Editorial : Disentangling the history of puppets

The history of puppet theatre has for a long time been considered as the continuous development of a single branch of the performing arts, without taking into account the diversity of theatrical devices, contexts of performances and manipulation techniques. As certain characters – among which Pulcinella, Punch or Polichinelle – know a long lifespan, and since their names kept coming up in shows over several centuries, it has been believed that their traits, attributes and repertoires were unchanging.

● Picture : Thomas Barret, *A Second Tale of a Tub*, 1715 (Job. Punch)

But names are misleading. Punch and Judy shows, performed from the end of the 18th century onwards in the streets of London with glove puppets, do not originate from the character of Punch that was found earlier in the comedies of Henry Fielding or Samuel Foote, and which was manipulated with rods and strings. The repertoire of Pulcinella performed by the little Neapolitan *guarattelle* is different from that of the actors who triumphed wearing this mask, either on the platforms of the Commedia dell'arte, or on the stages of Rome or Naples between the 17th and 19th centuries. Similarly, the Polichinelle of opera parodies, who trod on the boards of the Foire Saint-Germain, has almost nothing in common with the one who, after the French Revolution, acted in the booths built in the alleys of the Champs-Elysées or in public gardens before being dethroned by Guignol.
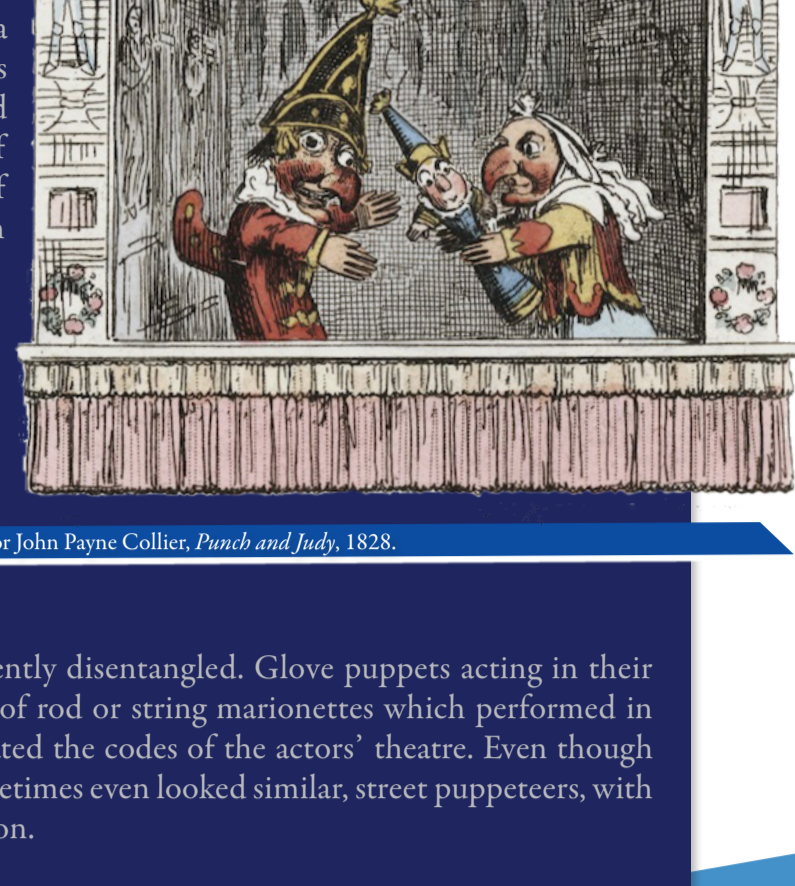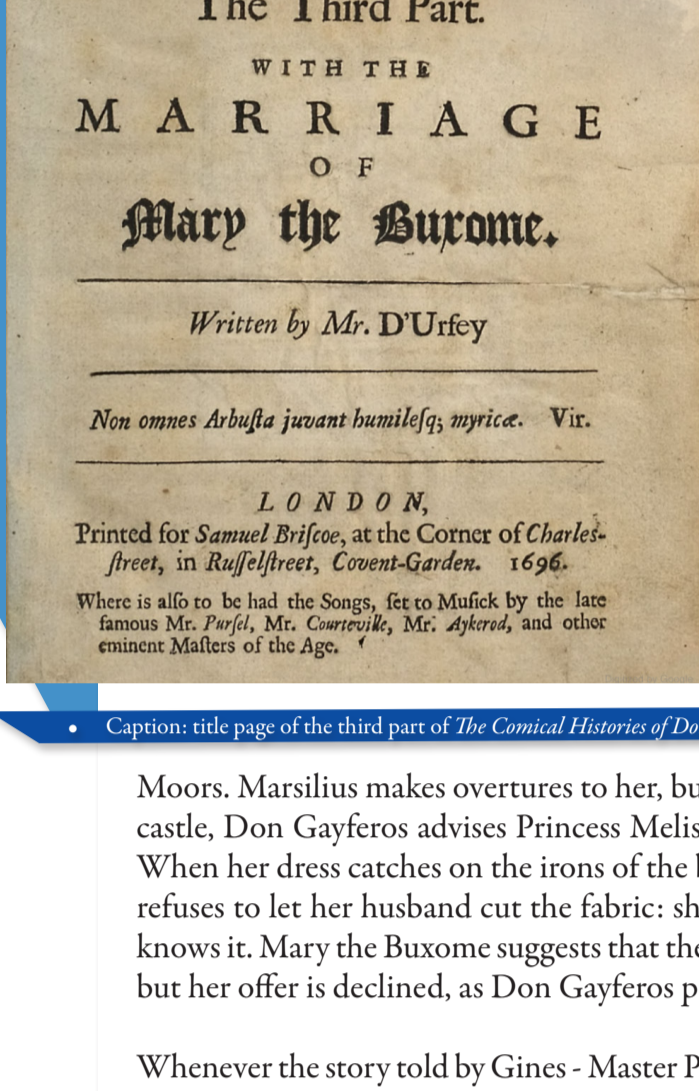
● Picture : George Cruikshank, illustration for John Payne Collier, *Punch and Judy*, 1828

The threads of this history need to be patiently disentangled. Glove puppets acting in their open-air booths were not the poor parents of rod or string marionettes which performed in theatres and which, for the most part, informed the codes of the actors' theatre. Even though their characters had the same names and sometimes even forded similar, street puppeteers, with their short farces, followed their own tradition.

[Prof. Didier Plassard]

"Dsheart, this is ridiculous enough— he takes the p[u]ppets for real persons, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

THE Comical History OF DON QUIXOTE. The Third Part. WITH THE MARRIAGE OF Mary the Buxome.

Written by Mr. D'Urfey.

Non vanæ redeat sanguis imagini. — Hor.

LONDON
Printed for *Samuel Briscoe*, at the Corner of *Charles-street*, in *Russel-street*, *Covent-Garden*. 1696.

Where a Book, etc., to be had, etc., at the one Shilling Books, etc., Mr. Congreve, *Mr. Dryden*, and other Eminent Authors of the Age.

● Caption: title page of the third part of *The Comical History of Don Quixote* by Thomas d'Urfey, 1696

In 1694, British writer and playwright Thomas d'Urfey published *The Comical Histories of Don Quixote* in two parts. Based on the famous novel by Miguel de Cervantes (1605-1696), it was one of the first theatrical adaptations of *Don Quixote* in England. Thomas d'Urfey published a third part in 1696. *The Comical Histories of Don Quixote* is a play for the actors' theatre, within which a puppet show (played by children, in d'Urfey's play) is staged. As in the Spanish novel, the puppet show narrates the liberation of Melisendra by Don Gayferos. However, Thomas d'Urfey adapted the scene to suit the tastes of his contemporaries, adding a number of bawdy references.

At the wedding of Mary the Buxome, Sancho's daughter, Master Peter performs a puppet play. In order to preserve his family's honour, Don Gayferos decides to free his wife Princess Melisendra, imprisoned in a castle by Marsilius, king of the

Moors. Marsilius makes overtures to her, but she insists she loves only her husband. Once at the castle, Don Gayferos advises Princess Melisendra to climb out of the window using her sheets. When her dress catches on the irons of the balcony and she finds herself hanging in mid-air, she refuses to let her husband cut the fabric: she doesn't want to reveal her body, even if he already knows it. Mary the Buxome suggests that the puppeteer use his (clean) handkerchief to cover her, but her offer is declined, as Don Gayferos promises to close his eyes and sets his wife free.

Whenever the story told by Gines - Master Peter's assistant - dishonours the family of Charlemain (Charlemagne), Don Quixote gets angry and threatens the puppets, which encourages Gines to mock him: "Dsheart, this is ridiculous enough— he takes the p[u]ppets for real persons, ha, ha, ha, ha!" But when Gines describes how Marsilius goes after Don Gayferos and fights Charlemain and his army, Don Quixote gets angry and attacks the puppets, cutting off their limbs with his sword. When he comes to his senses, he offers to pay for the damage he has caused.
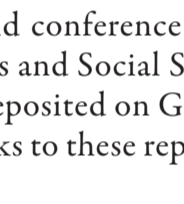
[Dr. Cécile Decaix]

Using HAL in a research project

HAL is a national digital archive for scientific publications. It has been developed by the *Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe* (CCSD), which depends on the CNRS, Inria and INRAE. It is also bolstered by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, which considers it as the flagship tool for opening up French research production as part of the two National Plans for Open Science (2018 and 2021).

HAL is a specialized repository, i.e. it offers features which make research institutes autonomous in depositing their scientific production. In this way, a project can work on centralizing its members' publications, which are often scattered across publishers' websites, print journals, specialized academic websites, etc. Initially a simple archive repository, HAL has become a tool for promoting a project's scientific output as well as its involvement in open science.


However, HAL does not display all of *PuppetPlays*'s scientific contributions. Research data, including transcribed texts for the anthology and conference videos, are stored on Nakala - an open science repository for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The database is hosted by Huma-Num, and its source code is to be deposited on Github, an open-source software development management service. Finally, links to these repositories are collected and documented on the *puppetplays.eu* website.

[Maxime Schoebsrys-Kreisz]

Joan Maragall's *Montserrat* (1897): from a shadow play to a symbolist poem

Poet Joan Maragall (1860-1911), who played an essential role in the revival of Catalan literature at the end of the 19th century, published texts which, in a symbolist vein, provided a set of myths and images for Catalan identity. While fully involved in Barcelona's artistic life, writing for several modernist magazines, he became a regular at the Els Quatre Gats (The Four Cats) cabaret which, like its Parisian model, the Chat Noir, set up a shadow theatre and started publishing a magazine.
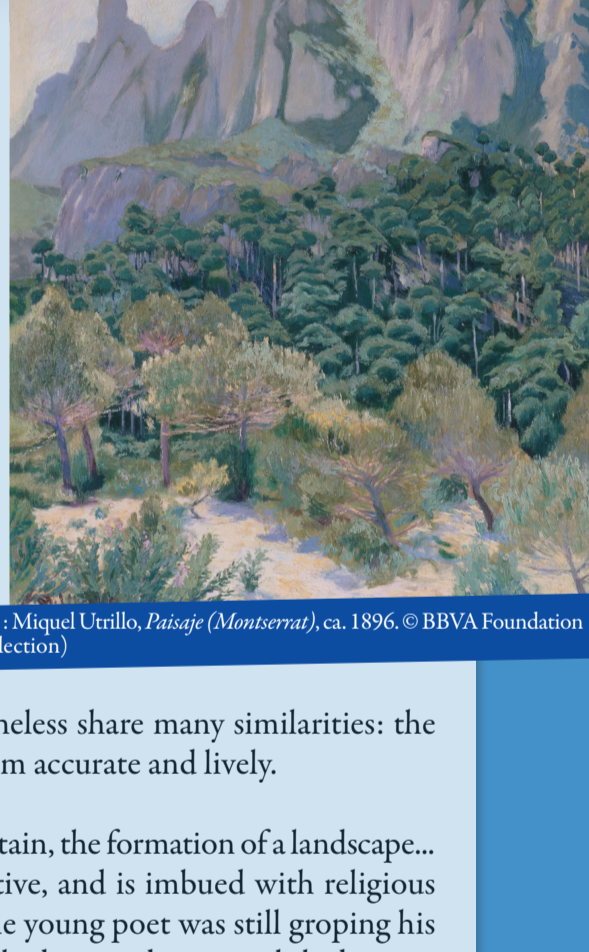
For the opening show, on 29 December 1897, Joan Maragall presented a poetic piece in Catalan, entitled *Montserrat*, from which an excerpt has survived. The text as well as the setting and the shadows (painted by Miquel Utrillo) celebrate the region's emblematic mountain, which was referred to again in another poem a few years later, *A la Mare de Déu de Montserrat* [To the Mother of God of Montserrat], which was published in the collection *Visions & Cants* (1900). The subject had evolved and the poet's style had asserted itself, attaining a quality and formal singularity that marked his era.

These two poems, which are not close enough to consider the first as an early version of the second, nevertheless share many similarities: the expression is simple and oral, despite the metric, and its lyricism accurate and lively.

The 1890 poem begins as a tale describing the birth of the mountain, the formation of a landscape... The 1900 poem, peppered with symbols, is more contemplative, and is imbued with religious sentiment. When he wrote for the Els Quatre Gats theatre, the young poet was still groping his way along, searching for an innovative style which combined shadows and music, while drawing its inspiration from its Parisian model and the lyrical pieces of the Chat Noir.

[Sophie Courtade]

Michel Laubu (Turak theatre company): poet and handyman

Puppeteers often create works from which no written traces remain - no scripts or storyboards produced before the show, and no notes written to record it afterwards. However, some forms are passed on from one puppeteer to another, today using video recordings, but also, more traditionally, by demonstrating and imitating movements. For example, puppeteer Michel Laubu would like to pass on a little piece entitled *Deux pierres* (Two Stones), which he has performed all over the world over the last few years, to his collaborator Emili Hufnagel. But if you are familiar with his work, you will quickly realise that the story told in *Deux Pierres* is inseparable from the world of Turakie - an imaginary country populated by figures assembled from recycled objects, and endowed with its own language (a grammar for which Laubu created a glossary) and folklore, and obeying a specific set of laws (physical, urban, political and social). Does this transmission involve giving away the suitcase containing the puppets and objects associated with this little piece of Turakie that the show represents? Or is it better to pass on a creative process and leave the future performer of the show free to develop her own visual universe?
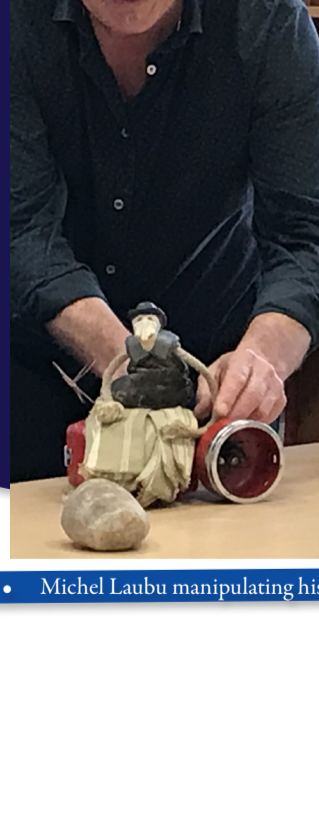
Michel Laubu picks objects and words from the material he uses to make up his project. They whisper to him a series of puns that shape characters which will then feature - or not - in a future show. One puppet, with the head of a toy sports water (in French: *lance l'eau*), and naturally becomes the Knight Lancelot of Lake Turakie. Another puppet, which is manipulated by a rod (here, an old sardine tin opener), has a chest made of an old, empty purse and a lower body made of mattress cloth (*toile*, in French). He therefore sleeps out in the open (*sous la toile/s*). Stripped of everything, like a castaway stranded on an island, he will become the shipwrecked Prospero from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*...
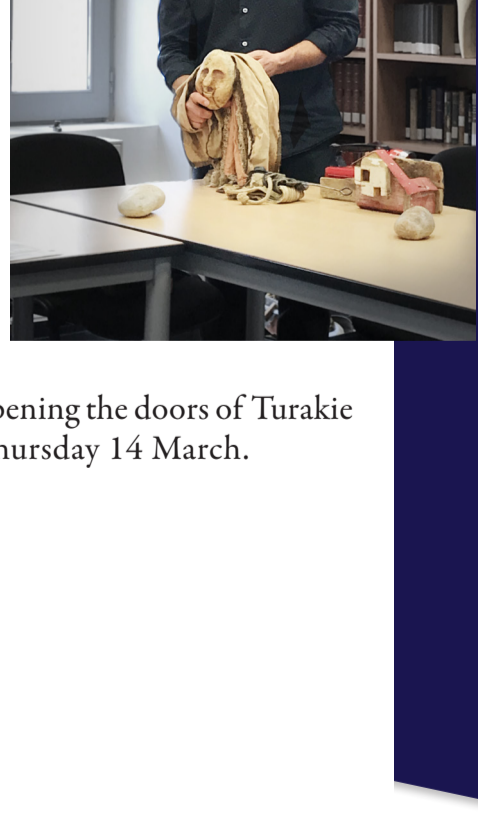
Many thanks to Michel Laubu for generously opening the doors of Turakie to the *PuppetPlays* team during his visit on Thursday 14 March.

[Dr Carole Guidicelli]