither should it be
surprising if scholars and practitioners in the field of
masking were to attempt to annex the puppet. As we have
seen, however, the puppet is essentially different than the
performing object of mask/costume and the actor who wears
mask/costume; and comprehension of the puppet requires that
it be considered as a distinct, if related, phenomenon.

The relationship between puppets and performing objects
and actors can be presented schematically:

Performing Objects	Puppets	Actors
Staging		Mask/Costume
Narration	Puppets	Presentational
Mask/Costume		Naturalistic
Perceived: Object	Perceived: Object	Perceived: Life
Imagined: Object	Imagined: Life	Imagined: Life
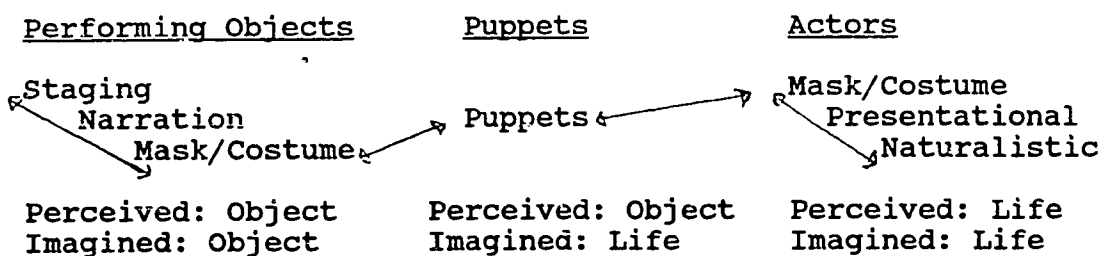
Julie Taymor, a contemporary theatre-artist who makes
use of each of the media discussed above, justifies such
usage by explaining that "[t]he change of scale, the mixture
of media--live actors, next to masked actors, next to
puppets--helps you move through different levels of reality"

(Taymor 1983: 114). The effect of this "change of scale" is to have each medium challenge the others; to compel the audience to confront the conflicting ideas about what is an "object," and what a "life." Distinguishing the puppet from the performing object and the actor on the basis of the double-vision it provokes does not isolate it, but rather explains the relationships between the three media, and clarifies the way in which they might interact.

CHAPTER 6

The Sign-Systems of the Puppet

As we saw in Chapter Three, the theories embedded in
the historic-geographic and object-control taxonomies do not
allow for a full description of the puppet. The historic-
geographic taxonomy, a diachronic attempt to compare and
contrast puppets, relies upon arbitrary temporal and
geographic distinctions to avoid being overwhelmed by the
sheer variety of puppet traditions. The method might be
justified if it were actually to consider each of the
distinct traditions and discover how they have developed and
influenced one another over time and across space; but the
relative paucity of information on many puppet traditions,
and the lack of an established vocabulary for description of
those traditions for which we have information, have thus
far made it impossible to use the method to much purpose.

The object-control taxonomy is an attempt at synchronic
analysis, but it mistakenly divides puppets into two and
three-dimensional classes of objects; more importantly,
while it postulates up to seven types of puppet control, its
distinctions between these types are quite vague, and the
types themselves fail to accommodate a number of distinct

control methods; and, withal, owing to its concentration on
the manner of control, the method offers limited information
about the design and movement, and no information at all
about the speech, of the puppet.

If, as has been argued throughout this essay, the
puppet is constituted of abstracted signs of life in the
sign-systems of design, movement, and/or speech, then it
follows that a description of the puppet must include
information concerning all of its sign-systems. It would,
of course, be foolish to abandon the descriptive vocabu-
laries of the two standard taxonomies, for traditions based
on particulars of history and geography obviously exist, and
the manner of puppet control is obviously important. But
these vocabularies must be substantially augmented to allow
for a full description of the puppet. What this Chapter
will try to establish is not a complete diachronic taxonomy
of the puppet, but a synchronic basis and vocabulary for
such a taxonomy, which might be developed upon either
historic-geographic principles, or upon principles relating
to the sign-systems themselves.

Underlying this new basis and vocabulary will be the
concept of double-vision, the central process of the puppet,
that operates when the puppet is both perceived to be an
object and imagined to have life, owing to its deployment of
abstracted signs of life in the three sign-systems, and to

the audience's desire to see life in all things. The manner
in which the puppet's abstracted signs are deployed to
fulfill the audience's desire will offer us a basis for
comparing and contrasting puppets, and a vocabulary for
describing the full range of puppet activity.

Craig, indicting naturalism in live theatre, cries out:

> Do away with the real tree, do away with the
> reality of delivery, do away with the reality
> of action, and you tend towards doing away
> with the actor. . . . No longer would there
> be a living figure to confuse us into
> connecting actuality and art. (Craig 1911:
> 81)

Of course, it might be argued that "actuality and art" are
not necessarily antithetical; but Craig's indictment makes
an essential point. There is nothing of "actuality," or,
one might say, of real life, in the puppet; there is only
"art," the signs themselves that constitute the puppet.

We have seen, in Chapter Four, that the puppet's signs
are chosen from a continuum of representation that ranges
from the imitative to the stylized to the conceptual,
according to the quality and quantity of the signs. Almost
every writer on puppetry recognizes the importance of sign
quality and quantity: "A puppet must always be more than
his live counterpart--simpler, sadder, more wicked, more
supple. The puppet is an essence and an emphasis" (Baird
1965: 15); "[Puppets] must condense, synthesize, all that is
essential and characteristic in the various features of

human nature" (Obraztsov 1967: 20); innumerable such

citations could be adduced.

Proschan makes the point of the puppet's limited sign

quantity with a fascinating analogy:

> Just as a word is abbreviated by the removal
> of certain letters and the preservation of
> only the most important, so theatrical signs
> utilize only the most crucial markers of
> their referents. However, unlike words,
> abbreviation of theatrical signs does not
> necessarily result in a reduction in size or
> mass, just a reduction in the density or
> quantity of elements. (Proschan 1983: 38n)

The puppet, however, does more than just reduce sign

quantity, for the "most crucial markers" that are preserved

are themselves changed in quality, by the limitation of

their number itself, and by the exaggerations to which they

are then subjected.

Green and Pepicello offer an insight into the particu-

larly theatrical nature of the puppet's signs:

> When puppets "speak," they [might] move their
> jaws, and usually gesture, but these behav-
> iors are not the source of the sound. . . . .
> Thus, although we have a part of the human
> speech-making process manifested by the
> puppet, it constitutes no more than a sign
> for speech production. . . . Similarly,
> puppets do not actually walk; they are moved
> by the puppeteer. Movement from one area of
> the stage to another could be managed far
> more easily and efficiently than by making a
> marionette imitate human locomotion.
> Therefore, no simple logistics are at work
> here. . . . The marionette displays a mere
> sign of animation. (Green and Pepicello
> 1983: 153)

This insight might seem obvious, but, in fact, it makes a important point: the signs deployed by the puppet are as intentional as theatrical signs can be; their intent, whether or not this is acknowledged by the puppet-artist, is to lead the audience to imagine life while it perceives an object. Indeed, "no simple logistics are at work here"; the puppet's abstracted signs of life provoke the process of double-vision.

But while the puppet is very much intentional, can it be said to be fully intentional? Elam makes the point that, in live theatre:

> The audience starts with the assumption that every detail is an intentional sign and whatever cannot be related to the representation as such is converted into a sign of the actor's very reality--it is not, in any case, excluded from semiosis. (Elam 1980: 9)

Intentionality is undermined to a certain degree by the potential for random signs unintentionally deployed by the living actor; whatever seems unintentional is transposed by the audience to the living "reality" of the actor. But these unintentional signs remain a part of the performance.

In puppet theatre, however, there is no living actor to whom random and unintentional signs might be transposed. Or, to turn the matter around, there is no living actor to deploy such random and unintentional signs. And so Veltrusky suggests: "A puppet which represents a character has only those features of a real person which are needed for

the given dramatic situation; all of the components of the puppet are intentional signs" (qtd. in Proschan 1983: 15).

This overstates the case, however. Unintentional signs inevitably will be intermixed with the puppet's deployment of intentional signs: the execution of the design will never completely overcome the intractability of the material upon which it is executed; the manipulation that creates movement will never completely overcome the mechanical quirks of the puppet in operation and the physical limitations of the puppet-operator(s); and the vocal performance will be subject to the vocal limitations of the puppet-speaker(s).

And it is worse than that. Even if the puppet's signs were to be deployed exactly as intended, and without any unintentional signs intermixed, still, the audience might acknowledge these signs differently than the artist has intended. All signs chosen for deployment from the three sign-systems carry with them a multiplicity of meanings beyond the control of the artist; no artist is capable of completely fathoming the breadth of meanings that might be inferred by an audience in response to any given sign or set of signs. What's more, the audience must not only acknowledge the deployed signs as intended, it must also fill in the blanks between the signs; that is, it must add those signs that have left out in the abbreviation. Although the

artist might be able to direct this filling in, it cannot be completely controlled. Each member of the audience might fill in the blanks in a somewhat different manner, possibly undermining the artist's intentions despite all efforts. The puppet is as intentional a performer as the theatre can provide. But it is not, and cannot be, fully intentional. If such a limitation keeps puppetry from attaining the status of precise science, this is only to be expected: for puppetry is an art, and all art conveys meanings both intentional and unintentional.

Filling in the blanks is an important part of puppet performance, for the puppet's abstracted signs are never a complete set of signs of life, no matter how the puppet might try to imitate life. The audience is required to add, in some way, to the deployed signs, so that they might imagine the "object" to have "life." Of course, the audience desires to fill in the blanks, to allow the puppet its "life." Perhaps one reason for the intensity of audience involvement in much puppet theatre arises from the audience's role as "co-creator" of the performance. This role involves the co-creation of comedy through verbal interplay, as Proschan discusses (Proschan 1987: 30 ff), but extends far beyond it to include co-creation of implied signs for the puppet.

The audience's role of co-creator is stimulated precisely by the "abbreviation" of the puppets deployed signs. According to Iván Koós, a director and designer for the Budapest State Puppet Theatre:

> The most important thing in the visual
> representation of the puppet stage is that it
> sets something going in the spectator's
> imagination without finishing the process.
> At a certain point the idea is left open to
> be completed by the spectator. . . . Take a
> familiar example: some of the puppets have
> no mouths, yet the spectator has the feeling
> that at certain appropriate moments the
> puppet smiles or gives expression to its
> sentiments by facial mimicry. (qtd. in Gál
> 1978: 20)

This principle of allowing the audience to fill in the puppet's blanks is operative in all three of the puppet's sign-systems; and is an important, if often unrecognized, aspect of puppet performance.

The realization that the puppet is constituted of signs from three particular sign-systems was made, as we have seen in the Introduction, centuries ago by Ardjuna, the Court Poet to the Javanese King Airlangga. It has been taken up with great vigor, not surprisingly, by scholars who are familiar with the field of semiotics. It will be recalled that in Jurkowski's definition of the puppet theatre, the puppet is referred to as a "speaking and performing [that is, moving] object" (Jurkowski 1983: 142). Veltruský also discusses the three sign-systems, and suggests that the puppet's signs "convey meaning by similarity":

> The inanimate object is more or less similar
> to a human or anthropomorphic being. The
> physical action imposed on it is more or less
> similar to the actions and behavior of the
> same represented being. . . . The voice
> performance also signifies the voice perform-
> ance of the represented being by similarity .
> . . [although it differs from the others in
> being real in itself, so that] the signans
> and the signatum are here existentially the
> same; some voice modifiers used in puppetry
> tend to attenuate or suppress this feature.
> (Veltrusky 1983: 71)

The "more or less similar" relation of the puppet to life is
what this essay has called the varying quality and quantity
of the puppet's abstracted signs. Veltrusky's charac-
terization of the puppet as an "inanimate object" is, as we
have seen, unfortunate, and in need of modification. His
use of the terms signans and signatum is scarcely clearer in
his article than it is in this excerpt, but he seems to mean
that the sign-system of speech differs from the other sign-
systems in that speech is delivered directly by the live
speaker, whether or not it is attributed to the puppet.

Green and Pepicello agree that the sign-system of
speech is different. They write that "channels . . . are
systems consisting of a message source, a medium of trans-
mission (for our purposes, either visual or auditory), and a
receiver" (Green and Pepicello 1983: 147). They note, in
the visual channel, "a scaled-down system of kinesics that .
. . creates a conventional code by focusing on a selected
set of movements by the puppet figure," and also that "[a]

second code functioning in the visual channel is the physical appearance of the puppet itself" (Green and Pepicello 1983: 151); that is, they note what this essay has called the sign-systems of movement and design. Within the auditory channel they note "a simplified or scaled-down system of speech (Green and Pepicello 1983: 148). For Green and Pepicello, the sign-system of speech differs from the others in that it makes use of a separate channel of transmission.

The differences between, and the relative importance of, the sign-systems of movement and speech are matters of substantial dispute. As we have seen in Chapter Two, artists, such as McPharlin, Obraztsov, and Baird, follow Duranty in asserting that "what the puppets do entirely dominates what they say" (qtd. in Veltruský, 1983: 97); while scholars, such as Bogatyrev, Jurkowski, and Veltruský, follow Magnin in asserting that "the separation of word and action is precisely that which constitutes the puppet play" (qtd. in Proschan 1983: 20). It may be that the artists' emphasis is conditioned by their having spent a good part of their time designing puppets, leaving them especially concerned with the physical aspects of puppetry; it may be as well that the scholars' emphasis is conditioned by the development of semiotics out of the field of linguistic analysis, leaving them drawn to that aspect of puppetry most

closely related to linguistics. The differences between, and the relative importance of, these sign-systems will be will be discussed later in this Chapter.

Following is a chart that correlates three basic points on the continuum of sign representation with the three sign-systems of the puppet; beneath each of the sign-systems are listed the variables that allow for the variation of quality and quantity of the representative signs. All of the terms used in this chart will be explained in the following analyses of the sign-systems.

	Design	Movement	Speech
Imitative	Life-like	With the Puppet	Normal
Stylized	Selected/ Exaggerated	Despite the Puppet	Caricature/ Dialect
Conceptual	Unlife-like/ Operator Present	Against the Puppet	Modified/ Speaker Present
	-------	----------	-------
Variables	Features Size Materials Operator Presence	Control Mechanics Control Points Articulation Points Lighting/Scenery	Paralinguistics Language Modification Speaker Presence

The three charted points on the continuum of sign representation are nothing more than its end points and a point at its middle. Given the nearly infinite number of possible permutations of the variables within each sign-system, and given the synergistic nature of these permutations, it will be impossible to locate with total accuracy the place of

each sign along the continuum. But the chart will help us
to ascribe general location to the signs, and to understand
the manner in which such ascription can be made.

It should be noted that there seems to be no precedent
for such a charting out of the puppet's sign-systems; and,
at present, it can be considered nothing more than a
tentative attempt to organize discussion of puppet signs.

It should also be noted that diachronic questions will
inevitably seep into this discussion of signs. For example,
does the on-stage presence of puppet-operators in Bunraku
have a different significance for Japanese and non-Japanese
audiences? Or, to put the question another way: does the
existence of certain performance conventions entail dif-
fering acknowledgements of the puppet by differing audi-
ences? There can be no doubt that performance conventions
are an important aspect of puppetry, and would need to be
addressed in any diachronic account; one of the purposes of
the synchronic account that follows is be to develop a means
for identifying such conventions for diachronic discussion.
For this essay, it is a sufficient task to identify and
discuss the range of possibilities in puppet signification.

<u>Design</u>

The signs of design for a puppet are, or can be,

intentionally deployed to a degree that cannot be matched by

live theatre; as we have seen, the signs might be entirely

inanimate in nature, a mixture of the animate and the

inanimate, or entirely animate. Batchelder writes:

> [The Puppet-maker] can give [the puppet]
> whatever grace or dignity or distortion or
> ugliness the play demands. He selects those
> physical characteristics which are essential
> to a given character, and expresses them with
> simplicity and force. He is not hampered . .
> . by the limitations of human anatomy.
> Furthermore, he is not confined to the
> representation of human beings. (Batchelder
> 1947: 281)

Our concern here is not to discuss all of the choices

puppet-artists have made in designing puppets; but rather,

to explain the variables of puppet design, and to describe

how they are used to create abstracted signs of life. The

major variables include the features and size of the puppet,

the physical material(s) that it presents to the audience,

and the absence or presence on-stage of its operator(s).

The features of the puppet are anatomical details, such

as eyes, nose, mouth, and limbs, as well as the general

shape of the puppet. Many traditions dictate the quantity

and quality of the puppet's feature-signs. In our Japanese

consideration, "there are roughly forty different types of

heads in general use . . . and about thirty special ones";

the differences between these types depend upon the charac-

teristics of the features, "male and female, young, old and

middle-ages, good and evil--each with its own refinements"

(Adachi 1985: 87). All of the facial features, however, are

to a great extent equally representational in quality and

quantity. That is, all of the puppet heads have features of

a near life-like quality, and all of them have a full

complement of such features, including even ears, although

these are often covered by the puppets' wigs. Additionally,

all of the puppets have arms that are life-like in design;

male puppets have life-like legs as well, while female

puppets have costumes that hide the absence of legs.

In our Javanese consideration there is also traditional

dictation of the quality and quantity of feature-signs:

> The several hundred human, god, and ogre
> figures . . . can be classified and identi-
> fied through some twenty-five physical
> features. Body build, foot stance, nose
> shape, eye shape, and the slant of the head
> are five of the most crucial. According to
> the most detailed Javanese texts, there are
> thirteen different eye shapes, thirteen nose
> shapes, and two or three types each of body
> build, foot stance, and slant of head. These
> different types of features can be combined
> into dozens of identifiable puppet types.
> (Brandon 1970: 40-1)

But again, the features are, to a great extent, equally

representational in quality and quantity. The facial

features are very much stylized in quality, with the shapes

of the eyes, noses, and mouths being substantially exagger-

ated. The shapes of the bodies and the arms are also
exaggerated, to the degree of being almost grotesque: the
bodies tend towards either emaciation or swollenness, while
the arms, when fully extended, might exceed the height of
the full figure (Malkin 1977: 108-9). The quantity of
features for these shadow-puppets is substantial, including
the full gamut of facial features and limbs. It is subjec-
ted to selection, however, since the puppets are presented
in profile: while all four limbs are always visible, only
half of a "full" face can be seen at any given time.

The Japanese Bunraku feature-signs are of a near life-
like quality and quantity, whereas the Javanese shadow-
puppet feature-signs are of a stylized quality and quantity;
both are dictated by tradition. But of course, such signs
need not be so dictated, and might be freely chosen for
deployment. A description of some puppets from the Budapest
State Puppet Theatre's production of The Miraculous Mandarin
demonstrates the manner in which puppets having different
quality and quantity of feature-signs can be used together:

> The ruffians have no faces. Their convex
> chests bulge like the abdomens of huge
> insects. The girl's face is also empty: her
> puppet-like appearance is emphasized by the
> absence of eyes, nose, or mouth; nothing but
> a blank oval is there. Her character can be
> seen in her seductively twisting limbs, slim
> long legs and inviting arms. When the
> Mandarin appears he looks the most human of
> all the figures, magically strange as he is.
> The Mandarin has a face. He has human
> features. Among the faceless, pounded into a

> shapeless mass, he represents humanity. (Gál
> 1978: 28)

In this production, the ruffians and the girl have highly
stylized features: the exaggerated quality of their body-
shapes denotes their nature; this quality is enhanced by the
absence, the total lack of quantity, of facial features.
The Mandarin, by pointed contrast, is near life-like in his
features' quality and quantity. The effect of such a
contrast should not be underestimated. Through the deploy-
ment of varying feature-signs, the characters are profoundly
distinguished.

There does not seem to be any established tradition of
puppetry that regularly relies upon unlife-like feature-
signs for the puppet itself; but many contemporary produc-
tions do. Turning to another production of the Budapest
State Puppet Theatre, we learn that:

> The characters in Aventures are [represented
> by] objects. They are: a suit on a hanger,
> an umbrella, a uniform cap, a lady's wig and
> hat, stoles, fur necklets . . . and so on.
> From these objects the human tragicomedy, the
> philosophical play evolves. (Gál 1978: 40)

The feature-signs of the represented characters, a man and a
woman, are subjected to a radical process of selection: all
that remains are what seem to be elements of their costumes
and props. Nonetheless, these elements combine, with the
vital assistance of movement and speech, to create the
characters. The feature-signs of these puppets are so

unlife-like as to render the puppets unrecognizable, outside of the performance, as puppets.

While the feature-signs of the characters in <u>Aventures</u> are subjected to a radical selection, those signs that survive do not undergo equally radical exaggeration: the suit, the wig, and so on, are clearly what they are. The process of metonymy, the representation of something by one or more of its attributes, is certainly, although not exclusively, involved in such representation. Feature-signs, however, can also be made unlife-like through radical exaggeration, in which a metaphoric process takes the place of the metonymic one.

Bil Baird has, in a science-fiction show, a puppet character named "Crutchface." This character consists of four pieces of wood: one is shaped like a swollen banana, with the gash of a mouth above its lower end; another is a small cylinder, with the dark irises of eyes on its ends, that penetrates the first just above mid-height and juts out on both sides; two more are shaped like tuning forks, whose solid ends touch the ground, and in whose forked ends the ends of the "eye" cylinder rest, suggesting that these tuning fork pieces are legs (Baird 1965: 219).

Radical selection of feature-signs is present in "Crutchface," in that he has no torso or arms. But more important is the radical exaggeration and juxtaposition of

those features that remain: the shape of the head and eyes
are exaggerated beyond the grotesque, and are no more than
concepts for a head and eyes; the attachment of the legs to
the eyes is shocking, and suggestive of an utterly crippled
personality. "Crutchface" is perhaps too crude a name for a
puppet whose feature-signs are deployed, through radical
exaggeration, with such metaphoric force.

The feature-signs in the design of the puppet, then,
may range from the imitative to the stylized to the con-
ceptual, according to whether they are life-like in quality
and quantity, to whether their quality has been subjected to
some exaggeration and their quantity to some selection, or
to whether their quality and/or quantity have been so
radically altered as to render them unlife-like.

The next variable to consider in the sign-system of
puppet design is that of the puppet's size. McPharlin
contends that "[t]he only time when puppet size is of
consequence is when [the puppet is] purposely contrasted
with the human scale" (McPharlin 1938: 75). Although such a
contrast with the human scale certainly has important
consequences, McPharlin is wrong in contending that the sign
of the puppet's size is otherwise inconsequential.

An understanding of the consequences of size requires
the recognition that size-signs work in two ways. The first
is when the puppet is contrasted with its stage, with its

scenery and/or props, and/or with other puppets with whom it appears; this might be called the "relative" size of the puppet. The audience perceives the puppet not according to any human notion of scale, but in a relative sense, according to the scale established in the presentation itself. The second way is when the puppet is contrasted, purposely or not, with the human scale; this might be called the "absolute" size of the puppet. The audience perceives the puppet, in an absolute sense, to be larger-than-life-size, or near-life-size, or smaller-than-life-size.

The relative size of the puppet is a sign that generates meaning by its contrast to other puppets or to its surroundings. The sign of relative size is not, as we have seen with McPharlin, generally recognized by writers on puppetry. Batchelder remarks:

> People unfamiliar with puppets are often
> surprised to find that the figures which
> seemed life-size when on the stage, are
> actually quite small. . . .   Basically, it
> is simply a matter of the relationship
> between the puppet and its surroundings;
> furniture, scenery, and properties are
> designed in proportion to the figures, and
> the eye accepts the whole scene as life size
> unless something in the human scale is
> suddenly introduced into the composition.
> (Batchelder 1947: 284)

Batchelder is referring to a conventional puppet theatre illusion, in which everything on the puppet-stage, including the stage itself, is uniformly scaled down. But she seems oblivious to the possibility of deploying large puppets

along with small ones, or of deploying puppets of any size amidst surroundings of a differing scale.

In our Javanese consideration, the puppets differ substantially in size, with the smaller being a mere six inches high, and the larger ranging up to four feet in height (Brandon 1970: 38). This discrepancy in size is not a function of naturalistic height differences; that is, it is not a matter of small babies and large adults. Rather, it is a function of the differing status of the characters represented: insignificant characters have the size-sign of smallness, important characters of largeness.

Similarly, relative size-signs are deployed in the Liège puppet tradition. Here again:

> [L]arge figures [are] stronger or more noble
> than small figures. In this way, Charlemagne
> might be nearly five feet tall, while a minor
> character might be less than eighteen inches
> high. (Malkin 1977: 24-5)

The relative size of these puppets is an intentional violation of the conventional illusion of puppet size, and is anything but inconsequential, for it has an important impact on the audience's understanding of character.

Signs of relative size might also be used to establish the puppet's relationship with its surroundings. Obraztsov details such usage in a production by the Moscow State Central Puppet Theatre:

> We wanted to show a Ukrainian village at the
> moment when the church service is at an end

> and the villagers are making for their homes.
> Our stage in this scene consisted of five
> gradually ascending horizontal planes. In
> the foreground stood large huts, immediately
> behind were smaller ones, and in the extreme
> background was a small church.
>   For each [of the characters] we made five
> different sizes of puppets, varying in height
> from four inches to two foot six. Small
> puppets emerged from the church, went off in
> all directions and disappeared behind the
> huts and trees. From behind the trees bigger
> puppets emerged on to the next plane, then
> even bigger ones, and when they appeared
> right in the foreground they were quite
> large. In this way we achieved perspective.
> (Obraztsov 1954: 13-4)

The Pickwick Puppet Theatre employed a similar use of

relative size in its production of Don Quixote. Puppets of

the hero and of Sancho Panza ranged from eight inches to

eight feet in height, and were variously used to create what

amounted to cinematic-style long-shots and close-ups, the

smallest puppets being almost lost in the vast landscape of

the stage, the largest ones dominating the stage with their

overwhelming presence (Moses 1980).

The absolute size of the puppet is a sign that conveys

meaning not by contrast to its surroundings or to other

puppets, but intrinsically. The hand-puppet, with its

diminutive stature, can scarcely help but seem charming and

playful. We have seen that the psychological associations

arising from its toy-like size can have a substantial impact

upon its audience. We have also seen, in our English

consideration of the hand-puppet Punch and Judy performance,

how Punch is allowed great liberty to say and do things that would be unsupportable in live theatre; they might be equally unsupportable if said or done by puppets of greatly larger size. It may well be that Punch is protected not just by his general status as puppet, but by his particular status as hand-puppet; that is, by the charm and playfulness associated with his absolute size.

Conversely, the greater-than-life-size-puppet, with its overwhelming stature, can scarcely help but seem powerful and foreboding. We have seen that the psychological associations arising from its god-like size can have their own substantial impact on its audience. In our American consideration of The Enchanted Child, only two characters are represented by greater-than-life-size-puppets: the child's mother and his school-teacher, both of whom can lead the child into paroxysms of dread. The Bread and Puppet Theatre uses towering puppets that can extend up to twelve feet in height. These puppets have "power, stature, and dignity, and [they] . . . predispose [the company] to the presentation of a somber view of human existence" (Brecht 1988a: 304). It may well be that they predispose a "somber view of life" precisely because of the hint of awesome deity associated with their absolute size.

The size-signs in the design of the puppet are not as easy to categorize along the continuum of representation as

are the feature-signs; for although there are more ways in which they might be deployed than is generally recognized, the choices they offer are not nearly as extensive as those of feature-signs. This is because size-signs can only be altered in quality; for any given puppet, there can be no reduction in their quantity, since each puppet has only one size. One might suggest, however, that when size-signs are deployed to create the conventional illusion of the puppet theatre as remarked upon by Batchelder, their quality is life-like and imitative; when they are relative, and emphasize relations between puppets or with surroundings, their quality has been subjected to exaggeration and they are stylized; and when they are absolute, and extreme enough to convey meaning by their extremity, their quality is unlife-like and conceptual.

The next variable to consider in the sign-system of puppet design is that of the material(s) that the puppet presents to the audience. Batchelder comments, "Puppets being imaginative creatures, freedom can be taken with the materials out of which they are constructed" (Batchelder 1947: 284). This freedom finds expression in three different ways: materials might be chosen because they are inexpensive, because they are easy to work, and/or because they have communicative meanings of their own. The first

two reasons do not concern us here; our concern is with the

communicative meaning of material-signs.

McPharlin offers this list of materials for puppets:

> Gordon Craig [in Puppets and Poets, The
> Chapbook No. 20, London: February, 1921. pg.
> 16] lists paper, cardboard, hide, zinc, wood,
> cloth, papier mache, and gesso. To these may
> be added various modern synthetics, such as
> Plastic Wood; rubber, cut or molded; ceramics
> . . . ; [as well as] other special materials,
> [such as] metal, glass, stone, [and] fiber.
> (McPharlin 1938: 71-2)

To this already extensive list might be added virtually any

material known to humanity, including, as we have seen, the

human flesh of the puppet-operator.

McPharlin goes on to assert that:

> [M]aterials may be used for their own visual
> and tactile qualities, glass, copper, and
> feathers for transparency, malleability, and
> lightness, either for fittingness to the
> design or for symbolic quality. (McPharlin
> 1938: 73)

Péter Molnár Gál, a designer for the Budapest State

Puppet Theatre, confirms McPharlin's assertion:

> The material chosen . . . may in itself have
> something to convey. It can effect the
> spectator on its own account and evoke
> associations and feelings in art-lovers.
> (Gál 1978: 17)

It will be recalled that the Budapest State Puppet Theatre's

production of The Miraculous Mandarin had ruffians whose

faces were of featureless leather. The use of leather for

these faces is as significant as their lack of features, for

leather provokes associations of callousness. If the faces

were of a featureless white gauze, the associations would be entirely different. The material-sign of leather is vital to the design, and to the characterization, of the puppets.

The exercise of imagining familiar puppets with altered material-signs demonstrates the importance of such signs. One of the many reasons for the success of the Muppets, for example, is that their supple faces are not only capable of expressive motion, but are also rather comforting for their very softness. If characters such as, say, Bert and Ernie were made, with precisely the same features, but of a lustrous metal, or of leather, or even of wood, the effect of the material-signs would be substantially altered.

The material-signs of the puppet can, but need not always, include the costume of the puppet. Adachi quotes a Japanese costume-maker, "In Bunraku, the puppet is the costume, the costume is the character" (Adachi 1985: 119). This overstates the case somewhat, for, as we have seen, there are forty different types of heads for Bunraku puppets, carefully distinguished by their features. If the costume were, indeed, the character, there would be need for such elaboration of the puppets' heads. Costumes are, however, a fundamental part of most puppets' design, and the foregoing discussion of material-signs must be taken to include the materials of the puppet's costume.

The material-signs in the design of the puppet are no
easier to categorize along the continuum of representation
than are size-signs. Each of the materials we have men-
tioned, and all of those that have gone unmentioned, such as
buttons used for eyes, zippers for mouths, fabrics, bristles
or wigs for hair, and so on, has its own quality. What's
more, while every puppet deploys at least one material-sign,
most puppets deploy more than one; when consideration is
also given to the puppet's costume, the quantity of materi-
al-signs deployed by any particular puppet can quickly
exceed a dozen. It would seem safe to suggest, however,
that when material-signs are deployed in a relatively self-
effacing way, as is often the case with cloth, wood, and
foam and styrofoam plastics, they tend towards the life-like
and imitative end of the continuum. Similarly, when
materials are deployed in a way that calls some attention to
them, as is often the case with leather, fibers, and the
just mentioned buttons and zippers, they have been selected
for communicative purpose, and their quality has a self-
exaggerating aspect, and they tend toward the stylized part
of the continuum. And when materials are deployed in a way
that insistently calls attention to them, as is often the
case with less frequently used materials such as metals,
glass, and, interestingly, human flesh, they tend towards
the unlife-like, and conceptual end of the continuum.

Before concluding this survey of the variables, it will

be useful to note one other variable, and one aspect of

design that is not a variable in itself, but can have an

important bearing on design.

This other variable is color. In certain traditions,

the color of a puppet's face or costume can have communica-

tive meaning. In our Javanese consideration:

> Color is an important indication of mood or
> emotional state. A puppet with gold wanda
> (face or face and body) indicates dignity and
> calmness, while black can mean anger or
> strength. . . . Red indicates tempestuous-
> ness or fury. . . . Youth or innocence may
> be shown by a white face. (Brandon 1970: 50)

General associations of certain colors with certain emo-

tions, such as red with fury, are, no doubt, almost univer-

sal. But it seems rare for color to be codified the degree

that it is in the Javanese shadow theatre, where it has

specific, rather than general, connotations. In that it can

have such associations, however, and in that it can be

subjected to codification, color is another, if not univer-

sal, variable of puppet design.

The aspect of design that is not a variable in itself

might be called "transference"; and it involves the trans-

ferring of human characteristics to the design of an animal.

When animals are presented on-stage, as in many traditions,

they generally are taken by the audience to represent

animals. Even when they are given human speech, they remain

nothing more than animals that can speak; it does not seem that they are taken by the audience to be the equivalent of human puppet characters. But in contemporary puppetry, especially in America, certain animal puppets are taken to be precisely the equivalent of human puppet characters. Characteristics are transferred from hypothetical humans to puppets of animal design. The Muppets are perhaps the most famous exponents of this: Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy, for example, are taken by the audience in the same way as are the human puppets Bert and Ernie. It is as if Kermit and Miss Piggy were people who just happened to be animals.

Transference simplifies and yet enriches characterization. It simplifies by offering an easily recognizable set of characteristics: if Miss Piggy were portrayed as human, her central characteristic of foolish pretension would require substantial development; but to be pretentious, and to be a pig, is obviously foolishness. Transference enriches characterization by offering an easily recognizable context: because Kermit is a frog with an acutely human consciousness, he has the opportunity to reflect upon what it means to be a frog; he can also engage in frog-like activity, without forfeiting the audience's human-consciousness-to-human-consciousness sympathy.

The practice of transference seems to be relatively new; perhaps in the past it has been used for the presenta-

tion of fables, but it does not seem to have been common to any major tradition. Its development is intriguing: is it inspired by Walt Disney's cartoon animations of such characters as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck? Jim Henson originally created Kermit not as a frog, but as a "sort of lizardy [sic] thing" not intended to represent any particular animal (Henson 1980: 25); working with designer Don Sahlin, in 1961, he began to create puppets that were recognizably animals, and Kermit evolved into a frog who remained, nonetheless, peculiarly human (Henson 1980: 8). The example of transference set by the Muppets has been followed with tedious regularity by less original puppet-artists; perhaps American puppetry owes a general debt to cartoon animation.

John Glore, in a review of the 1980 International Puppetry Festival held in Washington, D.C., remarks upon the recurring use of animal design:

> Puppetry gratifies our anthropocentric desire to find ourselves in everything. . . . [I]t is no coincidence that puppets so often take the form of humanized animals; this satisfies two of puppetry's central impulses: the personification of an animal, but also, the animalization of humanity, whereby the human world achieves animal innocence and lack of self-consciousness. (Glore 1980: 61 ff)

This explanation, if a bit overstated, seems to account for the psychological appeal of human consciousness transferred to animal design. It should be pointed out, however, that

the same explanation applies equally to most animal charac-
ters in cartoon animation, and, as such, should refer to the
general practice of transference.

Transference might also be used to instill human
characteristics into what are, in the real world, obviously
objects. For example, in our American consideration, a sofa
and a padded chair are among the characters of the opera,
given song in the same manner as the other characters, and
given movement as well, using their arm-rests as arms, and
dancing a pas de deux of surpassing clumsiness. Trans-
ference to real world objects is less common than it is to
animals, but the possibilities for simplification and
enrichment of character are similar.

We come at last to the final, and potentially most
significant, of the variables in the puppet's sign-system of
design: the on-stage absence or presence of the puppet-
operator. This is a variable of design because it can have
a profound impact upon the way in which the puppet is seen.
It is not a variable of movement because, whether the
operator is visually absent or present, the movement that
given to the puppet generally remains unaltered.

Batchelder informs us:

> Practices regarding the concealment of the
> means by which puppets are controlled varies
> considerably. Some puppeteers are careful to
> allow as little as possible of the mechanics
> to show, but others frankly admit that the
> puppets are mechanically operated, and they

often succeed in creating just as powerful a
dramatic illusion. (Batchelder 1947: 185)

The most obvious "means" of puppet control that might be
concealed or exposed is the actual operation of the puppet
by its operator. And beyond doubt, practices regarding the
on-stage absence or presence of the operator vary greatly.

The sign of operator absence/presence has a fundamental
impact on the quality and quantity of the puppet's design-
signs as a whole. When the operator is absent, as in the
Nigerian and English considerations given in the Introduc-
tion, the quality of the puppet's design-signs, made up of
the variables of features, size, and materials, is presented
without visual mediation to the audience; the quantity of
design-signs is limited to those of the puppet itself. The
directness of such presentation can be of extreme impor-
tance: in our Nigerian consideration, if any of the
operators allowed even the mechanics of operation to be
revealed, "the whole company was likely to be slain by the
spectators. At the very least, the offending puppeteer
would be killed" (Malkin 1977: 66).

When the operator is present, however, as in our Ameri-
can, Indian, and Japanese considerations, the quality of the
puppets' design-signs is immediately transformed, just as
the quantity of design-signs is expanded to include the
operator's presence. This presence alters the overall
design-signs presented on-stage, and, regardless of those of

the puppet itself, presents an overall design that is
unlife-like in quality and quantity, and is conceptual, in
that the visual concept of the puppet as puppet is stressed.

Perhaps the best example of the transforming presence
of the operator is the Japanese Bunraku. The puppets
themselves present design-signs of near life-like quality
and quantity; but with the presence of up to three operators
for each puppet, the overall design-sign is wrenched away
from being imitative. Nothing that is truly life-like can
be so obviously controlled by others. It might well be that
the radical juxtaposition of near life-like puppets with the
utterly unlife-like presence of their operators accounts for
some of the power of Bunraku puppetry: the puppets,
regardless of their own imitative design-signs, are made
conceptual in a manner that compels the audience to consider
their ontological status. As we have seen, Green and
Pepicello argue that oscillation of the audience's attention
between "the object as actor (i.e. having life) and acted
upon (i.e. an inanimate thing)" occurs only when the
operator is present on-stage (Green and Pepicello 1983:
157). Although the process of double-vision does not, in
fact, require such presence, no doubt that it is especially
stimulated by it.

Movement

Most puppet-artists have little doubt that the sign-system of movement is the most important of the puppet's three sign-systems. As we have seen in Chapter Two, both Baird and McPharlin define the puppet primarily in terms of movement. Obraztsov states in no uncertain terms:

> The puppet is created to be mobile. Only when it moves does it become alive and only in the character of its movements does it acquire what we call behavior. . . . Of course the text, assuming there is one, has enormous importance but if the words a puppet speaks do not correspond with its gestures, they become divorced from the puppet and hang in the air. (Obraztsov 1950: 125)

Veltruský makes a point about puppet movement that seems remarkable only in that it comes from a semiotician:

> [T]e motions imparted to the puppets are similar to those of the beings they represent. This is not a matter of more or less precise formulation; a crucial moment of the puppet performance is at stake. . . . [T]he puppets' motions convey a meaning of internal impulse corresponding to the impulse that produces the live beings' movements . . . and, by contiguity, this implied meaning reflects in the spectator's mind on the puppets themselves, thus tending to attribute to them life of their own. (Veltrusky 1983: 89)

Veltruský is correct that representative movement is "a crucial moment" in puppet performance; most puppet-artists, however, would argue that it is "the" crucial moment.

The argument for the dominance of movement over either design or speech runs as follows. The design of a puppet might be radically unlife-like, giving the audience signs so unrepresentative as to be unintelligible by themselves: the previously mentioned _Aventures_ of the Budapest State Puppet Theatre, with its suits and wigs and stoles is an example of such unlife-like design. Likewise, the speech of a puppet might be radically modified, or the puppet might be allowed no speech at all, giving the audience signs that are either unintelligible or non-existent: examples of the former will be offered in the next section; examples of the latter would include all puppet-mime and puppet-ballet. But the movement of the puppet must be intelligible as character movement, or else the design and speech, whatever their representational quality, will be nothing more than plastic art and oratory.

This matter might be approached in a more oblique way. The Chicago Little Theatre Marionettes, one of the seminal American puppet companies of this century, made a break-through with puppet movement that amounted to rediscovering the wheel, but that nonetheless set them towards success. They presented a disastrous rehearsal for their producer; the director, Ellen van Volkenburg, explained the problem:

> I think it was too much movement. Everything
> wiggled all the time. We then decided to
> make it a positive rule that no puppet should
> move on the stage except the one speaking.
> When a puppet was about to speak, it would
> raise its right arm with an accent, thus

calling attention to itself. (qtd. in Martin
1945: 6)

The raising of the right arm is not significant in itself;
any number of "accent" gestures might be substituted. But,
as McPharlin writes, "When two puppets are on stage and one
speaks, that puppet must move and the other be still, or
else the audience cannot tell which is supposed to be the
speaker" (McPharlin 1938: 81). Although movement is often
significant in itself, it is also significant for the
identification of the speaking puppet.

This simple point exposes a central difference between
the sign-systems of movement and speech. The perceived
object of the puppet is given movement directly by its
operator; that is, it actually moves. The perceived object
of the puppet might also be assigned speech, but it never
actually speaks. Van Volkenburg came to realize, through
painful experience, that a strategy must be found for corre-
lating assigned speech with actual movement; the strategy
she hit upon is central to much puppet performance.

Our concern in this section is to explain the variables
of puppet movement itself, and to describe how they are used
to generate abstracted signs of life along the continuum of
representation. The major variables include the control
mechanics, the control points, and the articulation points
of the puppet, and the lighting and scenery that can give
the implication of puppet movement.

These variables operate in a different manner than those discussed in the previous section. There, each variable contained what might be called a "sub-sign-system" within the sign-system of design. The variables in the sign-system of movement contain no such sub-sign-systems. This difference arises from the static nature of design, as opposed to the dynamic nature of movement. While the variables in design present themselves directly as feature-signs, size-signs, and so on, the variables in movement do not, in themselves, present signs. They operate on a level beneath that of the sign itself; they generate signs.

The first three variables in the sign-system of movement, the control mechanics, the control points, and the articulation points of the puppet, are all intrinsic to the puppet, and are generally subsumed under the term "puppet type," as in the object-control taxonomy. McPharlin states:

> Puppet movement may be classed as movement of
> type and movement of degree. Each type of
> puppet, according to its articulation and
> control, has its characteristic movement.
> And this movement might be staid or violent,
> realistic or abstract. (McPharlin 1938: 81)

McPharlin recognizes the variables of control mechanics and articulation, but he is limited by his reliance on general movement characteristics of puppet types. As we have seen, the actual number of types is quite uncertain; and even within established types, movement-signs might differ drastically. It is impossible, for example, to characterize

hand-puppet movement as simply and always "violent." Hand-
puppets happen to be very good at such movement; but they
might also be moved in a careful and deliberate manner.
Likewise, it is impossible to characterize marionette
movement as simply and always "staid." Marionettes, at
least of the string variety, happen to be very good at slow
and stately movement; but they might also be swung around
with great force.

Our purpose in breaking down discussion of puppet types
into discussion of three separate variables is to allow for
more accurate and detailed description of the manner in
which puppets generate movement-signs. Control mechanics
are the means by which the operator exerts control; control
points are those places on the puppet at which the control
is exerted; articulation points are those places where the
puppet is jointed to allow for differential movement of its
parts. To understand how these variables operate, it will
be best to examine a few of the postulated types.

The control mechanics for the string marionette are the
strings, held by the operator, from which the puppet hangs.
Puppet movement derives from the opposing forces of the
operator's pull on the strings and the counter-opposed pull
of gravity; the movement of a string creates either a
rising/falling puppet movement, or a pendular puppet
movement. Rising/falling movement, such as a puppet hand

sawing in the air, or a head nodding in agreement, is
generated regardless of string-length: the operator pulls
on a string at a certain speed, and the rising movement is
performed at that speed; when the operator relaxes tension,
the falling movement occurs at a speed no greater than the
pull of gravity. For pendular movement, such as a puppet
hand reaching out towards an object, or legs swung in a
walk, string-length is an important consideration. McPhar-
lin notes, "The longer the string, the smaller the arc of
pendulous movement at its end, and the more human-appearing
the action of a properly weighted figure" (McPharlin 1938:
85): the operator pulls a string in a certain direction,
and a part or the whole of the puppet is set swinging; this
swinging ends when its pendular potential is exhausted, or
when the operator pulls the string back, or when the moving
part of the puppet is grounded by friction, as in the steps
a marionette takes while walking.

The control mechanics of strings operated from above
have a number of consequences. For example, marionettes
have a natural ability to fly, as the operator's upward pull
on the strings can easily overcome the downward pull of
gravity. Marionettes, however, cannot grasp objects, for
while their hands can be swung together, they cannot be made
to apply pressure; this limitation can, however, be obviated
to a degree through the use of such things as hooks and

velcro. Also, marionettes cannot move through doorways;
impediments between the operator and the puppet, such as
lintels, absolutely inhibit puppet movement.

The control mechanics for the hand-puppet, such as
Punch in our English consideration, are far simpler than
those of the string marionette: they are the hand and
fingers of the operator on which the puppet is set. In
general, hand-puppet movement derives directly from the
movement of the operator's hand and fingers. There are no
elaborate calculations to be made, as with the marionette,
concerning rising/falling forces, or pendular action, or the
distance between the operator and the puppet; the hand-
puppet is, as we have seen in Chapter Two, nothing more or
less than a costume, with whatever elaboration, for the
human hand held in an upright posture. This intimacy of
control mechanics offers the hand-puppet an immediate
responsiveness to control that is absent in the marionette;
this responsiveness allows it the quick movement often noted
as its primary characteristic.

The consequences of the hand-puppet's control mechanics
are quite different than those of the string marionette.
For example, the hand-puppet is incapable of flight; the
hand can be raised only so far before the bottom of the
puppet becomes visible, and, beneath that, the arm of the
operator. Even if the operator is present on-stage with the

puppet, no sense of flight can be sustained, owing to puppet's obvious connection, through the arm and body of the operator, with the ground. Similarly, the hand-puppet is incapable of directly passing over any objects on-stage, although the illusion of such passage can be achieved by having the puppet "leap" while slightly up-stage of the intervening object. The hand-puppet can easily grasp objects, however, as the operator is able to create a pincer-like force between the fingers in the puppet's arms.

The control points for a string marionette are those places at which the strings are attached to the puppet. For a standard contemporary marionette, the control points would include one on each side of the head, one on each shoulder, one on the butt, as well as one on each hand and one on each knee or foot (Baird 1965: 161). The control points are important in determining the movement possibilities of the puppet. For example, control points on the sides of the head, as opposed to a single such point on the top of the head, allow for the head to be pivoted side to side, as well as up and down, although the control mechanics and the articulation of the puppet remain unchanged.

Of course, there might be a larger number of control points, for the sake of specialized movements, and every finger on each hand might be, conceivably, a control point for a piano-playing marionette. There also might be fewer

control points, as we have seen in our Indian consideration,
in which each puppet has only four: the head and the butt,
and the two hands (Baird 1965: 47).

The control points for the hand-puppet are those places
where the pressure of the operator's fingers and hand is
applied to the puppet. The conventional hand-puppet has
three such points: the ends of the puppet's arms and the
puppet's head. By exertion of pressure on these three
points, all hand-puppet movement is generated.

The number of control points for the hand-puppet is
only slightly variable. An additional such point can be
created, by the folding under of one of the operator's
fingers, in the puppet's chest or belly; this might be
useful for generating specialized movement of a pounding
heart or a kicking foetus. Also, any of the three standard
control points can be left unattended; but all that this
might do is generate movement of a deformed nature.

Standard contemporary marionettes generally have
articulation points mirroring the major articulation points
of the human body. James Juvenal Hayes, an American puppet-
artist in the first part of this century, believes that
"fifteen joints are ideal . . .; they would be at each end
of the neck, the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, and
ankles" (qtd. in McPharlin 1938: 79). These articulation
points are also important in determining the movement

possibilities of the puppet. For example, articulation

points at the hips and the knees, as opposed to such points

at the hips alone, allow for differential movement of the

upper and lower legs, as well as for differential movement

of the leg as a whole, although the control mechanics and

the control points of the puppet remain unchanged.

And, of course, the number of articulation points in

the marionette is variable. The piano-playing puppet

suggested above would require them at the base of each

finger. Conversely, there may be fewer, as in our Indian

consideration, in which no articulation points are provided

at the elbows, the whole of the arm being "made from a

fabric that is stuffed with a springy, fibrous substance"

that allows for a more generalized bending (Malkin 1977:

75).

The articulation points of the hand-puppet are far

fewer than those of the marionette; they exist only at the

points where the operating hand has its major articulations.

Thus, articulation points exist at the neck and shoulders of

the hand-puppet, where the operator's fingers are articu-

lated at the joint that connects them to the palm, and at

the puppet's waist, where the operator's hand is articulated

at the wrist-joint. This last articulation is surprisingly

expressive. McPharlin notes:

> The wrist . . . has the same rotary and far-
> forward, not-so-far backward bend as the

> human waist. This makes kowtowing, working
> over a washboard, swinging an ax, and other
> movements hinging from the waist particularly
> vraisemblable in a hand-puppet. (McPharlin
> 1938: 89)

An additional articulation point can be created in the

puppet's chest or belly, as mentioned earlier, because the

body of the hand-puppet is generally constructed of a

malleable material. And of course, any of the four basic

articulation points can be left unused by the operator.

This examination of the three intrinsic variables in

the marionette and the hand-puppet suggests how they work

separately and together to generate puppet movement. All

puppet operation is derived from these variables, and

describable in terms of them. It will be recalled that, in

his discussion of traditional shadow-puppets, Baird notes

differences in the manner in which the control rods are con-

nected to the puppets. Let us conclude our analysis of the

three intrinsic variables by examining those differences.

Baird writes:

> Each of the [Greek Karaghioz shadow-puppets]
> has a hole somewhere in the upper body into
> which the control rod may be snugly inserted.
> . . . [T]he rod [is] held at right angles to
> the plane of the figure. . . . It is the
> manipulation of [this rod] plus an occasional
> hand rod that gives Karaghioz his distinctive
> action. . . . His movement is entirely
> different from that of Indian, Indonesian,
> and Chinese [shadow-puppets]. Since the
> latter are supported by a vertical rod, they
> can do a quick flip and face in the opposite
> direction, and use their hands to embellish
> their speech. Karaghioz can do a complete

> somersault with a twist of the rod. . . .
> [Also,] a quick bow, bending almost double,
> lying on the back, and swinging the legs are
> manipulations easily accomplished. (Baird
> 1965: 79)

In both Greek and Javanese shadow-puppets, the control

mechanics are rods: in the former, only a single rod is

generally used, with occasional puppets being controlled by

two; in the latter, three rods are generally employed

(Brandon 1970: 51). Thus according to the object-control

taxonomy, while both are shadow-puppets, both are also rod-

puppets: "By definition, the shadow-figure is a rod-puppet"

(Batchelder 1947: xix). Their movements, however, are

distinctly different, as Baird reports. The differences

arise from the different number of rods employed, and from

the differing control points and articulation points.

The single control point of most Greek shadow-puppets

is a hole in the upper body into which the support rod is

inserted at a right angle. Throughout the performance, the

operator must maintain a hold on this rod. A second control

point exists for certain puppets; it might be for a moveable

arm or phallus (Myrsiades 1988: 28-9). When two puppets are

on-stage, neither can have an active second rod.

The control points for most Javanese shadow-puppets are

quite different. An extended point exists along a portion

of the puppet's spine, from which the rod descends downward

to the operator; the puppet is generally kept on-stage with

its support rod thrust into a banana-wood log beneath the stage-level, freeing the hand of the operator (Brandon 1970: 63). The two additional rods connect to control points at the puppet's hands (Brandon 1970: 51).

The articulation points used in the two traditions of shadow-puppets also differ. For the Greek puppets, Malkin counts "three or four joints," with "one at the waist, a second and third at each knee, and a fourth [for puppets with a second rod] at one of the elbows" (Malkin 1970: 62). As there are no control points below the waist, the articulation points at the waist and the knees can be used only to give a free swinging characteristic to the puppet's walk. The articulation point at the elbow, if present, allows for a simple flexing of the lower part of the arm.

In the Javanese tradition, while there are still generally only four articulation points, they are dedicated exclusively to enabling arm movement for the puppet, the points being at each shoulder and each elbow (Baird 1965: 57). As we have seen, the support rod is generally immobilized once the puppet is brought on-stage; an operator may then "have [the puppet] tie his sash, fix his headgear, or stroke his moustache" to establish his character (Brandon 1970: 65). In the course of the scene, the articulation points allow the arms detailed gesticulation, "bringing the rear arm sharply forward from the face" for greeting,

"draping the forearm over the shoulder" for sorrow, and so
on (Brandon 1970: 66). Movement might be limited to arm
gesticulation, but, with two articulation points for each
arm, the possible range of such movement, in quality and
quantity, is superior to that of the Greek shadow-puppet.

There is yet one more variable in puppet movement,
although it operates in a manner completely different than
the first three variables. As a way of introducing it, it
will be useful to return for a moment to Veltruský, the
semiotician who seemed not to disagree with the puppet-
artists' argument for the primacy of movement.

Veltruský suggests that "[c]ertain puppets are invested
with meaning through . . . speeches, sometimes delivered in
a normal human voice while the puppets are motionless (Vel-
truský 1983: 71). To a degree, this is not only true, but
obvious: every puppet, even the hyperactive Punch, is
sometimes motionless during its performance; and some
puppets are motionless even at a time when they are given
speech. But Veltruský does not seem to be referring to such
cases; he seems to be suggesting that some puppets are never
given any movement. This suggestion is repeated later in
his article:

> As has already been pointed out, puppets do
> not always resemble the beings that are
> represented (or any living beings whatso-
> ever), they are not always set in motion, and
> speech is not always part of the performance.
> (Veltruský 1983: 88)

The clauses concerning design and speech are certainly true, and consonant with the puppet-artists' position; but is the clause concerning movement also true? Are there puppets that are never set in motion? This question cuts to the heart of the argument that movement is the most significant, indeed the defining, sign-system of the puppet.

Veltruský offers no examples of non-moving puppets; he merely cites Proschan's unpublished thesis, "The Puppetry Traditions of Sub-Saharan Africa: Descriptions and Definitions" (Veltruský 1983: 71). This thesis was unavailable for examination, and so the example(s) given there cannot be analyzed. One can note however, that such non-moving puppets seem to be exceedingly rare; and that it seems peculiar to base so important an argument upon such a seemingly isolated practice. But then one can also doubt whether, to their audience, the puppets in question actually seemed to be without movement.

Here we arrive at the fourth variable of puppet movement, a variable that differs from the other three in not being intrinsic to the puppet, but in being extrinsic: lighting and scenery can be used to generate implicit movement in the puppet in the absence of actual movement.

McPharlin suggests that puppet movement need not be exclusively generated in the puppet itself:

> It is movement, actual or illusory, which
> gives the puppet animation. . . Indeed, as

> the face of a puppet moves through zones of
> light and shadow, the features take on
> mobility. (McPharlin 1938: 76, 81)

The illusory, or implicit, movement of the puppet's facial features, generated by the puppet's movement through light and shadow, might also be generated while the puppet remains stationary, with the light and shadow moving instead.

In shadow theatre, one of the basic movements of the shadow, at least in performances not lit by electric light, derives from movement not of the puppet, but of the light. In our Javanese consideration:

> The shadow cast is distinct for a relatively
> short distance only, but because of the
> moving and waving flame [of the light source]
> it seems infused with life. (Brandon 1970:
> 35)

Indeed, the light source itself might be moved from one point to another, causing the shadow of the puppet to move while the puppet remains stationary; again, the movement would not be of the puppet itself, but implied for the puppet. It might be argued, however, that such implied movement would be visible only to those on the far side of the shadow-screen, and thus, available only to shadow theatre. But, as in McPharlin's suggestion, a puppet directly subjected to a moving and wavering light, to shifting fields of light and shadow, also can generate the implication of movement.

Although Veltruský offers no examples of non-moving puppets, an example might be offered here, in which lighting and scenery are used to generate implicit movement.

At the Visitor's Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, the Mormons use non-moving figures set against a diorama to relate the stories of their religion; a tape system supplies narration and character voices. The various figures are highlighted when it is their turn to "speak"; through the use of subtle lighting effects, the expressions on their faces seem to change, and their hands even seem to gesticulate; also, the dioramas themselves are, in some cases, mobile, and the shifting of their scenes in the background implicitly suggests movement of the figures through space (Mormons 1988).

When Veltruský suggests that some puppets "are not . . . set in motion," he might be, in a literal sense, correct. But as we have seen with double-vision, puppetry is a function of audience perception and imagination; the puppet need not be, literally, an object, and it cannot be, literally, alive. Likewise, signs of puppet movement need not be generated, literally, by movement of the puppet itself; they might be generated from outside, giving the implication of movement. Whatever the literal generation of the movement, it is perceived by the audience as puppet movement, and, as

with the puppet's abstracted signs in general, it provokes the imagination of life.

It remains to be demonstrated how all of the movement-signs generated by the variables, three intrinsic and one extrinsic to the puppet, might be located along the continuum of representation. In the chart given earlier, the three stages of representative signs were called "with," "despite," and "against" the puppet. Movement-signs made "with the puppet" are signs for whose deployment the intrinsic variables have been expressly created; these signs provide a quality of imitative representation. Movement-signs made "despite the puppet" are signs for whose deployment the intrinsic variables have not been expressly created, but of which they are nonetheless somewhat capable; these signs provide a quality of conventional and stylized representation. Movement-signs made "against the puppet" are signs for whose deployment the intrinsic variables have little or no relevance, and in which the extrinsic variable might be used to generate implied movement; these signs provide a quality of conceptual representation. In all cases, the quantity of movement-signs is simply the sum of the generated movements.

An example of movement-signs made "with the puppet" is our Japanese consideration: the puppets give detailed signs of walking and gesturing, and even of "crying, heavy

breathing, sewing, smoking, and dancing" (Adachi 1985: 51).

The quality and quantity of these signs are generated by the

control mechanics, which are short rods, often with triggers

for specialized movement, as well as direct hand-to-puppet

contact; by the control points, at the base of the head, the

ends of the forearms, and the feet, as well as those places

operated by the triggered controls, such as the eyebrows and

the fingers; and by the articulation points, which closely

mirror those of the human body.

Such complexity, however, is not required for movement

"with the puppet." Stefan Lenkisch, producer of a Romanian

puppet theatre, relates this insight:

> [W]e began to realize an important fact: if
> our puppet performed one particular movement
> to perfection the spectator would gain the
> impression that it could perform any con-
> ceivable movement. (Lenkisch 1967 [1965]:
> 28)

Simplicity can be as effective in its own way as complexity.

One movement, towards the perfection of which the intrinsic

variables are created, is enough to set the audience to

imagining a fully rounded life of movement for the puppet.

Simplicity and complexity may also be ingeniously

intertwined, as in this example given by Obraztsov:

> To make a puppet which can perform all the
> physical movements of a human being is
> impossible. One cannot, for example, make a
> puppet able to shave, bath, jump from a
> height, sail a yacht, dance a waltz and do
> handstands. . . . [T]he hero of our play Two-
> Love to Us has to do all these in the course

> of the plot. That is why we have had to make
> a series of puppets, which appear outwardly
> the same but whose anatomical structure
> varies. The spectator's impression is that
> he has seen only one puppet throughout the
> whole play. In fact, there are thirty of
> them. (Obraztsov 1954: 13)

An example of movement-signs made "despite the puppet"
might be found in our Javanese consideration. As we have
seen, the puppets have no articulation points below the
waist. Nonetheless, these puppets walk on and off the
stage. This walk, with fixed and immobile legs, is accepted
by convention, for the construction of the puppet does not
allow for anything but a manner of walking that is not
particularly life-like. But despite their stylized and
conventional nature, the walks of various characters are
still distinguishable, owing to the control the operator has
of the support and arm rods. For instance:

> Ardjuna walks smoothly across the screen,
> with no vertical movement. Both arms hang
> straight down or one swings back and forth
> gently. . . . Bima bounds across the screen
> in two or three leaps, rear arm cocked behind
> him and forearm raised high in a strong
> gesture. (Brandon 1970: 65)

Another example of movement-signs made "despite the
puppet" might be found in our English consideration. As we
have seen, while the operator's wrist allows for great
articulation at the waist of the puppet, the same cannot be
said for the fingers in the puppet's arms. The movement of
the puppet's arms derives solely from the articulation

points at its shoulders, and the arms, incapable of bending

at the elbows, and are always stiff (McPharlin 1938: 89).

This movement is stylized, and is accepted conventionally as

the appropriate arm movement of the hand-puppet.

It should be noted that movement-signs made "despite

the puppet" must maintain, in their stylization and conven-

tionalization, a certain consistency of representation.

Rose Soroky, in a generally superficial look at puppet

aesthetics, writes, "The audience cannot empathize with a

puppet whose feet do not touch the ground or whose knees are

bent when he walks" (Soroky 1982: 6). In fact, the audience

can indeed empathize, but only if the convention is estab-

lished and maintained that none of the puppet's feet touch

the ground, or that, as in our Javanese consideration, every

puppets' knees are bent.

An example of movement-signs made "against the puppet"

was given in the discussion of the Mormon production, in

which lighting and scenery generated implicit movement. But

movement "against the puppet" is not limited to implicit

movement. It occurs whenever the puppet is treated as the

object that the audience perceives it to be.

In the Javanese shadow theatre:

> Supernatural characters can be made to grow
> in size by bringing the puppet closer to the
> lamp. An extremely beautiful effect is
> created by moving a puppet slowly to the edge
> of the playing area while withdrawing it from
> the screen, then bringing it back on again.

> The shadow dissolves and vanishes in the air,
> then rematerializes. . . . A special effect
> is produced when a figure is turned to face
> in the opposite direction: it looks as if
> the character compresses into a thin line,
> then expands outward again. (Brandon 1970:
> 36)

These special effects are all generated with a total
disregard for the articulation of the puppet; the control
mechanics and control points are involved only in that they
allow the operator to treat the puppet as an object suscep-
tible to general movement.

And in battle-scenes in the Liege tradition:

> Whenever a large figure representing a
> general, and six or seven small figures
> collided, often in midair, with a similar
> group, audience members understood that they
> were witnessing a titanic battle. (Malkin
> 1977: 25)

What they were actually witnessing were the puppets being
given movement as if they were little else but projectile
objects; again, no articulation is necessary for such
movement, and no special control points. All that matters
is that the operators' have a means with which to fling the
puppets into battle.

Movement "against the puppet" is relatively rare; but
it demonstrates how movement-signs, just as design-signs,
can span the full range of the continuum of representation,
provoking double-vision in any number of ways.

<u>Speech</u>

Speech, everyone seems to agree, is different. We have seen in the first section of this Chapter how Veltruský suggests that the sign-system of speech differs from the other sign-systems in that "the <u>signans</u> and the <u>signatum</u> [in speech] are existentially the same" (Veltruský 1983: 71), meaning that speech differs from movement in being actual signs of life representing signs of life; we have also seen how Green and Pepicello locate it in its own "auditory" channel, separate from the "visual" channel shared by design and movement (Green and Pepicello 1983: 147). The significance of the difference between the two sign-systems, however, is the subject of profound disagreement. We have seen how Baird and McPharlin utterly disregard speech in their definitions of the puppet; we have also seen how Obraztsov cavalierly dispenses with "the text, assuming there is one" (Obraztsov 1950: 120). Now we must discuss how scholars have come to consider speech to be the most important sign-system of the puppet.

Samuel Foote, a nineteenth century English theatre-artist, tells a story about a Roman orator:

> Livius Andronicus, . . . upon delivering a
> popular sentiment in one of his pieces, was
> so often encored that, quite exhausted, he
> declared himself incapable of a further
> repetition, unless one of his scholars was
> permitted to mount the stage, and suffered to

> declaim the passage, which he [Livius] would
> attempt to gesticulate. . . . Here, gentle-
> men, by separation of the personage, you have
> the puppet complete. (Foote 1812: 150)

The article containing this story is shot through with

assertions concerning ancient theatre, many of them no less

remarkable than this one. Jurkowski comments, with an

almost apologetic note, "[L]eaving aside the historical

aspect of Foote's statement, we must admit that he pointed

at the essential feature of the puppet theatre" (Jurkowski

1983: 137). He goes on to affirm Foote's assertion,

stating, "The separability of the speaking object and the

physical source of the word . . . is the distinctive feature

of the puppet theatre" (Jurkowski 1983: 142).

Despite Jurkowski's affirmation, Foote's assertion

seems so extreme as to be foolish. Are we really to take

Livius Andronicus, with his flesh and blood gesticulations,

to be a puppet? Obviously he is not: he is not an object

in the inanimate sense used by most writers, including

Jurkowski; neither is he an "object" in the expanded sense

used in this essay. He is, quite clearly, a living man,

miming a speech delivered by another. Jurkowski does not

seem to have articulated an argument for the singular impor-

tance of the separation of "speaking object" and "physical

source of the word," and it is possible that he does not

quite mean what he says. In another article, he writes, "In

any theory of puppet theatre, the most important factor is

the relationship between puppeteer and puppet" (Jurkowski
1988 [1979]); and, as we have seen, his definition of the
puppet theatre takes pains to highlight the variability of
this relationship, not only for speech, but for movement as
well. Perhaps, inspired by Foote, he has gone overboard in
focusing on the relationship in speech.

Veltruský does not want to go as far as Jurkowski seems
to go in claiming the predominance of speech: "The [gene-
ral] sign produced in puppetry neither automatically
counteracts the predominance of the verbal, literary
component . . . nor favor[s] such a predominance" (Veltruský
1983: 97). This seems even-handed enough; but, in the same
article, Veltruský makes his own remarkable assertion for
the power of puppet speech. In ventriloquism, he suggests:

> It is by its own particular sound qualities
> that the ventriloquist's way of speaking--an
> impeded way--calls forth the image of the
> speaker as human-like but not quite human;
> with the help of this convention, this human-
> like speaker is perceived as a dummy. This
> is true even when the voice performance
> stands alone, as in the case of the popular
> radio performance of Peter Brough and his
> dummy Archie Andrews on the BBC in the
> 1950's. It is perhaps not too far-fetched a
> conclusion that the strange delivery of a
> ventriloquist or a puppeteer with a voice
> modifier conveys a corresponding image of the
> dummy or puppet in any event. (Veltruský
> 1983: 103)

If this is, indeed, "not too far-fetched," then the sign-
system of speech alone is sufficient to constitute the
puppet. And if it is, then surely speech is the most

important sign-system of the puppet. But is it too far-fetched? It is likely that the radio audience of Peter Brough, and similarly, of Edgar Bergen in America, is aware, through previous knowledge, of the existence of the puppets Archie Andrews or Charlie McCarthy, and that the attribution of speech to them, as puppets, is a function of this previous knowledge, and not of the speech delivery alone. That is, the speech delivery reinforces the knowledge that there is an unseen puppet, but does not constitute the puppet by itself. This same analysis would hold true for a radio performance of Punch and Judy: only if the audience were already familiar with Punch as a puppet character, or with the puppet tradition of using modified speech, would his speech be taken to be puppet-like. And so, despite Veltrusky's suggestion, signs of speech, by themselves, do not have the power to constitute the puppet.

But still, it might be argued, the different nature of the sign-system of speech gives it overwhelming importance in puppetry. Bogatyrev argues:

> The contradiction between the puppet's
> appearance and the puppet's human voice has
> long interested theorists and performers.
> Kolar cites Zich's claim that the puppet's
> movements are incomplete, or clumsy and
> wooden: "Zich sees the aesthetic contradic-
> tion in the dualism of the puppet theatre--
> the inanimate material of the puppet and the
> puppeteer's human voice. But at the same
> time it constitutes a specific and dialectic
> unity in puppet theatre: the synthesis of
> live voice and animated puppet" [in Kolár,

"Aesthetic Roots of the Czech Puppet
Theatre," Divaldo 14, 67-71]. It seems to us
that Kolár is completely correct to see the
organic blending of a human voice and puppet
movements as a means of giving life to
puppets. The puppet seems more alive when
its movements are combined with a human
voice. In a performance where the puppets
merely pantomime, the animation of the
puppet's inanimate matter without a human
voice accompanying its movements is not as
convincing to the spectator. (Bogatyrev 1983
[1973]: 60)

The human voice, that is, in opposition to the "inanimate

material" of the puppet, provides for a "dialectic unity,

rendering the puppet's performance more "convincing."

Bogatyrev seems to presuppose that the puppet's speech

is more or less human-like in its delivery, and that it is

directly attributed to the puppet. Even when this is the

case, as in our African consideration, and in much contempo-

rary American puppetry, this "dialectical unity" provided by

speech is problematic. One might argue, to the contrary,

that human-like speech attributed to the puppet undermines

the puppet's presumption of "life" by setting in unhappy

contrast the artificiality of its design and movement.

What's more, the presuppositions themselves are problematic.

In our English and Indian considerations, puppet speech is

modified to such a degree that it has few of the charac-

teristics of human speech. In our Japanese consideration,

speech for all characters is delivered by a visible speaker,

while in our American consideration, it is delivered for

each of the characters by separate, visible, singers; in both cases, it is clearly separated from the puppet. The relationship of voice to puppet is far more complex than Bogatyrev seems to acknowledge. Jurkowski's complaint against synchronic reductionism surely applies here; the argument for the importance of puppet speech cannot be based on simplistic presuppositions.

But after all this, it remains to be said that speech is, indeed, different, and in two ways. First, alone among the three sign-systems, it is, in fact, dispensable. Do away with puppet speech and the performance of the puppet may still continue; it might even be enhanced. The Pandemonium Puppet Company has a sketch in which an anthropomorphic frog, no relation to Kermit, comes on-stage oblivious of the audience; he sweeps the play-board of the stage, which has been liberally sprinkled, beforehand, with baby powder; the powder is swept into a dust-storm, the audience laughs, and the frog realizes he is not alone. Although the audience expects the frog to speak, he never does. He bows, shows frustration at the tepid response he is given, and bows again to a greater response. As he continues toying with the audience, a playing-block slides on-stage, and the frog trips over it as he returns to his dusting. He moves it aside and returns again to his work; it slides back behind him and he trips over it again. The sketch continues on in

silence, with two additional blocks eventually appearing,

for a full five minutes. It might well be that the tension

created by the frog's silence is an important factor in the

success of the piece, for his complete lack of speech leaves

the audience hanging on his every movement: a twitch of his

head or a shrug of his shoulders communicates his character

more clearly than might any speech (Roccoberton 1983).

A sketch of this sort is not without limitations; most

especially, the lack of puppet speech is difficult to

sustain for too long without the tension it creates dissi-

pating into audience frustration. Jiří Trnka, a Czech film-

maker who used puppets to beautiful effect, included no

puppet speech in his first movies; but eventually he dis-

covered value in it:

> After [Trnka's] experiences when filming Old
> Czech Legends, to which [limited puppet
> dialogue] had added such a powerful effect,
> he could not resist the temptation to develop
> it further. He now realized that he needed
> to make his puppets speak in order to infuse
> new life into them. Prior to this film he
> had used words only with caution. . . . In
> Old Czech Legends, he used them in a much
> more complicated and exacting manner. A
> dignified monologue introduced in the form of
> an outside commentary had considerable
> impact, and in addition to this, the puppets
> themselves spoke several times. This left
> Trnka only a small stage from expansion into
> more dialogue, with all the added attraction
> of fuller characterization and entertaining
> repartee. (Bocek 1963: 191)

Puppet speech can certainly offer "fuller characterization

and engaging repartee," as well as the expression of

profound and literary dialogue. But clearly, whatever it
might add to puppet performance, it is in no way required
for it. As such, it is impossible to agree with the
scholars who claim it to be, in one way or another, "the
distinctive feature of the puppet theatre."

The second way in which speech is different from the
other sign-systems, as Veltruský, Green and Pepicello, and
others have noted, is that it is more grounded in real life
than are they; it is produced by a human voice signifying a
human voice. As suggested above, this difference can work
to the benefit or the detriment of the puppet performance;
for the puppet-artist to ignore the difference is to risk a
terrible inconsistency in the deployment of signs. Dis-
cussing his early failures with attributing speech to the
puppet, Obraztsov remarks, "I [should] have understood that
it is not a question of voice alone but of the need for the
actor's emotions [and voice] to coincide with the puppet's;
even with its size" (Obraztsov 1950: 119).

This second difference is at the heart of the sign-
system of speech; and the variables in the sign-system are
all concerned with finding ways in which the puppet's speech
might be made to "coincide" with the puppet's design and
movement, to be appropriate to the puppet. The major
variables within this sign-system are paralinguistic
features, dialect/language, voice modification, and the on-

stage presence or absence of the living speaker(s). These
variables can act as signs in themselves, as do the vari-
ables in the sign-system of design, or as generators of
signs, as do the variables in the sign-system of movement.

The first variable involves "paralinguistic features,
or alternately, "suprasegmental features." Elam defines
these features as "vocal characteristics with which [the
speaker] endows [speech] over and above its phonemic and
syntactic structure" (Elam 1980: 79). Basing his discussion
on the work of many linguists, Elam isolates the elements of
"loudness, pitch, timbre, rate, inflection, rhythm, and
enunciation" (Elam 1980: 81). As employed in puppetry,
standard combinations of paralinguistic features offer a
means of vocal stereotyping that can suggest particular
personality traits for various characters while allowing for
easily comprehended distinctions to be made between those
characters. These combinations of paralinguistic features
can be deployed in an approximation of normal human speech,
presenting speech signs that are imitative in quality and
quantity; or they can be deployed in a manner that amounts
to caricature of normal speech, presenting speech-signs that
are stylized in quality and quantity.

The use of paralinguistic features for the deployment
of normal human speech requires little discussion. Every
person has his or her own unique vocal attributes; in

puppetry, paralinguistic features might be combined to
create characters with their own unique vocal attributes.
One need only walk the streets of any major city to realize
how vast is the range of normal human speech, and with what
facility and regularity paralinguistic features are com-
bined.

Paralinguistic features are relied upon heavily in our
Javanese consideration. One puppet-operator, the dalang,
must deliver not only the speech of numerous characters, but
also basic narration and elaborate descriptions:

> Different vocal techniques are associated
> with the dalang's delivery of djanturan,
> tjarijos, and ginem. The ritual descriptive
> passages of djanturan are delivered in
> deliberately stylized phrases. Sentences may
> be separated by a sharp rap or two on the
> puppet chest. . . .
> [In] passages of dialogue, ginem, . . .
> pitch and vocal quality are varied to
> distinguish puppet types. . . . [T]he
> systematic assignment of certain pitches and
> qualities to certain types of puppets
> [enables the dalang] to distinguish vocally
> forty to sixty characters. . . .
> Tjarijos is delivered in a less stylized
> manner than djanturan. Because it is matter-
> of-fact narration . . . few special tech-
> niques are associated with it. (Brandon
> 1970: 62-3)

In the Sicilian tradition, there is more than one
speaker, but paralinguistic features are nonetheless
employed to create stylized representation of speech-signs
for various character-types:

> [T]he timbre of the voice changes with the
> type of character. . . . The positive comic

> characters . . . speak with nasal, clucking,
> raucous voices, different from the negative
> comic characters, who speak dialect with a
> throaty, strident voice. . .   The positive
> heroes have a clear, resounding timbre; the
> negative ones an obscure, throaty and raucous
> on.   (Pasqualino 1987: 11)

It might be noted, with Pasqualino, that in addition to
paralinguistic features, the Sicilian tradition also makes
use of the dialect/language variable to characterize and
distinguish between characters. As in all three sign-
systems, the variables may be combined in many ways.

The variable of dialect/language is commonly employed
in traditions where class and nationality, as represented by
the use of various dialects and languages, are significant
attributes of the characters. Also, the use of language by
a given character might be so individualized that it amounts
to a personal dialect.

After his brilliant survey of voice modification
techniques, to which we will soon turn our attention,
Proschan discusses three other techniques available to the
traditional folk-puppeteer for distinguishing between
various characters' speech and for distinguishing puppet
speech from live speech. First, "the solution [in Sicilian
puppetry] may be as simple as the shifting of registers from
Italian to Sicilian and back for villains and heroes"
(Proschan 1981: 552). As we have seen, paralinguistic
features are also a part of the Sicilian solution. Second,

the solution may involve "mangled syntax"; as Bogatyrev

notes, "Old [Czech] puppeteers, conveying the language of

upper class heroes . . . distorted common colloquial

language [and] intentionally made grammar mistakes, while

puppets depicting peasants spoke Czech correctly" (qtd. in

Proschan 1981: 552). The third solution involves "exagger-

ated parodies of stereotypical speaking styles, elaborated

far beyond what is necessary to differentiate the charac-

ters" (Proschan 1981: 552). This solution makes use of

paralinguistic features, as discussed above.

The most often remarked upon variable in the puppet's

 ‐n-system of speech is that of voice modification, in

which the voice of the speaker is subjected to modification,

or distortion, through the employment of a mechanical device

in or at the mouth of the speaker. Proschan offers a

summary of devices typically used in traditional puppetry:

> [V]oice modifiers fall into three groups:
> those held in the back of the mouth (usually
> two hard plates bound together with a
> vibrating ribbon between them); those held in
> the front of the mouth (these also use a
> vibrating reed); and those held outside the
> mouth (these are tube kazoos). (Proschan
> 1981: 533)

A voice modifier held in the back of the mouth, between the

speaker's upper tongue and palate, called a "swazzle," is

used in our English consideration; one held in the front of

the mouth, between the speaker's teeth, called a boli, is

used in our Indian consideration (Proschan 1981: 534); voice

modifiers held outside the mouth, secured by a harness,
include not only the kazoo, but also duck calls and bird
whistles, and are not uncommon in contemporary productions.

As this variety of devices suggests, the use of voice
modification is not all the same; the further back in the
mouth the device is located, the more difficult it is for
the speaker to articulate the speech. What's more, given
any particular device, the speaker still has control over
the delivery of speech-signs. Proschan remarks:

> In using the voice modifier, the puppeteer
> can aim for easy intelligibility, for
> absolute inscrutability, or for some mid-
> point. The goal varies from one tradition to
> another, in fact, from one moment to another
> within the performance. (Proschan 1981: 533)

It would be safe to suggest, however, that voice modifica-
tion generally produces speech-signs that tend towards the
conceptual end of the continuum of representation, for it is
the concept of speech, rather than the content, that is
attributed to the puppet.

But of course, unintelligible speech-signs are of
limited utility in puppet performance. How might voice
modified speech be rendered intelligible to the audience?
According to Proschan, this can be accomplished in three
ways: first, through "dialogue and repetition," in which
the puppet's distorted words are clearly repeated in
assertive or interrogatory form by an interlocutor, another
puppet, or the puppeteer him or herself; second, through

"the communicative event," in which puppet movement, such as gesture and action, clarifies the intent of the speech; and third, through the modified speech itself, in which the "close correspondence between the contours of natural speech and the contours of [modified] puppet speech" must be noted, and in which the "redundance and resistance to distortion" of natural speech leaves the puppet's speech full of communicative signification (Proschan 1981: 535-9).

Voice modified speech presents obvious burdens to the puppet-artist(s) and the audience; yet it is commonly used in may diverse traditions. The burdens presented by it are correctly presumed to be off-set by the benefits it offers. Proschan suggests one of the primary benefits:

> A puppeteer who must speak for several puppets has only one natural voice, so he must either rely to a [great] extent on the speech stereotypes, or he must find some other way to alter radically his natural voice (or utilize the two solutions together). (Proschan 1981: 528)

He mentions other benefits as well. "[T]he distinctive sound of the voice modifier alerts the audience to the arrival of the puppeteers and the beginning of the perform-ance"; "the squeaky voice is inherently funny"; the voice modifier "can be used for 'secret' communication (the transmission of cues)"; and the voice modifier "can mark when particular characters are speaking," such as when, in

their plays, only Punch and Petrouchka have modified voices

(Proschan 1981: 540-1).

Proschan comments that:

> Puppet voices are sometimes explained, even
> by the same analyst, in opposite terms: they
> are small voices to correspond to the
> diminutive size of the puppets . . . yet they
> are also capable of producing humorous effect
> by virtue of their incongruity. . . . The
> truth is that both are correct. . . . [W]e
> sometimes see an internally consistent,
> mutually reinforcing semiotic system at work.
> . . . We sometimes see . . . the interaction
> of two distinct yet related [systems].
> (Proschan 1981: 548-9)

But there is a difference between "small voices" and

modified voices. A small voice might be "correspond" to the

puppet while not being humorous in itself, as in the gentle

yet stylized voices of the Muppets' Kermit; a modified voice

might be funny while not corresponding to the puppet, as in

the hypothetical case of a swazzle being used for a greater-

than-life-size giant in Jack and the Beanstalk.

Proschan is attempting to come to terms with what is

perhaps the most important benefit of voice modification; a

benefit so obvious that he does not explicitly consider it.

As Speight reminds us:

> There is an inherent disparity between the
> figure of the puppet and the voice of a man;
> we may become accustomed to the convention by
> which a full sized human voice is supposed to
> proceed from the (usually) immobile lips of a
> marionette, but there is ample evidence that
> in the past it was considered necessary to
> disguise the human voice when it spoke in the
> puppet show. . . . [W]e may well learn . . .

> that the use of some kind of megaphone or
> sounding box would lend just that "unhuman"
> [sic] timbre to the voice that is necessary
> to make the puppet show a completely distinct
> form of entertainment. (Speight 1947: 37-9)

The use of voice modification takes away the "disparity

between the figure of the puppet and the voice of a man"; it

lends the "'unhuman' timbre" to the puppet's voice that

makes it uniquely its own.

Veltruský makes much the same point:

> In order to combine human speech with the
> inanimate object and the notion carried out
> by its means, the delivery is made so strange
> as to be perceived as the puppet's own voice
> and the impeded speech as its own speech,
> anthropomorphous rather than human.
> (Veltruský 1983: 103)

Or, to put in the terms of this essay, the ontologically

paradoxical puppet is given, with voice modification, an

appropriately paradoxical speech, human-like, but not human.

Because the sign-system of speech is different, the

fundamental problem it presents to the puppet-artist is that

of making it appropriate to the puppet. Normal speech-

signs, speech-signs towards the imitative end of the

continuum of representation, are, in much traditional and

most contemporary puppet theatre, generally not deployed by

the puppet because they seem incommensurate with it. Even

if only paralinguistic features of speech are used, they

help to correlate speech with the puppet's other sign-

systems. The recurrence of voice modification suggests the

degree to which this need for correlation exists. But, as
with the Chicago Little Theatre's breakthrough with puppet
movement, sometimes the wheel must be continually redis-
covered. "From Walt Disney's films [Jiří] Trnka learned
that a stylized visual production needed corresponding
stylization in any accompanying voices" (Bocek 1963: 195).
We have seen how animated cartoons may have been responsible
for the anthropomorphic animals that can now be found
throughout puppetry. Much of the contemporary use of
stylized speech-signs, especially, perhaps, in American
productions, might also owe a debt to animation.

The last of the variables in the puppet's sign-system
of speech is the on-stage presence or absence of the
speaker. This variable has an impact similar to that of the
on-stage presence or absence of the puppet-operator. When
the speaker is present on-stage, the speech-signs of the
puppet are radically transformed from wherever they other-
wise might be on the continuum of representation to a
location at the conceptual end of the continuum. The on-
stage presence of the speaker differs from that of the
puppet-operator, however, in that it is commonly employed
not only with imitative of speech-signs, as is the presence
of the puppet-operator with imitative design-signs, but with
speech-signs from both ends of the continuum, operating in a
different manner for each.

We have seen how Jurkowski rails against synchronic approaches that fails to recognize the element of service. What is actually at issue, however, is not service, but the interaction, or lack thereof, between the on-stage speaker and the puppet. In Jurkowski's example of Master Pedro's puppet theatre, the story-teller is involved in no verbal interaction with the puppets, and delivers all of the speech in the performance, be it narrative or character-speech. A similar lack of interaction obtains in our Japanese consideration. Although Jurkowski argues that Bunraku puppets differ from Master Pedro's because they "are not simply illustrations to accompany the storyteller's chanting . . . [but] are visual components of the characters" (Jurkowski 1983: 129), the same might be said, as we have seen, of Master Pedro's puppets, for they, too, "are not simply illustrations." The Petrouchka show to which Jurkowski refers, however, as well as our consideration from India, have on-stage speakers who verbally interact with the puppets, translating their voice-modified speech and engaging in dialogue. Proschan writes:

> Significantly, in many of the cases cited,
> the voice modifiers are found in use along
> with an interpreter or interlocutor. The
> interlocutor may employ a peculiar form of
> dialogue which involves his or her repeti-
> tion, often in the form of questions, of the
> puppet's distorted statements. (Proschan
> 1981: 533).

As Jurkowski insists, this is surely a different matter.

Non-interactive on-stage speakers, such as in Master
Pedro's show and in our Japanese consideration, deliver
character-speech that tends towards the imitative end of the
continuum. If they were to interact with the puppets,
speaking for themselves in normal voices, they would blur
the line that distinguishes puppet speech from human speech.
The speech-signs they deliver are conceptual in that the
audience can clearly see that the puppet is incapable of
speaking for itself. Conversely, interactive on-stage
speakers, interlocutors, such as in the Petrouchka show and
in our Indian consideration, deliver human speech of their
own, set against the voice-modified speech of the puppets.
The line between the two kinds of speech remains quite
clear. The puppet's speech is already conceptual in itself,
as it is scarcely intelligible, and the on-stage presence of
the speaker reinforces this conceptuality by demonstrating
its need for translation.

Twentieth century American and English puppet-artists
seem surprisingly oblivious to the possibilities of non-
interactive on-stage speakers. Lee writes:

> The method of manipulator-actor [delivering
> speech] can perhaps more easily achieve
> spontaneity and life in the puppet than any
> other means. . . . Moreover, it is only the
> manipulator-actor who can improvise and
> create a certain "by-play" with the audience.
> (Lee 1958: 121)

The potential of the non-interactive on-stage speaker to

inhibit "spontaneity" and "improvisation" must be weighed

against the potential of the same speaker to deepen and

enrich the overall performance, as in Bunraku; it seems

clear, at the least, that the non-interactive on-stage

speaker has a potential that is not entirely negative.

The performances of Peter Arnott and of Bruce Schwartz

present interesting cases. Both of these solo performers

are visually present, if not quite on-stage, when they

operate and deliver speech for the puppets in their perform-

ances. Schwartz explains:

> I keep the mechanics out in the open because
> I don't want people to pay attention to them.
> . . . My theory is that watching me move the
> puppets with my hands will become dull after
> a little while. When it does, the puppets
> will be more interesting than I am.
> (Schwartz, 1983: 106)

Arnott says, similarly: "[A]fter the first few seconds the

audience is oblivious to my presence and concentrates wholly

on the [puppet] action" (Arnott 1964: 81). If these

explanations are not taken to be disingenuous, they suggest

that both Schwartz and Arnott overlook the power that the

on-stage presence of the operator-speaker can have. Arnott

goes on to say that:

> This question of synchronization [of dialogue
> and movement] is all-important, and it seems
> to me that however many operators there are,
> each operator should speak his own figure's
> part. [Otherwise], it is rarely possible . .

. for perfect synchronization to be achieved
in this way.   (Arnott 1964: 97-8)

Schwartz and Arnott, although two of the finest puppet-
artists currently performing, seem almost intentionally to
preclude the potential value of the non-interactive on-stage
speaker; although both serve a similar function in their
performances, both combine the labors of operating and
speaking for the puppets.   Along with Lee, they value the
immediacy that arises from this combination of labors.   But
Jurkowski is certainly correct when he writes that "the
relations between the object (the puppet) and the power
sources . . . are of great semiological and aesthetical
significance" (Jurkowski 1983: 142).   By limiting themselves
to one set of relations in the delivery of speech-signs,
Schwartz and Arnott, along with many others, overlook the
other possible relations available to them.

The matter of speech-sign delivery has been treated in
some detail because it exposes certain presuppositions about
how it is believed that puppetry must be presented.   The
burden of this Chapter, extended as it is, has been to show
that within each sign-system of the puppet, the range of
representation is surprisingly broad, with the variables in
each sign-system offering an astonishing number of choices
for the deployment of representative signs of life.

The practical consequences of this discussion are quite
straight-forward: there is no one way to create puppet

performance; rather, there is an almost infinite number of
ways. In puppet traditions sanctified by the passage of
time, the codification of certain combinations of signs is
elaborate enough to allow for the most detailed nuance
within the accepted parameters of performance. In the
contemporary West, where, as Jurkowski points out, there is
no dominant tradition to guide performance, many puppet-
artists seem to be unaware of the plethora of choices
available, and are satisfied with the few possibilities of
which they happen to be aware, allowing the "native theatri-
cality" of the puppet, in Milovsoroff's term, to provoke its
process of double-vision. Perhaps a greater awareness of
how the puppet's signs might be deployed will enable them to
make more interesting choices.

The scholarly consequences of this discussion are
straight-forward as well. Each of the sign-systems has been
considered in its own right; old terms of description have
been refurbished, and new terms introduced and explained.
Description of the puppet need not rely upon the inadequate
taxonomies of the historic-geographic and the object-control
methods. The basis for a new taxonomy, predicated on
comparing and contrasting the manner in which abstracted
signs of life are deployed through the puppet's three sign-
systems to provoke double-vision, has been established.

CHAPTER 7

Metaphor and the Puppet

The puppet is involved with the idea of metaphor in two distinct yet related ways: the puppet itself might be taken to be a metaphor of humanity, and the term "puppet" might be applied to particular people. The puppet's central process of double-vision, and the ontological paradox of the puppet that follows from this process, is the key to understanding both of these involvements of the puppet and metaphor.

The power of the puppet as a metaphor is an implicit confirmation of the idea that double-vision is the central process to the puppet. In much puppetry, as we have seen in the preceding Chapter, the operator and/or speaker is not present on-stage, and yet the puppet is perceived to be an intentional creation subjected to intentional control; even when the puppet is presented in the most imitative manner possible, it is perceived by its audience to be an object. As we have also seen, even when the operator and/or speaker is present on-stage, and the puppet is obviously an inten- tional creation subjected to intentional control, it is still able to lead its audience to imagine that it has a spurious life of its own. The puppet takes on its metaphor-

ical connotation because, regardless of the quality and quantity of its abstracted signs, it inherently provokes the process of double-vision, creating doubt as to its ontological status: what is the nature of its being?

It will be recalled that the appeal of the puppet has been traced back, alternately, to the fond reminiscence of childhood dolls and to the archetypical tug of the religious totem. As was demonstrated in Chapter Four, these theories are individually inadequate and mutually incompatible. All the same, both theories are given new meaning when the concept of double-vision is applied to them. For in both childhood doll-play and in ritual ceremony, there is a marked, and somewhat intentional, tendency for the margin between "object" and "life" to be made unclear; and in both, the psychological associations of creation and control provoke powerful metaphors of creation and control.

It should not be surprising that the metaphorical relationship of god/person to person/puppet finds far more literary expression than that of child/toy to person/puppet, in that the philosophical ramifications of the former seem far more profound than those of the latter. But as we discuss the literature this metaphorical relationship, the reader should be aware of how easily it translates into the more domestic relationship as well. The puppet's process of

double-vision allows it metaphorical power that extends in both directions from humanity.

Batchelder cuts right to the point about the puppet as a metaphor of humanity:

> The idea of the puppet is itself ironical.
> Here is a character, more or less closely
> related to life, moved about by a human being
> who is its master. No one misses the analogy
> between the puppet dominated by man, and man
> dominated by forces greater than himself.
> (Batchelder 1947: 299)

This essay has repeatedly suggested that the puppet is perceived to be an object, while imagined to have life. The puppet as metaphor of humanity, however, inverts this formulation. People are perceived by other people to have life, while, at the same time, they are imagined to be but objects. The power of the puppet as a metaphor of humanity depends upon this inversion, and upon the ontological paradox that remains. Ultimately, it is a question of who, or what, creates and controls.

Aristotle invokes the metaphor of the puppet to explain the gods' control not only over humanity, but over all of the universe. He writes, of the Prime Mover:

> All that is necessary is an act of his will--
> the same as that which controls the mari-
> onettes by pulling a string to move the heads
> or the hands of these little beings, then
> their shoulders, their eyes, and sometimes
> all the parts of their bodies, which respond
> with grace. (qtd. in Baird 1965: 38)

The universe itself, which is perceived to be real, is imagined in this cosmological metaphor to be but the puppet of a greater force, the original force.

A view no less cosmological, but more focused on the god/person person/puppet metaphor, is current in Java, where, as Brandon informs us:

> On a mystical level, the [shadow] screen may be said to symbolize heaven; the banana-log stage, earth; the puppets, man; and the [puppet-operator], god, who through his knowledge and spiritual power brings man to life. (Brandon 1970: 18)

An Anatolian poet of the thirteen century by the name of Birri similarly expresses the metaphor of humanity as a puppet, created and controlled by the greater force of God:

> Wise man seeking for truth
> Look up at the tent of the sky
> Where the Great Showman of the world
> Has long ago set up his Shadow Theatre.
> Behind his screen he is giving a show
> Played by the shadows of men and women of his
>   creation.
> (qtd. in Jurkowski 1988 [1979]: 2)

Perhaps the most extensive meditation in Western poetry upon the puppet as a metaphor of humanity might be found in Conrad Aiken's lengthy poem "Punch, the Immortal Liar." Towards the end of the work, the puppet builder and operator, called the "mountebank," has a moment of reflection:

> Suddenly, there, as he stood at the darkening
>   window . . .
> He saw himself,--though a god,--the puppet of
>   gods;
> Revolving in antics the dream of a greater
>   dreamer. . . .

Shortly after, he addresses one of his puppets:

> "I, too, am a puppet. And as you are a symbol for
>   me . . .
> So I am a symbol, a puppet drawn out upon strings,
> Helpless, well-colored, with a fixed and
>   unchanging expression
> (As though one said "heartache" or "laughter"!) of
>   some one who leans
> Above me, as I above you... And even this Some
>   one,--
> Who knows what compulsion he suffers, what hands
>   out of darkness
> Play sharp chords upon him!... Who knows if those
>   hands are not ours?"
> (Aiken 1953: 361-2)

The chain of ontological doubt extends upward from the

puppet to the person to the "Some one" above, who himself

suffers the "compulsion" of "hands out of darkness," perhaps

extending the chain of creation and control infinitely

upwards, or, more surprisingly, perhaps turning the chain

around, and suggesting that the person might in some way

control the god, and the puppet, in some way, control the

person. This last suggestion might seem outrageous, but the

puppet does, in a sense, control the manner in which it is

controlled. Craig states, as a principle of puppet-opera-

tion, "You don't move it, you let it move; that's the art"

(qtd. in Jurkowski 1988 [1979]: 14). In the practical

sense, this means that the role of the puppet-operator is to

learn the movement potential of the puppet, and to allow for

that potential to be realized. In a more mystical sense,

although one's threshold for such mysticism might easily be

transgressed, this means that the puppet-operator's role is

to put him or herself in the service of that which is in his
or her service. The suggestion, in Aiken's poem, is not
only that the puppet, the person, and the god all possess an
ontologically doubtful status in being controlled by the
next greater force, but that their ontological status is no
less doubtful in being controlled by the next _lesser_ force.
The metaphorical paradox of the puppet cuts in both direc-
tions.

The gods' creation and control of humanity is not the
only subject of creation and control offered by the metaphor
of the puppet; people can also be created and controlled by
other, more powerful, people. Horace, in his "Satires,"
writes, one person to the next:

> . . . what am I to you?
> Look how you who lord it over me
> Bow and scrape for others like a puppet on a
>   string!
> (qtd. in Jurkowski 1988 [1979]: 2)

The chain of ontological doubt is here identified, metaphor-
ically, within the context of human relations.

And the metaphor might be even more localized than
that. Within any given person, the ontological status of
the "face" presented to other people might be subjected,
metaphorically, to doubt. Adam Mickiewicz, a Polish
Romantic, writes:

> These artificial marionettes we call people
> may embrace us in friendship, smile at us,
> cry sometimes, but underneath you find
> egoism, greed and pride manipulating their

strings, dominating these figures (qtd. in
Jurkowski 1988 [1979]: 6)

The metaphorical linkages of humanity to the puppet

have been expressed not only in literature, but in the

theatre itself. Batchelder remarks that:

> Some types of poetic or tragic drama are
> suitable for puppets. Maeterlinck's The
> Death of Tintagiles proved an excellent
> puppet medium, partly because of its concen-
> trated intensity, and partly because the
> characters are so obviously in the power of
> forces beyond their control that they seem
> like human puppets. (Batchelder 1947: 300-
> 1)

In her analysis of Maeterlinck's work, Knapp comments:

> What impressed Maeterlinck . . . was the
> passive, remote, impersonal and automatonlike
> nature of the marionette as it fruitlessly
> confronted the forces of destiny. He saw an
> analogy between man and marionette: both are
> manipulated by outer forces, both are unaware
> of this control over their lives. (Knapp
> 1975: 77)

There is certainly great power in this metaphorical usage of

the puppet; but it should be noted that such usage does not

work equally well with all types of puppets. When a pair of

hand-puppets engage in an awkward and unlikely embrace, or a

when group of Sicilian rod-marionettes bash at one another

until heads literally roll, the rather melancholy metaphor

of humanity as slave to destiny is difficult to apply.

It should also be noted that the second part of Maeter-

linck's analogy, that neither the person nor the puppet is

aware of being controlled, is inaccurate. Puppets can

easily deploy signs to suggest that they are "aware" of
being controlled. Jurkowski notes that in a sketch by the
contemporary German puppet-artist Albrecht Roser and his
marionette clown, Gustav, Gustav's control strings become
intentionally entangled, and the puppet appeals to its
operator for help in sorting them out; "he is a puppet
playing upon his awareness of being a puppet" (Jurkowski
1983: 141). And it need scarcely be mentioned that many
people have an intense feeling of being "manipulated" by
some force greater than themselves, be this a force of
deity, or of historical circumstance, or of other persons.
It might well be argued that the knowledge that human life
is, itself, regularly, if not always, subject to control
lends the metaphor of the puppet its peculiar power: we see
ourselves in the puppet because we are all to well aware
that our freedom of action is circumscribed by external
forces.

As suggested in Aiken's poem, the metaphor of the
puppet is richer and more complex than it might first appear
to be. This richness and complexity is manifested in a
production of Prokofiev's <u>Classical Symphony</u> by the Budapest
State Puppet Theatre, in which the audience watches live
"spectators" watch as a live "orchestra" plays the music for
a puppet show:

> On a Rococo court stage (the stage within the
> stage), the puppets present a traditional

> Italian comedy with rigid conventionality.
> The courtly, contrived boredom is, however,
> broken again and again by the appearance of a
> [puppet] cat on the stage within the stage.
> At its sight, a pampered lap-dog [belonging
> to a "spectator" and presumably alive in its
> own right] grows wild and starts fighting.
> The two animals chasing each other gradually
> destroy this contrived world of art. Flies
> are torn down, wings collapse, instruments
> fall apart to reveal their mechanical
> components in the orchestra pit; even a
> white-wigged spectator [whom we have seen as
> live] tumbles down and reveals that he is
> nothing but a termite-eaten empty shell, an
> empty puppet. (Gál 1978: 41)

By the rather apocalyptic end of the performance, the
audience's understanding of what is and is not real has been
thoroughly confused; the question of who is in control of
what has been raised in an unanswerable manner, and the
audience has been invited to apply the metaphor of the
puppet not only to the "reality" of the performance, but to
reality itself.

This brief conspectus of literary and theatrical
employments of the puppet as a metaphor of humanity suggests
that the metaphor might well be as wide-spread as the
phenomenon of the puppet itself, and might be operative, as
is the process of double-vision, in a synchronic manner.
That is, it might well be that the metaphor of the puppet is
as pervasive in human thought as is the phenomenon of the
puppet in human theatre. A fascinating question arises from
this suggestion: does the metaphor follow from observation
of the puppet, or does the puppet follow from recognition of

the metaphor? Or, to put the question another way: does

the sense that people and puppets are alike in being created

and controlled by greater forces follow from the observation

that the puppet is, indeed, so created and controlled, or

does the practice of creating and controlling puppets follow

from the observation that people are so created and con-

trolled? It is doubtful that this question can be answered

with any certainty, and no attempt to do so will be offered

here. But the question itself is significant, in that it

presents the possibility that humanity, believing itself to

be created and controlled by a more powerful force, needs to

give expression to this belief by creating and controlling

what amount to surrogate people, in a fashion analogous to

that in which a child, subject to the discipline of parents,

exercises a childish discipline upon dolls.

Whether the metaphor of the puppet or the puppet itself

came first, the puppet's performance cannot help but raise

metaphorical implications. As we have seen, these implica-

tions extend beyond the immediately obvious matter of

creation and control. As Szilágyi contends, "The true means

of expression of puppetry is . . . the stage metaphor":

> With its symbolic style of performance the
> puppet stage makes the spectator believe that
> while the theatrical world may be on a
> separate plane, one on which the puppets are
> independent beings obeying their own laws,
> everything ultimately is rooted in the human
> world and therefore reflected. . . . [The
> spectator] is reminded that the unreal world

> of art and the reality of everyday life exist
> simultaneously and alongside one another.
> (Szilágyi 1967 [1965]: 37)

It is not just a question of creation and control that the

metaphor of the puppet raises through the process of double-

vision, but a question of acknowledging reality itself:

what is an "object," what is "life"?

The distinction drawn in Chapter Five between the

puppet and the live actor can be seen clearly in these

metaphorical references to the puppet: the figure of the

live actor cannot sustain metaphors such as these, because

it does not invite such profound questions of creation and

control, and does not present such a perplexing ontological

paradox of "object"/"life." In a phrase, the living actor

is not subjected to double-vision in the same manner as is

the puppet.

The puppet is also involved with the idea of metaphor

in that the term "puppet" might be applied, metaphorically,

to particular people. When it is, it is not applied as a

term of approbation.

The term itself, even before its metaphorical applica-

tion, has become an unhappy one, at least in the West. Its

connotations might not be inherently pejorative in cultures

with traditions of puppetry that are highly valued; but in

the West, where puppet traditions have generally been taken

to be marginal derivations of live theatre, these connota-
tions are almost invariably negative.

Facing up to this reality, Craig writes, "'Puppet' is a
term of contempt, though there still remain some who find
beauty in these little figures, degenerate though they have
become" (Craig 1911: 90). Of course, even Craig betrays a
certain contempt for "these little figures," arguing that
they must be superseded, "degenerate" as they are, by the
more exalted figure of the Ubermarionette.

If it would seem that Craig overstates the matter when
he writes that "'puppet' is a term of contempt," or if it
would seem that, decades later, the term might be accorded a
bit more respect, one need only consider Malkin's measured
response to the September 1972 "Puppet" issue of The Drama
Review, in which:

> [T]he editors go so far as to put the word
> puppet in quotation marks because the word,
> in their view, does not "describe satis-
> factorily . . . the concepts of the inanimate
> actor, depersonalization, incarnation, and so
> forth" [Michael Kirby, "Introduction," The
> Drama Review 16 (1972): 3]. It is as though
> the editors were convinced that the word
> puppet, without quotation marks, represents
> too elementary a concept or too naive an art
> form for their purposes. They seem to ignore
> or be ignorant of the possibility that the
> puppet, like the actor and the mask, is an
> essential element of the theatre. The
> articles treat the puppet as mask, the puppet
> as symbol, the actor as puppet and so forth,
> but there is no attempt to articulate any
> contemporary concept of the puppet as puppet.
> (Malkin 1975: 3)

And if it be thought that this contempt for the term, and for all that it signifies, has lessened with the passing of nearly two more decades, the reader is invited to reflect upon his or her first reaction to the subject-matter of this essay, or upon the reaction of others when the subject-matter is discussed.

It might well be that the denigration of puppetry derives from the psychological associations that the puppet evokes. In the contemporary West, religious ritual is looked upon with only slightly less condescension than is childhood play. And, as puppetry in the West has been reduced, by and large, to ethnological studies of puppetry in the religions of other cultures, and to performances for children in this culture, this condescension has been amply reinforced. It would seem, if a note of speculation might be allowed, that sophisticated Westerners have an almost morbid fear of taking the power of their imagination as seriously as the power of their perception, and that they find the juxtaposition of perception and imagination, with the ensuing ontological paradox that threatens their under-standing of what is "object" and what is "life," to be un-nerving, and that they therefore avoid the problem entirely by condescending to the practice of puppetry that raises it. It might well be that a culture's willingness to appreciate puppetry depends upon that culture's willingness to accept

the ontological paradox provoked by the process of double-vision.

To speak of a person, metaphorically, as a "puppet" is to speak of that person with a certain degree of contempt. This contempt is rooted in that in which the term itself is held, but is even more complex. To be called a "puppet" is not only to labeled with an unpleasant term, but is also to have one's ontological status subjected to contemptuous doubt. A full examination of the ways in which the term "puppet" has been applied to particular individuals is beyond the scope of this essay; but two common applications might be discussed.

Politicians, and, indeed, entire governments, are regularly called puppets. For example, Vidkun Quisling, a man whose very name has become part of the English language, was called a "puppet" of the Nazi's when they established him in power over conquered Norway; also, the government established by the Vietnamese in conquered Cambodia was called a "puppet regime." The contempt in being denominated a "puppet" is obvious; but beneath that contempt is an attack upon the ontological status of the subject. Did Quisling and the Vietnamese regime govern in their own right, or were they created and controlled by forces, in these cases, political in nature, more powerful than themselves? Were they "objects" acted upon, or "life" that

acts? Both Quisling and the Vietnamese regime in Cambodia
did, in fact, govern ostensibly independent nations; but at
the same time, both were obviously responsive to the will of
those who established them in power. Their ontological
status was certainly in doubt; metaphorically, they were
"puppets" in every sense.

Likewise, men or women in love are regularly called
"puppets." It would be unkind to mention any living person
to whom this term is applied, so let us take as our example
Cleopatra, a figure of history and literature who is
frequently believed to have been in the thrall of not just a
few particular men, but of love itself. Although, in
history and in literature, Cleopatra is accepted as a person
with no less "life" than any other person, she is, at the
same time, seen to be "object" that is responsive to the
overwhelming power of romance. Thus, Cleopatra is a "puppet
of love," created and controlled by a force, in this case
emotional in nature, more powerful than herself. Again, her
ontological status is in doubt, and, metaphorically, she too
is a "puppet" in every sense.

It is important to recognize that while such terms as
the "puppet governor" and the "puppet of love" involve
questions of creation and control, they imply the presence
of what might be called a "world-audience" that must make
something of the ontological status of the person under

question. As with the puppet as a general metaphor of
humanity, what is at issue is nothing less than the question
of one's status as "object" and/or "life."

The metaphorical power of the puppet, both as a
metaphor of humanity and as a term applied to people, arises
out of the paradoxical process of double-vision central to
the puppet. The theatrical-audience and the world-audience
must grapple, ultimately, with matters of ontology, with
matters of being. The puppet-stage and the world-stage
present figures that are difficult to comprehend; it is the
task of their audiences, which are nothing less than
humanity, in part or in whole, to arbitrate the nature of
being. The much-scorned wisdom of Pythagoras is given new
credence in the metaphor of puppet and person, and in the
metaphor of people as "puppets"; perception and imagination
are human activities, and the comprehension of what is an
"object" and what is a "life" is composed out of their
juxtaposition. Humankind is, indeed, the measure of all
things.

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